



THE drum roll

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September 1, 2017

Thomas's nicknames were not all complimentary

Friday, September 1, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
500 North Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois

The Rock and the Sledge



Jerry Allen as George Thomas

About six years ago, Jerry Allen portrayed Union Major General George H. Thomas for the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table. That portrayal covered the life of the general. Now Allen will portray Thomas again, but focus on September 1863 through December 1864. During this period, Thomas gained two well-deserved nicknames: the Rock of Chickamauga and the Sledge of Nashville. These two sobriquets replaced many other monikers, some of which were not complimentary: Old Tom, George Washington, Old Slow Trot, the Virginian, Pap Thomas, Old Pap, and Uncle George. So how did Thomas become the Rock and the Sledge?

Thomas was born in Virginia to a slave-holding family. He attended West Point Military Academy and served ably in the Seminole War and the Mexican-American War. In Mexico, Thomas suc-

cessfully led a gun crew, received three brevet promotions, and became close friends with Captain Braxton Bragg. Thomas would later face Confederate General Bragg on several battlefields, including Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

In 1851, Thomas became a West Point cavalry and artillery instructor. One of the officers recommending Thomas for this position was Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Braxton Bragg. One of his students was Cadet John Bell Hood. Thomas would face Confederate General John Bell Hood during the Atlanta Campaign and at Nashville.

In 1855, Thomas was appointed a major of the 2nd U.S. Cavalry by Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War. Once again, Bragg recommended Thomas's advancement. In 1857, Thomas was given command of the regiment and would continue there for 2½ years. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Thomas remained with the Union and alienated his Southern family and friends.

Over the course of the war, Thomas changed his attitude about several things, but his devotion to the Union cause never wavered. Allen's portrayal of Thomas will begin on the eve of the Battle of Chickamauga and end with Thomas surveying the battlefield after the Battle of Nashville.

Allen lives with his wife, Ellen, in Cary. He has been a member of the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table for 23 years. For the past 3 years, he has portrayed Thomas at Oak Mountain Intermediate School in Birmingham, AL.

If you would like to join us for dinner with Jerry Allen at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting on September 1 at Sam's of Arlington restaurant, 1863 West Central Road, Arlington Heights, please contact me at kberlant@comcast.net or (847) 506-1807 by Wednesday, August 30. —

Wayne Rhine

Please note change of date for September Saturday meeting

National Civil War Museum

By Pat McCormick

On June 2, 2017, the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table's annual banquet featured Wayne Motts, who took us on a trip through the collections of the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA.

Motts, who referred to his employment at the museum as every day being "like Christmas," described Civil War preservation as a three-legged combination of land, structures, and artifacts.

While land (battlefield property) and buildings receive the most attention, museums are equally important. The National Civil War Museum opened in 2001. In its 65,000 square feet, the collection currently includes 21,000 manuscripts and 25,000 artifacts.

One thousand items are on permanent display, while others are rotated through changing galleries. He also noted that the museum's mission is to represent both sides of the conflict.

Motts then took us on a sample visual tour of the museum's collections, organized chronologically. John Brown's Harper's Ferry raid is often viewed as the match that lit the fuse to the conflict, and the museum has the pen that Virginia governor (and future Confederate general) Henry Wise used to sign Brown's death warrant. The collection includes an early seven-star Confederate flag that flew over Fort Sumter after the surrender, an 1861 letter written by Thomas Francis Meagher (to Chester Arthur) on Irish Brigade stationery, and a flag of Eppa Hunton's 8th Virginia regiment.

Early in 1862, the famous clash of ironclads occurred, and the collection includes a "naval tally" — hat ribbon, that is — with the wording "U.S.S. Monitor." About a month later the battle

of Shiloh was fought, and a blood-stained sash from a captain in the 13th Tennessee is in the collection. A harness, tack box, and U.S. Army belt belonging to U. S. Grant are in the mix.

Are you familiar with the McClellan Saddle, standard issue in the Union Army and used by both sides? The museum has one — in fact, it's one owned by its designer, George McClellan himself.

The Vicksburg campaign took place in 1863, and the museum owns a pistol presented to Union raider Benjamin Grierson by General Christopher Augur after the raid.

Another Vicksburg (and Illinois)-related item is a Medal of Honor earned by an 11th Illinois soldier on the transport *Horizon* when it ran the Vicks-



Brevet Major James D. Vernay wearing Medal of Honor and G.A.R. badge.



Brevet Major James D. Vernay's Medal of Honor.



Colonel Benjamin Grierson's presentation revolver.

burg batteries. Gettysburg, of course, also was fought in 1863, and one related artifact is a blood-stained tactical manual owned by a captain in the 64th New York who was killed July 2 in Rose's Woods. The sacking of Lawrence, Kansas, by guerilla William Quantrill is represented by an 1851 Colt revolver owned by Quantrill.

Both Joseph Kershaw (CSA) and David Hunter (USA) saw action in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864, and the museum has an inscribed sword belonging to Kershaw and field glasses belonging to Hunter. Spring of '64 saw the emergence of the ironclad *Albatross* in North Carolina, and thus William Cushing's daring expedition that destroyed her. A spy glass and cutlass of Cushing's are in the collection. Both Robert E. Lee (of course) and Joshua Chamberlain had prominent roles at Appomattox in 1865. The museum owns a Bible of Lee's (inscribed "R. E. Lee, Mexico 1847") and 274 letters written by Chamberlain.

And the final artifact highlighted was an April 14, 1865, playbill from Ford's Theater.

After taking us through the war years artifact-by-artifact, Motts summed up by reiterating the importance of museums and their collections, pointing out that artifacts can be a powerful way

of involving youth in the realm of Civil War history. On behalf of the round table I would like to thank Wayne Motts for a fascinating presentation. I know that next time I'm in range of Harrisburg I will make every effort to visit the National Civil War Museum.

September Events

September 8, Second Friday Lecture Series, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. Steve Krolick will speak on Hall Rifles and Carbines in the Civil War, noon. Free program is sponsored by the Milwaukee Civil War Roundtable and the Iron Brigade Association. Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or www.thecivilwarmuseum.org.

September 8, Chicago Civil War Round Table. Ed Bonekemper will speak on False Remembrance of the Civil War, The Myth of the Lost Cause.

September 12, McHenry County Civil War Round Table. Frank Crawford will speak on Guy Henry.

September 14, Lake County Civil War Round Table. David Dixon will discuss his new book, *The Lost Gettysburg Address*.

September 16, Great Lakes Civil War Forum, Civil War Museum, Kenosha, WI. This year's forum, Tullahoma, Chickamauga, and Beyond, will feature Greg Biggs speaking on Turning the Tide: The Union Cavalry in the Tullahoma Campaign; David Powell presenting Longstreet in the West; Robert Girardi discussing General William Passmore Carlin and the Chickamauga Campaign; and Stephen Goldman covering Wounded Warriors Come Home: The Union Soldier in Peace. Registration is at 8:30 a.m., first program at 9:30 a.m.; cost, \$60/\$50 for Friends of the Museum, includes lunch.

Dues Are Due

Dues forms and checks should be sent to treasurer Tom DeFranco, 9273 Fairway Drive, Apt. 316, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016-1720. Dues are \$55 family, \$45 individual, and \$5 student. A sustaining membership is any payment over the normal rates. Deduct \$5 if you receive the newsletter by e-mail.

drum roll, September 2017

September Saturday Discussion

All members and guests are invited to participate in the session to be held at the Barrington Area Library on Saturday, September 9, 2017, from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Please note the change from the usual date. Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on events in North Carolina in 1865.

These discussions are generally held on the third Saturday of the month from September through June. They are held to generate and foster a free exchange of ideas on Civil War events.

Eisenhower Library Discussion

The Civil War discussion group at the Eisenhower Library, 4613 North Oketo Avenue, Harwood Heights, meets on the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 until 11:30 a.m. On September 2 the group will discuss the Tullahoma campaign.

Women's Civil War Book Club

The Civil War book club for women will meet on September 7 at the home of Denise Limburg. The book to be discussed is *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy* by Karen Abbott. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Denise Limburg at (847) 382-1022 or dlimburg@prodigy.net or Mary Banks at zeller1@comcast.net or (847) 497-3149.

To Contribute to the Drum Roll

All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Appropriate subjects include (but are not limited to) book reviews, family histories, travel reports, and recent research. Articles should be as long as necessary to cover the subject. If you have information to share, please send it to Sally Smith, 328 Eastern Avenue, Barrington, Illinois 60010-4629 or e-mail drum_roll4@juno.com.



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Silent Auction

The lucky winners at the June silent auction were Nathaniel Cerf, who won *The Untold Civil War* by James Robertson; Alfred Kitch, who won *Civil War Weapons*, *Civil War Sites* by Angus Konstam; Mary Beth Foley, who won *The Civil War* by Ric and Ken Burns and *The Robert E. Lee Reader*, edited by Stanley Horn ; Mark Ostrand, who won *Lincoln's Code* by John Fabian Witt; Wayne Rhine, who won *The Angel of Marye's Heights* by Anthony J. Ziebol (signed); Anna Strelka, who won *Rebel At Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* by George Creel; and Phillip Thornton, who won *Five Tragic Hours*, *Shiloh*, *Chattanooga*, and *Stones River* by James Lee McDonough, *Major General Robert E. Rodes of the Army of Northern Virginia* by Darrell L. Collins, *Civil War Quiz Cards*, and *Civil War Firsts* by Gerald S. Henig and Eric Niderost.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to the donors.

2017-2018 Speakers

September 1	Jerry Allen	The Rock and the Sledge
October 6	Donald Scende	George Armstrong Custer
November 3	TBD	
December 1	Pat McCormick	Irish Brigade
January 5	Wayne Rhine	Cushing Brothers



To learn more about the Northern Illinois Civil War Round Table
 visit our website at www.northernilcwr.org