



THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE THE drum roll

Volume 39

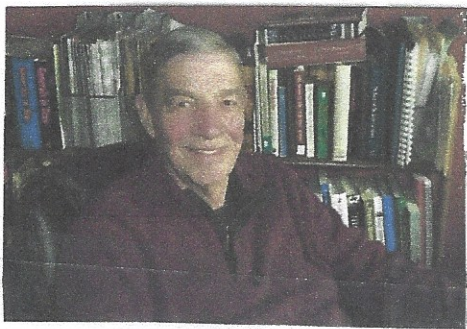
370th Meeting
Number 2

October 2, 2020

THE ZOOM MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 7:30 PM ON
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2ND

THE INVITATION TO THE ZOOM MEETING WILL BE SENT IN A
SEPARATE EMAIL A DAY OR TWO PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE A NOTIFICATION, PLEASE CONTACT ME
AT dlimburg@prodigy.net BEFORE 4 PM ON OCTOBER 2ND.



David Keller

The Story
of
Camp
Douglas

Opened in 1861, Camp Douglas was a Union and reception facility for over 40,000 Union soldiers in Chicago. Camp Douglas became a prison camp, housing over 30,000 Confederate prisoners, from 1862 until it was demolished in 1865. Containing over 200 buildings on 60 acres, Camp Douglas was the most significant Civil War facility in Northern Illinois. Presenter David Keller will discuss the history of Camp Douglas, relate some Camp Douglas stories from Confederate diaries and journals and talk about the conditions and loss of life at the camp. He will also discuss the current status of the camp's site and work done by the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation.

Mr. Keller is the founder and current Managing Director of the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation. He is a long time resident of Chicago and an amateur historian. Retired since 2002, David devotes much of his time to volunteer activities including the Chicago History Museum. His interest in Camp Douglas came from his interest in the Civil War, Civil War Prison Camps and 19th century Chicago History. He has written four books, *The Story of Camp Douglas*, *Chicago's Forgotten Civil War Prison* and *Robert Anderson Bagby, Civil War Diary* (Annotated) 1863-1865 have been published. Two books, *Military Prisons of the American Civil War*, *Factors That Made Them What They Became* and *Command at Antietam: Lincoln, McClellan and Lee at the Turning Point of the Civil War* are scheduled for publication in 2021.

HOW AMERICAN DEATH RITUALS CHANGED DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By Pat McCormick

The show must go on, as they say. Despite restrictions imposed by the 2020 pandemic, the Round Table soldiered on with its first-ever Zoom meeting. From a remote location, speaker Paula Zalar presented the story of mourning practices in the young United States, and how the Civil War impacted them.

Several decades before the Civil War, the societal approach to death – at least among those classes who could afford the rituals – followed a series of specific steps, which could be roughly categorized as rituals of symbol (items connected to the deceased) and rituals of manner (behavior of those close to the deceased.) The ideal was a “good death:” one in which the dying person could linger, thus having more time to prepare to meet their Maker. If the lingering was painful, all the better – enduring the pain allowed the dying to demonstrate stoicism, thereby indicating that they were confident in their soul’s heavenly destination.

Ideally, the dying person would be in his/her own home, surrounded by family, friends, and members of the community. Last words would be spoken, followed by silence, with the clock in the room stopped (so as not to hurry the dead on their way.) This delay also had a practical reason: to allow the official recorder of death to arrive. Following death, a dark bedsheet would be draped over the site, under which the layers of the dead would go to work. These were local women; every town had its own group. They would wrap the body in linen. When they were finished, the minister would make some brief remarks. Burial would occur later, usually in the family plot; there were no public cemeteries in the U.S. until 1831. Included in the grave would be “grief tokens”, the number and nature of which would vary with the deceased’s station in life.

After this, life would return to normal for the living. The dead’s own actions would have sent them to heaven or hell, and the living would not dwell on the death. More than anything else, the rituals were a reminder that someday the survivors would pass that way as well.

Starting in the early 1830’s, a wave of romanticism impacted the country. This new sentimentality (characterized by overblown, flowery language) led to a re-evaluation of death as societal rather than individual – as a part of the greater whole. This manifested itself in various ways. Among these

was the practice of visiting the grave and opening the coffin to see the decay. Other aspects were post-mortem paintings (supplemented or replaced by post-mortem photography as the technology came available) and hair jewelry, made with hair from the deceased. Flowers and even nuts were also important. The overall approach had changed from “We stay, you go” to “we stay, you stay with us.” (This era is the one that the vast majority of Civil War soldiers grew up in.)

The scope and immediacy of death in the Civil War had a profound impact on the societal approach to the subject. The “good death”, lingering on while surrounded by friends and family, was rarely possible. Instead, death was usually sudden and violent. The object of a “good death” had to be replaced with the hope for a “good burial”, while the deceased’s surviving comrades were expected to testify to the victim’s last minutes – it was their spiritual duty to tell the truth, normally in letters to the unfortunate soldier’s family. But the exigencies of the battlefield all too often made the “good burial” an impossibility. Starting during the war and continuing long afterwards, the un-retained dead were searched for (once again, usually by women’s societies.) As the century progressed post-war, monuments also served the function of honoring the dead for whom a “good burial” was impossible.

With the deceased usually unable to stoically face death, the stoicism was transported to grieving instead. A period of mourning became commonplace, and – ritual still being important – clothing served as an indicator of the stages of mourning (and typically it was women who were expected to follow the plan.) Clothing would start out black, which color had been a symbol for mourning since at least Saint Benedict (6th Century), then progress through gray and eventually to white. During this period, it was looked down upon to be anything but stoic – if the mourner carried on vocally, they were seen to think that their loved one was not prepared to meet his Maker. It was also important to avoid dragging the mourning period out too long (though the length could be subjective.) War had thus changed the approach to “You go, we’ll follow.” In an era when conformity was highly valued, this approach held for decades after the war.

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank Paula Zalar for a fascinating look at the mores of 19th Century death, and also a huge thanks to Bruce Allardice for administering the very first NICWRT Zoom meeting.

Upcoming Events

Kenosha Civil War Museum

Free programs on Facebook

10/9 "The Other Civil War in Mexico"

Noon Presenter hil Angelo

10/30 "Lincoln and The Presidential Campaign of 1860"

Noon Presenter Doug Dammann

Workshops – pre-register – fee involved

10/6 In-person at Museum

"The Iron Brigade and the Battle of Gainesville" Speaker Lance Herdegen

10/20 Zoom 7:00PM

"Ten Top Myths of Shiloh"

Presemnter Dr. Timothy Smith

10/22 Zoom

"Ambrose Bierce – One of America's Greatest Horror Writers"

Speaker Steve Acker

10/27 In-person at Museum

The Strange and the Supernatural of the Civil War" Presenters Jenn Edginton and Doug Dammann

Civil War Round Table of Chicago

10/9 Zoom "Perryville Under Fire"

Speaker Sturat Sanders

Salt Creek Civil War Round Table

10/16 Zoom "None but the Brave:

The Story of the Medal of Honor"

Speaker Jim Heinz

McHenry County Civil War Round Table

10/13 CANCELLED

All presentations have gone virtual, so contact the hosting organization for details.

Both the Congress of Civil War Round Tables and the Kenosha Civil War Museum have many more programs available. Check out their websites for details.

Saturday Discussion

At this time, meeting rooms at the Barrington Area Library are not available.

Eisenhower Library Discussion

At this time, meeting rooms are not available.

To Contribute to the Drum Roll

All members are welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. If you have information to share, please send it to Denise Limburg, 451 Woodview Road, Lake Barrington, IL 60010, (847) 212-5313, dlimburg@prodigy.net

THE drum roll

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More Confederate soldiers died
in Chicago's Camp Douglas
than on any Civil War battlefield

*from back cover of David Keller's book
The Story of Camp Douglas*

2020-2021 SPEAKERS

Oct. 2	David Keller	Camp Douglas
Nov. 8	Laurie Schiller	David Stuart and the Burch divorce trial of 1861
Dec. 4		
Jan. 8	Doug Dammann	1 st Wisconsin
Feb. 5	Mike Powell	African Americans in the U.S. Navy
Mar. 5	Bruce Allardice	TBD
Apr. 2	Pamela Toler	Nursing in the Civil War
May 7	Eric Wittenberg	Tullahoma or Chickamauga
June 4	Curt Fields	Portrayal of General Grant

