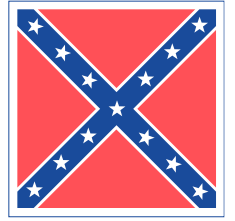


# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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## *Paul Kahan Simon Cameron, Lincoln's First Secretary of War*



Simon Cameron (1799-1889) was one of the nineteenth century's most prominent political figures. From abject poverty, he rose to undisputed political boss of Pennsylvania, Lincoln's secretary of war, senator, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and a founder of the Republican Party. In his wake, however, he left a series of questionable political and business dealings and, at the age of eighty, even a sex scandal.

demonstrating along the way strong loyalty to friends and allies while spending an entire political career tirelessly promoting the interests of his home state of Pennsylvania. An anti-slavery moderate, he was also comparatively liberal on race.

Paul Kahan is a lecturer at Ohlone College in Fremont, California. Dr. Kahan earned a Ph.D. in U.S. history from Temple University, an M.A. in Modern American History

& Literature from Drew University and B.A.s in history and English (with minors in medieval/Renaissance

studies and music) from Alfred University. In 2008, Dr. Kahan published his first book, Eastern State Penitentiary: A History. His most recent book, Amiable Scoundrel: Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Scandalous Secretary of War, was published in 2016. Kirkus called it "A fine political biography" while the San Francisco Book Review said it was "Essential for any Civil War historian's library.

In the popular mind, Simon Cameron is chiefly remembered for two things, his breathtaking personal corruption and a dismal record of incompetence as Abraham Lincoln's first Secretary of War.

On March 10th Cameron's latest biographer, Paul Kahan, will contend that both conclusions are grossly oversimplified. In Kahan's view, there is much to admire in Cameron, who rose to the heights of state and national power,



### **760th REGULAR MEETING**

★★★★★

Friday, March 10th

★★★★★

HOLIDAY INN O'HARE

5615 N. CUMBERLAND, CHICAGO

*Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.*

*Dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

**\$50 - Members/Non-members**

**ENTRÉE  
CHICKEN MARSALA OR  
TILAPIA**

## DALTON'S BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION EFFORTS ARE REWARDING

By Robert D. Jenkins Sr.  
President, Save the Dalton Battlefields

Whitfield County, Georgia, is the home to more Civil War earthworks than any other county in the Nation. On October 29, 2016, Whitfield County, in conjunction with Save the Dalton Battlefields, The Civil War Trust and other local organizations acquired over 300 acres in Crow Valley, just north of Dalton, Georgia, thus preserving a significant portion of these earthworks. The property, formerly known as The Grant Farm or Grant Property, lies adjacent to Rocky Face Ridge where Whitfield County already owns over 600 acres atop the ridge. There, Confederate and Federal earthworks and rock walls remain in nearly pristine condition, a stark reminder of the fierce fighting which occurred in February and May 1864.

The Grant Property features trenches, redoubts, stacked rock walls, and both below surface and above surface earthworks in multiple locations throughout the just over 300 acres. It was the scene of combat on two separate occasions during the war. Additionally, the property was the location of one or more brigade-sized Confederate camps during the Winter of 1863-64 for up to six months. Also, the property saw use by Native American Indians, early White settlers to Crow Valley and slaves. There is evidence that several cabins were erected by one or more of these groups both prior to and during the war.

In February 1864, the property was host to fighting with two separate actions occurring on February 24-25, 1864 as Federal forces advanced from north to south across Crow Valley toward Dalton. Confederate forces including Clayton's Alabama brigade and Reynold's Virginia and North Carolina brigade defended the

southern half of the property while the Northern troops under Turchin's Ohio and Indiana brigade with portions of other Northern units from mid-western states crossed the northern half of property. The February fighting covered virtually the entire 300 acres of the Grant property as both Northern and Southern units marched and countermarched and attacked and counterattacked one another during the action. The February action also saw Confederate earthworks constructed in several places including a significant one-quarter to one-half mile of infantry trenches, a four-gun battery site, another trench of smaller length and a portion of a two-gun battery earthwork together with a supporting redoubt and vidette. In addition, the property features a rare Federal rock wall about 3 feet in height and over 50 to 80 feet in length along the slope of Rocky Face Ridge.

In May 1864, the northern portions of the Grant Property were utilized for Confederate earthworks as the Southern forces learned from the February fighting and moved their lines further to the north to take advantage of more of the high ground along Rocky Face Ridge and Crow Valley. ... The May earthworks feature a combination of Confederate infantry trenches, rock walls, and a four-gun battery site.

In addition to the two periods of combat, the Grant property was home to a number of Confederate troops from late November 1863 to the second week of May 1864.

This acquisition marks the sixth property in Dalton and Whitfield County which have been preserved by various organizations and which will be opened to the public as an historic

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The only requirement for membership in The Civil War Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 1039 Hinswood, Darien, Illinois 60561, or editor@chicagocwrt.org.

park. Dug Gap Mountain Battlefield Park maintained by the Dalton Civil War Roundtable, Mt. Rachel owned by the City of Dalton, Rocky Face Ridge, Mill Creek Gap Battlefield Park and Potato Hill Battlefield Park owned by Whitfield County, will now be joined by the Grant Property which will open access to the Battle of Crow Valley. ...

Whitfield County and Save the Dalton Battlefields plan to open the Grant Property to the public for day time use as a walking, hiking, biking park which will not only interpret and feature the earthworks, rock walls and related sites on the Grant Property, but the park will also include trails to the summit of Rocky Face Ridge where visitors will be able to reach vistas atop the mountain from which, on a clear day, on will be able to see all the way to Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to the northwest, as well as Pine Mountain, Lost Mountain, and even Kennesaw Mountain to the south. No date has been set for the park's opening, but plans are already in the works. In the meantime, private tours may be arranged by contacting Robert Jenkins, President, Save the Dalton Battlefields 706-259-4626.

From March *Civil War News*

## FEBRUARY MEETING

By Mark Matranga

Bob O'Neill addressed The Round Table at its 759th Regular Meeting on the "Cavalry During the Peninsula Campaign." O'Neill outlined the roles played by the mounted armies of both The Army of the Potomac and the Confederate forces led first by Joseph Johnston and then Robert E. Lee, and also discussed the evolution of the union cavalry during the first year of the war.

Union cavalry grew after Bull Run in July 1861 when General McDowell had 3,000 under arms - by September of that year Washington needed no more units. Leadership was affected by the increase in forces: Chief of Cavalry George Stoneman, a captain, had commanded no more than a squad before the war; Phillip St. George Cooke had commanded the 2nd Dragoons. Experience seemed not to affect Johnston when he put 28-year old J.E.B. Stuart in command.

At the time of the 7 Days in 1862, union cavalry consisted of 5 regular regiments and 11 volunteer units. Only some had carbines - interestingly, regulars were made to give up their carbines. A large number were assigned to McClellan's Headquarters. The confederate army consisted of a polyglot group of 12 regiments, battalions, and legions.

Union horsemen operated as traditional cavalry in the initial phases of the campaign, but near Williamsburg St. George Cooke's 6th U.S. was ordered to flank and attack the camps behind Fort Magruder. After Williamsburg, the cavalry fanned out to the James and the York. On May 7th, the 1st NY accompanied the ship-borne operation at Eltham's Landing. At the

end of May, Averill's 3rd Pa. opened communications with the navy near Shirley Plantation on the James. As the army moved up the Peninsula, the cavalry participated in engagements at Mechanicsville, Marlebourne, and Hanover Court House where, O'Neill pointed out, the 6th U.S. was misused, an example of its commander's struggle to properly use cavalry.

On May 25-26, cavalry assisted Porter's V Corps in pushing the confederates from Ashland and Hanover. Cavalry supported infantry but also were assigned a separate role destroying property. The 8th Ill. burned the Ashland railroad station; the 3rd Pa. raided King William Court House. As the campaign neared Richmond, cavalry was disbursed across all corps and assigned to guard artillery. Stuart's Ride around the army then intervened, embarrassing McClellan and his mounted arm.

O'Neill contends that union and confederate cavalry were evenly matched. However, the northern side was not well armed or equipped and not properly trained; its logistics were rudimentary. There is some uncertainty as to what arms the northern cavalry had during the Peninsula Campaign. The 8th Ill. did not have carbines, however. And union cavalry operated at a disadvantage: confederates could go anywhere and received assistance from the local populace whereas the union horsemen could not. And with Stuart's Ride, southern riders were the darlings of the south; U.S. Cavalry received no accolades.

Confederate cavalry was superior at the art of reconnaissance. The 'Ride'

was more than a publicity stunt: it confirmed for Lee vital intelligence. But O'Neill sees much to admire in the northern side. The strongly abolitionist 8th Ill., for example, displayed characteristics of a successful unit, with discipline provided by its commander, Col. John Farnsworth, a pre-war Dragoon Sgt. Major and no-nonsense soldier, and purpose supplied by its Lt. Colonel, William Gamble. McClellan had little faith in volunteers but placed the 8th in prominent roles. Thomas Kelly of the 8th said it best:

"We were a crack regiment when we were full. I would like to see them all together as we were when we left Washington....But that can never be, [as] some of them have gone to another better world and others are disabled for life. What men we have got are good soldiers and brave ones, too."

The Round Table thanks Bob O'Neill for increasing our understanding of the role cavalry played in this important campaign.

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### NEWBERRY SEMINAR ON CIVIL WAR ERA

The Newberry Library in Chicago is sponsoring a seminar entitled "Confirming our Continent: Canada, Mexico and the United States, 1857-67." It will be held at the library 2-4 p.m., March 1 through April 12, and concentrate on the relationships between the three countries. Author Joseph Harrington is the seminar leader. For fees and other information, contact the Newberry at [www.newberry.org/WS17Continent](http://www.newberry.org/WS17Continent).

## GRAPESHOT



**Leslie Goddard** will portray Clara Barton March 2-3 at the Marshall, Illinois Public Library, March 13th at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Elgin, and 3:00 p.m. March 19th at the Robert R. McCormick Museum, Cantigny.

The Civil War Museum in Kenosha will host its Second Friday Lecture Series, featuring Dave Noe speaking on "The Luck of the Merrimack," Friday, March 10, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm. On March 14 the museum will hosts its Civil War Media Club, featuring "The Gettysburg Address; A Graphic Adaptation."

Information on all Civil War Museum programs is available at (262) 653-4140 or [www.thecivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.thecivilwarmuseum.org).

**Bruce Allardice** will speak on "Finding Your Civil War Ancestor Online," March 29th at the Elmhurst Public Library.

Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or publications? All members are welcome to contribute items to the newsletter. Contact the editor at [editor@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:editor@chicagocwrt.org) or (630) 297-8046.

### PLEASE NOTE

Make your reservations by Sunday, March 5, by emailing [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org), or calling 630 460-1865 with the names of your party and choice of entrée.

If a cancellation becomes necessary after dinner reservations have been made, please email us at [dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org](mailto:dinnerreservations@chicagocwrt.org) and/or call us at 630-460-1865.

We are offering the option of choosing not to have dinner and coming only for the address at 7:15 p.m., for a charge of \$10 per person.

Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE.

### More Upcoming Civil War Events

- Mar. 1st, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Ray Wilson on "The Confederate Territory of Arizona"
- Mar. 3rd, Northern Illinois CWRT: Harold Knudsen on "Disunion and Secession"
- Mar. 9th, Lake County CWRT: Rich Garling on "Flags of the CSA"
- Mar. 9th, Milwaukee CWRT: Paul Kahan on "Simon Cameron, Lincoln's First Secretary of War"
- Mar. 14th, McHenry County CWRT: Ed Urban on "McHenry County and the Civil War"
- Mar. 17th, Salt Creek CWRT: Brian Conroy on "Military Academies the Civil War"
- Mar. 21st, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: David Walker as "Jefferson Davis in Person"
- Mar. 23rd, South Suburban CWRT: Graham Peck on "Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858"

## Bulletin Board



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Holiday Inn O'Hare, the second Friday of each month, *unless otherwise indicated*.

- Apr. 14th: Diane Smith on "Command Conflict in the Overland Campaign"
- May 12th: Connie Hansen presents a "First Person Portrayal of Jennie Wade's mother"
- June 9th: Don Sender on "Untold Facts of the Custer Debacle"
- Sept. 8th: Ed Bonekemper on "False Remembrance of the Civil War, The Myth of the Lost Cause"
- Oct. 13th: Dave Powell on "Chickamauga"
- Nov. 10th: Tom Clemens on "Antietam"
- Dec. 8th: David Dixon on "Lost Gettysburg Address"

**Abraham Lincoln Bookshop** Their next "Author's Voice" is 12-1 p.m. March 25th, when **Daniel Weinberg** talks with Judith Giesberg about her book, Sex and the Civil War and Jonathan W. White, author of Midnight in America.

**Tour Reminder**—Sign up NOW for our CWRT's annual Battlefield Tour, covering the 1862 Peninsula Campaign. It will be held May 3-7, and as usual Ed Bearss is the head guide. See <http://www.chicagocwrt.org/battletour.html> for more information.