



NEWS

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BOARD MEMBERSHIP RECRUITING MEETING

Dear Valued Members,

The national CWRT Congress' annual conference theme this year was Round Table Sustainability. Over 70 Round Tables from around the country have shut down in recent years. Among the major reasons is the lack of new leadership. The same people serve as officers year after year, without support, until they no longer want to do the job, and the organization fails.

Over the past few years, the TCCWRT Board had survived and averted this scenario by transitioning to a more active "working board" format. In this format we have set up several committees, e.g., technical, membership, marketing, programs, nominating, and an advisory group. This new approach has resulted in several exciting new changes including:

- a major upgrade in our technical presentation capabilities at the KOC (new projection equipment, larger screen, and more)
- new financing systems
- greatly enhanced website capabilities with recorded presentations
- monthly newsletters
- member profiles and more
- new book and apparel sales approaches
- pre-meal social hour
- annual membership picnic
- marketing outreach to increase our membership.



First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

We believe this is an exciting time to be a member of the Board of Directors of TCCWRT.

At 5:00 pm, prior to our monthly meeting on January 16, 2024, in the Madonna Room, we will conduct a brief half-hour informational session for folks with interest in learning more and/or possibly joining the board. At this session, we will present a short overview of the board and committee opportunities and be available to answer any questions you may have. To get a good understanding of the board responsibilities we would encourage you to go online to our website, www.tccwrt.com and review the board bylaws and some of the exciting things we are doing.

Again, it is the unique talents of our TCCWRT members who have stepped forward in the past few years that has resulted in our new growth and our continuing stature as one of the premier Round Tables in the U.S. We look forward to discovering new talents in our membership and seeing you on January 16th. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to email us at info@tccwrt.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

TCCWRT Board of Directors

OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS – AN INVESTMENT IN HISTORY’S FUTURE

BY KEN FLIES

At TCCWRT’s November Board meeting, the Board considered creating a high school scholarship program and we’d like your input. A scholarship committee was formed to explore such a program with a goal of an annual \$2000 scholarship. As Round Table membership is aging and history is being relegated to a minor position in high school curriculums, new ideas need to be developed to sustain the future of Round Table membership and the study of Civil War history.

Interest in such a program was introduced by CWRT Congress Vice President and TCCWRT Board Member Carol VanOrnum, based on a similar endeavor at the Bull Run CWRT. Carol, on page four of the November 2023 edition of the CWRT Congress Newsletter, *The Light Post*, wrote an excellent article reviewing Bull Run’s efforts and promoting the goal of young folks in the study of American History. You can read the article [HERE](#).

While we expect some members may make more substantial donations to the fund, even with additional minor tax-deductible donations of \$25-\$50 from a greater number of our large membership, the committee believes the annual \$2000 level is sustainable. For our older members, you may consider this an excellent opportunity for your annual IRA tax-deductible donations.

Before the Board takes action, we would appreciate it if you would read Carol’s excellent article and provide your feedback on proceeding with a similar TCCWRT program. Send your comments to Carol at info@tccwrt.com.

To date, the committee has already received pledges of several hundred dollars from members to initiate a scholarship fund- monies that will be held in a trust. If you are interested in making a pledge at this time you may also drop a note to Carol. Thank you.

OUR JANUARY MEETING: JANUARY 16, 2024

“Civil War Ciphers & Codes Wartime Evolution” Presented by Derek Lee

Beginning with a history of cryptography, this presentation briefly examines the evolution of code systems prior to the Civil War. With the advent of the telegraph, encryption became increasingly essential to military communications. Because telegraph lines could easily be tapped by either side to intercept critical intelligence, both the Union and Confederate armies employed ciphers to protect messages. Were these methods effective? Was either side successful in cracking their opponent’s codes? How do these early encryption systems relate to modern-day technologies? By comparing the Union Stager Cipher and the Confederate adaptation of the Vigenère Cipher, this presentation explores the strengths and weaknesses of both. In addition, other forms of coded messages employed during the Civil War are also described including the Signal Corps, spies, and high-ranking individuals.



Derek Lee received his BA from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, majoring in anthropology and mathematics. He went on to receive an MS in Geographic Information Systems from St Mary’s University in Winona, Minnesota. Mr. Lee is the Director of Bear Creek Archeology in Cresco, Iowa where he has contributed to over 2,750 cultural resource management projects throughout the upper Midwest. He has contributed to numerous journal articles and book chapters regarding various topics in archaeological research. In addition, Mr. Lee has presented at local, regional, national, and international conferences on technology-assisted methods of archaeological excavation. Mr. Lee combines his cross-disciplinary interests in modern computer science, history, and mathematics into a fun and comprehensible presentation on an intriguing and often-overlooked topic.

From the Dusty Collection #35
Minnesota Soldiers and Medical Care

The Civil War was the single most deadly event, as percentage of population, in American history. Of the 750,000 or so combatants who died during or immediately after the war, over two thirds were victim of disease. The medical establishment was unfortunately hampered because the germ theory of disease and infection was still in its future. While camp sanitation was mandated by regulation it was not strictly enforced. Farm boys in crowded recruit camps had less natural resistance to childhood diseases than their city raised messmates. Rations were heavy on salt meat and hard bread with adequate calories but few vegetables and little variety. Cooking duties were rotated, or assigned to men of less use in the ranks. And medical care for the sick or injured was often grounded in misinformation that treated symptoms rather than causes and ignored surgical sanitation. Civil War medicine has long intrigued me. Here are some random musings, illustrated by a few Civil War medical artifacts that have come my way over the past fifty years.



Each 1000-man regiment of infantry was authorized a commissioned surgeon and assistant surgeon, plus one or more enlisted medical stewards selected from the ranks. The latter wore distinctive caduceus diagonally on each sleeve and served as “pill pusher” for the regimental surgeon. A rare example of their sleeve insignia is shown here. Enlisted men were also detailed as hospital orderlies. The writer’s



grandfather may have missed the Battle of Gettysburg due to that temporary but fortunate assignment in the summer of 1863. And a regiment’s fifers and drummers were typically detailed as stretcher bearers after a battle, ferrying wounded men from the firing line to regimental aid station.

Commissioned medical officers wore an easily recognizable dark green silk sash around their waist unlike the maroon sash worn by most other officers.



Like other officers they wore embroidered gold bullion shoulder straps, but with the silver letters “MS” standing for Medical Service in the center. A similarly marked oval badge adorned their hat. Surgeon Henry Pennington of the 17th Illinois Infantry and later the 5th US Colored Heavy Artillery wore these insignias on his uniform.



The quality of regimental surgeons varied greatly. Some were political appointees motivated by an easy and regular paycheck. Others, like Henry Pennington, were old time country doctors who followed their local patients into the field. But soon the army began regular examinations before appointing surgeons. The overall quality of medical care immediately improved. Well educated young men, recent medical school graduates, enlisted to gain invaluable real surgical experience.

One was James McMasters of the 6th Minnesota who helped to treat hundreds of his sick comrades during an ill-fated tenure at Helena Arkansas. Their low-lying camp along the



Mississippi River contributed to a sick roll that numbered higher than those available for duty, devastated the regiment until its transfer to St. Louis and earned Helena the nickname of “Hell in Arkansas.” Soldiers back in Minnesota faced their own disease epidemics following the 1862 Dakota Conflict. Measles had moved up the Mississippi that summer after killing hundreds of young men at army camps, including the writer’s 18-year-old great uncle, a new recruit at Camp Douglas outside Chicago. Today a childhood disease largely eliminated by inoculation, then it could be deadly to otherwise healthy youth and adults. Moving through the military ranks and

the Twin Cities civilian population, measles next hit the Dakota Internment Camp below Fort Snelling where it killed around 130 of the 1,700 mostly women and children camped in the damp river bottoms. By mid-winter it had run its course and few additional cases were reported.

Regimental surgeons, besides supervising their unit's hygiene and treating camp diseases, also had to be reasonably skilled in surgery. In battle their presence gave soldiers at least some assurance that they might survive a wound. The medical staff of a regiment or its brigade (three to five regiments operating under a brigadier general) set up aid stations behind the lines and usually in a sheltered ravine. Behind them were division level field hospitals with a staff able to perform more advanced operations and evacuate those who survived.

Civil War surgeons frequently carried a pocket instrument set but also owned a so-called capital surgical



set that traveled in the regimental baggage wagons. Those well-honed sets were impressive, but note that the instrument handles were made of ebony wood, checkered for traction. The wood made it impossible to heat sterilize the instruments, something that led to infection in nearly every wound. In fact, "secondary hemorrhage" from infected wounds was the most frequent cause of death among surgical survivors. And what about amputation? The terrible destruction to bone and tissue caused by minie balls and shell fragments made amputation

the only safe alternative in crowded field hospitals. Yet contrary to popular opinion most procedures were carried out only after anesthesia by chloroform or ether.

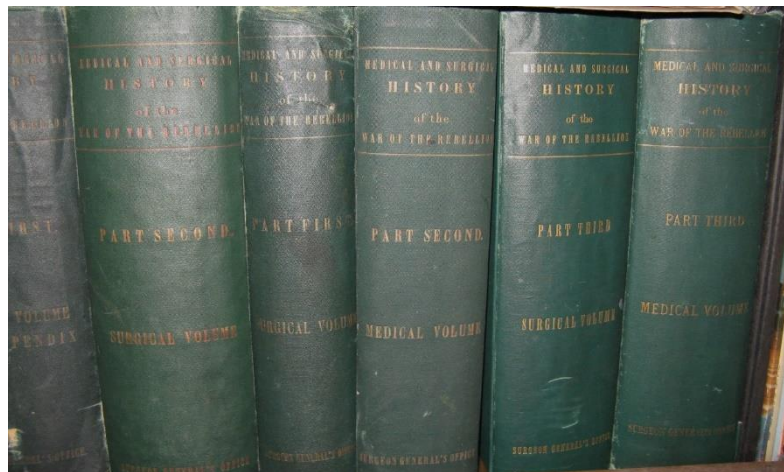
The US medical establishment above the field army level grew exponentially during the Civil War. Massive general hospitals were set up in cities and along railroad lines with special hospital cars used to transport the seriously injured who had initially left the battlefield via horse drawn ambulance. Thousands of nurses were employed or volunteered. Aid societies like the US Sanitary Commission and the US Christian Commission channeled aid and volunteers. And well attended Sanitary Fairs, including in Minnesota, raised money for hospital relief. To produce medical supplies government "laboratories" were established to augment market purchases.



Liquid medicines, like “Vinum Album” (white wine) were manufactured there and bottled in US Hospital Dept. dark green bottles like this one brought home to Hastings by General William LeDuc. It is one of the few surviving specimens retaining its paper label. And field tourniquets were mass produced for both surgeons and soldiers who chose to carry one. This one came in its paper wrapper from a crate discovered in the 1960s in a Washington warehouse and sold off cheap enough for even a young high school collector to buy!

The US Surgeon General’s office compiled the important lessons of the conflict in its massive tome, *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*. Published in three medical and three surgical volumes, the reference details tens of thousands of case studies and captures what was then known of best (and worst) treatments. The volumes are illustrated with often graphic color plates and are still an

excellent reference in researching soldiers on both sides who came under care by the US Army’s medical establishment.



But the true lasting legacy of the war was in its maimed soldiers, like Benjamin Franklin of the 2nd Minnesota Cavalry, and in the immense federal Pension Bureau that developed to support that legacy of wound and disease based disability. That bureaucracy is still massive, now known as the Veterans Administration.

The voluminous pension files at the National Archives, carded Civil War hospital records, and widow pension files (now on line) are a rich trove of information for today’s researchers.

STEVEN SCHIER'S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

He's back and better than ever. Here's Steve Schier's monthly trivia question.

The Union faced secessionists in how many Southern states?

(See page 9 for the answer)

OUR 2024 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

February 20 th	“The Concept of “Cowardice” in the Civil War” Dr. Lesley Gordon
March 19 th	“Food and Hunger During the Civil War” Prof. Anne Rubin
May 21 st	“U.S. Colored Troops at War” Dr. David Wright Falade

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – JANUARY

2 nd	1861 – Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbor is seized by South Carolina troops.
5 th	1861 – Seven U.S. Senators, from southern slave states, meet in Washington D.C. to consider seceding from the Union.
10 th	1862 – Col. James A. Garfield (a future U.S. President), commands Union forces at the Battle of Middle Creek, Kentucky.
29 th -30 th	1864 – Union and Confederate forces skirmish at Medley, West Virginia.

CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – JANUARY

8 th	1821 – Gen. James Longstreet C.S.
9 th	1803 – Christopher Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury C.S.
13 th	1808 – Slamon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury U.S.
16 th	1807 – Rear Admiral Charles Henry Davis, U.S. Navy
19 th	1807 – Gen. Robert E. Lee C.S.

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1/5 Jane Koenig
- 1/5 Yvonne Compart
- 1/7 Terri Rand
- 1/8 Ron Angevine
- 1/13 Leroy Burggraff
- 1/28 Joyce Hinderks

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS



L to R: Dave Greener, Louise Dowling and John Hiebert. Not pictured: Doug Rude and Ester Graney

STEVEN SCHIER'S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

Eleven

CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable

info@tccwrt.com

<https://tccwrt.com/>

Can you contribute to a future newsletter? Writers are wanted to submit Civil War related articles to this newsletter.

Please submit your drafts to Bruce Cooper: earlofbuce@hotmail.com