



# NEWS

## Issue 54: October 2024

### 2024-2025 BOARD

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First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

### WHAT IS THE CWRT CONGRESS AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

BY CAROL VANORNUM

When I joined the TCCWRT in 2009 it wasn't long before I wanted to contribute to the organization in some way. When I asked the current Secretary/Treasurer what I could do to help, he answered, "Funny you should ask, I'm announcing my resignation tonight." I am sure he couldn't believe his luck! And so, I began my journey in 2010.

Being on the board was easy. I mean, other than reviewing financials and looking for a Civil War project to fund, the board didn't do much else. We were just cruising. We had 128 members in 2010, and when I look back at the names today, many of them are gone.

Fast forward to 2017. One of our board members had received a notice from a new organization called the CWRT Congress. They were advertising an upcoming conference in Manassas called *How to Improve Your Round Table*. The board unanimously voted to send me to it.

The CWRT Congress was created in 2016 by five men: Founder Mike Movius of the Puget Sound CWRT, and founding members Dr. John Bamberl of Scottsdale CWRT, Wallace Rueckel of Brunswick CWRT, and Matthew Borowick and Jay Jorgensen, both of the Robert E. Lee CWRT of New Jersey. They recognized that many CWRTs were struggling to survive, let alone

thrive, within their communities. Members were aging out, unable to drive at night, or were dealing with illness. Young people were not joining organizations. So, they decided to do something to help. They formed the CWRT Congress.

The Congress is not a Civil War Round Table. It is a non-profit resource center for Round Tables. Its mission is *to provide new and existing Civil War Round Tables with time-tested tools to help them to remain or become sustainable.*

At the conference, I learned so much! I brought all the information back and we began to give our organization a facelift. We asked member Craig MacIntosh, a now-retired illustrator for the Star Tribune, to redesign our logo. We hired a young professional to redesign our website, using photographs taken by members Nancy and Stuart Harder (disclosure: my sister and brother-in-law). We added PayPal to make registrations easier and have since included payment by Zelle. We created committees to work on membership, marketing, and technical aspects. We began a newsletter, *The News*, edited by board member Bruce Cooper, now in its 54<sup>th</sup> issue. We removed the time-consuming book raffle, tirelessly run by Sally Rubinstein, and replaced it with book sales. We recruited additional board members. And so much more. We now have 158 members, with 10 new ones recently joined.

I had to let the Congress know how much of an impact they had had on our Round Table. I kept them apprised of our progress. And when this group decided they wanted more *working* board members, they called me. I was incredibly honored. Before long, I was a Vice President (that Minnesota work ethic pays off) and am now editor of the quarterly newsletter, [\*The Light Post\*](#). I share best practices and highlight Round Tables around the country which are finding unique ways to thrive. I get to find out firsthand the ways that we can continue to grow and improve. But we cannot sit on our hands.

Just this last summer, the CWRT Congress held workshops to assist regional CWRTs in Virginia and Indiana. Mike Movius, president of the Congress, opened the session by sharing the following story. On June 17, 2024, he received an email from the president of a CWRT in North Carolina which was founded in 1955. They had overcome many hurdles until the pandemic, which left them with no place to meet due to the closure of their longtime venue. Aging membership continued to impact them. They were unsuccessful in joint meetings with another CWRT. No members stepped forward to accept leadership roles. The president had continued his efforts despite having five major surgeries over a three-year period. Despite the best efforts of the members, by the summer of 2021 they “suspended operations and the executive committee began the heartbreaking process to face the inevitable and following our constitution to officially disband.” Mike ended this story by saying, “Founded in 1955. Died in 2024. So that’s why we exist.”

The TCCWRT was also founded in 1955. This coming January, we will celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. We have a lot to be grateful for – a membership that truly cares about our organization. Let’s keep moving forward. If you have suggestions on ways we can improve, grow, and lead the charge of keeping Civil War history alive, please let the board know.



I encourage you to check out the [CWRT Congress's](#) website and sign up for their emails. On their home page, toward the bottom is an email signup button. I’m proud to be a part of both the TCCWRT and the CWRT Congress. Our board members are working hard to make our organization better every day so that you, our members, will continue to enjoy the TCCWRT. Thank you!

## STEVEN SCHIER’S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

On April 26, 1865, General Joseph E. Johnston surrendered nearly 90,000 men of the Army of Tennessee to whom?

**(See the last page for the answer)**

## NEW GUEST INITIATIVE

We would like to start following up with the guests that you bring to the meetings – something we should do as a *best practice*. It will be a simple email, which looks something like:

*Thank you for attending our meeting this last Tuesday. We hope that you enjoyed it and would like to invite you to join our organization. We’d also like your feedback on some things. What did you enjoy most about the meeting? What Civil War subjects interest you the most? How could we have made your experience better?*

So, we’re asking that when you register your guest, please also include their email address so that we can follow up. Beyond this initial thank-you email, we will not make further contact unless requested.

Many thanks.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Left to right: John Phillips, Wallace "Duke" Lunden, Tom Parsons, Bill Sullivan, Tom Wolfe, and President Rod Myers

## THE TCCWRT COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM NEEDS YOU

The board of the Twin Cities Civil War Round Table approved a college scholarship program starting with 2025 high school graduates. The goal of our scholarship is to increase interest and knowledge of American history with special emphasis on Minnesota soldiers and units in the Civil War. Details of the scholarship program will be announced at future meetings and if you have interest in being part of the scholarship committee, please contact, Darryl Sannes, [darryl73@aol.com](mailto:darryl73@aol.com).

## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Read a good Civil War book lately? Why not recommend it to the Round Table. No need to write a full review, just a few sentences with some basics and why you recommend it. It's just that simple. Send your book recommendations to Bruce Cooper ([earlofbruce@Hotmail.com](mailto:earlofbruce@Hotmail.com)).



## From the Dusty Collection #44

### General LeDuc's Steel Body Armor

I spent time with an old friend while participating in the recent Civil War Weekend at the LeDuc Mansion in Hastings. The steel body armor that once belonged to General William LeDuc and is now in the MNHS collections was loaned to the Dakota County Historical Society for exhibit. It sat in my tent and I enjoyed telling visitors the story of this rare and interesting artifact.

At the beginning of the war various patterns of body armor were offered to soldiers by a number of manufacturers. At least three were in New Haven Connecticut where LeDuc's



Atwater pattern armor was made. These devices were never issued to soldiers. Rather, men had to spend their own money with eager sutlers, agents and hucksters who promoted body armor as essential to a soldier's safety. The most common pattern of armor was a simple pair of blue cloth covered breastplates that fastened in the center where a line of brass buttons gave it the appearance of a uniform vest. The G. & D. Cook Company of New Haven produced two models with a heavier pattern intended for cavalry. Their models started at around \$5. Remember that a private soldier at that time earned only \$13 monthly.

The Atwater pattern armor was more complicated and cost at least twice as much as the Cook pattern. The inventor was listed as a "merchant tailor" in the 1860 New Haven City Directory. His stated net worth at the end of the war indicated that he ultimately lost money on his armor venture. And while one of the two oval advertising plates on the armor's shoulders

advertises "Patent Applied For.," no such application was found on the otherwise useful Google Patents search engine. Atwater's armor featured detachable plates that also covered the upper thighs, but of course was more difficult



to conceal under a uniform. General LeDuc probably never actually used this set in combat, if it ever even accompanied him to the field.

Armored vests sold very quickly in 1861 and 1862. One agent reported over 200 sales in



a single day. However, the vests were heavy and hot for soldiers already marching with nearly 50 pounds of gear and weapons. Members of at least one Minnesota regiment, the Fourth Infantry, purchased body armor of some pattern when they first posted south. The St. Paul Daily Press of May 17, 1862, reported their first serious march in Tennessee a week earlier: *Started out in the hottest sort of heat, all dressed in wool, with blankets on the men's backs, and many of them lugging their steel vests....* By the next day *Steel vests began to be hung on upon the trees beside the road, and men began to lag and scatter, and drop down in the shade.* So much for that great idea!

Many soldiers refused to purchase body armor because of the stigma of cowardice. Nineteenth century images of military manhood centered on an unflinching bravery when standing in line under fire. Other soldiers complained that the vests, which came in limited sizes, did not fit comfortably under their uniforms. In some cases, soldiers bought shoddy vests made of tin instead of steel from swindlers in the camps. Although more comfortable to wear, they gave little protection from bullets.

Confederates had more limited opportunity to buy such armor, although a number of crude examples are known. The most famous was worn by Texan Colonel William P. Rogers who led his men in a desperate attempt to take Battery Robinette at Corinth on October 4, 1862. Bullets left dents on Roger's armored vest, but an artillery grapeshot ball penetrated and proved fatal. That vest is today displayed at Corinth. Another punctured vest, pictured here, was recovered from a dead Confederate officer at Gettysburg. But during WWI a test was made on a surviving set of Civil War Atwater Armor by the head of the Metropolitan Museum's Arms and Armor collection. He fired a Colt M1911 45 caliber automatic at the artifact which successfully deflected the heavy jacketed slug.



General LeDuc's body armor was saved for posterity though a bit of serendipity. Back in the early 1980s when the Minnesota Historical Society took over management of the 1862 mansion, museum staff cleared out all of the artifacts and furniture. Everything went to St. Paul for cleaning, cataloging and storage while the then empty house was made ready for construction crews to upgrade utilities and the building envelope inside and out. Shortly before crews were due to arrive with dumpsters and demolition gear, the several historic site managers used the house for their semi-annual business meeting. During a meeting break this writer explored the attic and opened a compartment under a set of built-in window seats. Pulling old papers out of the way, there was the armor tucked back in a corner. Retrieving it and thrilled to show it to the acting head of historic sites, I was told to put it back since the "museum staff had already taken out everything they had interest in for the collections." Later that day, the armor surreptitiously went into my car trunk, and soon to the MNHS museum where one of the curators was just as excited as I was to learn of the rare artifact. And there it is preserved today, with more photos and details on the Society's web site.

## CIVIL WAR BOOKSHELF: BOOK REVIEWS BY TCCWRT MEMBERS

### ***"Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction"***

**Reviewed by Linda Bryan**

*When slaves ran away from Southern plantations, they ran toward a war. Union camps at first represented a safe haven, but, as former slaves quickly learned, life behind Union lines proved to be toxic.*" This concept, underlined in my copy, appears on page 22 in the first chapter of ***Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction*** by Jim Downs (Oxford University Press, 2012).

There are a lot more underlined passages in my copy, as well as margin summaries and subheads on pages I intended to quickly return to. Downs's prose is relentless, heaping sadness upon sadness, moral crime upon moral crime. As I read on, I often thought, "you've already said that!" only to reread and realize that each seeming redundancy was really an advance in the author's delivery of data we've never hear of, data that needs more careful absorption and reflection in order to fill voids within our mental timelines of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Jim Downs began this research by delving into the Medical Division of the Freedmen's Bureau for a PhD thesis. His expanded and reorganized work, published in this academic-style book which is highly readable for non-academics, is well done, but so damn sad. Each paragraph repeats, reinforces, and advances the reader's understanding of the tremendous waste of lives (and resources and opportunities) that was embedded within the highly touted Black Emancipation theme we learn in school. Not every Northern soldier was sympathetic to the freedmen and neither were the doctors, planners, budgeters, donors, and citizens. A large number of emancipated blacks spent time in "contraband camps" that were the embodiment of kindness, *in theory*, but proved to be a curse in many ways. We have heard a lot about the U.S.

Colored Troops, but very little about their wives and children who remained in the camps. The wives were promised financial help through the soldier salaries which never arrived. Camps varied widely in available services, with delivery usually ranging from intermittent to nonexistent. Disease, inadequate food, and the failure of promised social and medical services were much too common. Colored soldiers sometimes survived their tour of duty only to learn that their own families had not.

We often hear about the horrors of food shortages, field surgeries, and war wounds for soldiers, but rarely about freedmen's starvation, clothing inadequacy, troubles keeping families together, and being coerced into work situations that echoed the situation of slaves, but now under angry, surly former slave-owners forced to accept these workers as paid laborers to preserve their Southern crops and harvests. The Civil War brought blacks into Catch-22 situations regarding social and medical services, the same one we struggle with today because of two dueling perspectives: 1) that services for the needy are Christian, noble, moral, and absolutely necessary and therefore worth elaboration and financial expenditure... yet also the opposite stance, 2) that by extending help we encourage free-loading and work-shirking and also waste money. Depending on which officials with which of these perspectives held black emancipated lives within their power, the freedmen experience varied widely. Similarly, 19th century dueling ideas about vaccination caused preventable epidemics that killed many who lived under mandated living conditions.

The many former slaves who experienced the worst treatment from the U.S. government deserve to be remembered as we consider the totality of the Civil War and its aftermath.

## **THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – OCTOBER**

- 12<sup>th</sup> 1864 – Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney dies at the age of 87.
- 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 1864 – Union forces win the Battle of Byram's Ford, Jackson County, Missouri.
- 24<sup>th</sup> 1861 - First trans-continental telegraph line is completed.
- 27<sup>th</sup> 1864 – Battle of Burgess' Mill, Virginia
- 31<sup>st</sup> 1879 – Major General Joseph Hooker dies at the age of 64.

## **CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – OCTOBER**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> 1828 – Alfred Waud – War Artist/Correspondent
- 7<sup>th</sup> 1817 – Major General Bushrod Johnson C.S.



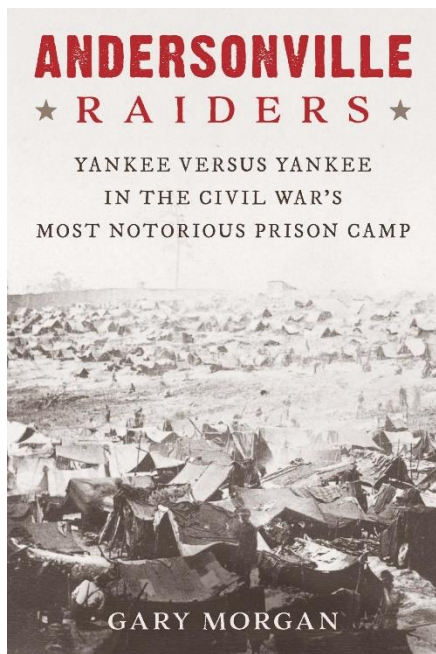
- 12<sup>th</sup> 1818 – Elizabeth Van Lew – Union Spy
- 13<sup>th</sup> 1810 – Commodore James Shedden Palmer U.S. Navy
- 23<sup>rd</sup> 1828 Brig. General Turner Ashby C.S.

## TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 10/1 Steve Schier    | 10/16 Glenn Corliss  |
| 10/6 Carol VanOrnum  | 10/17 Dave Tabert    |
| 10/8 Kathy Sullivan  | 10/17 Clark Griffith |
| 10/9 Brett Johnson   | 10/26 Erin Whitehead |
| 10/9 Thurl Quigley   | 10/28 Bill Sullivan  |
| 10/12 Joe Fitzharris | 10/30 Paul Engstrom  |
| 10/12 Jim Coughlin   |                      |

## OUR OCTOBER MEETING – OCTOBER 15, 2024

### “Andersonville Raiders” – Ms. Gary Morgan



On a sultry evening in July, 1864, six men were marched into the stockade at Andersonville Prison. There, in front of 24,000 witnesses, they were forced to mount a hastily erected gallows and were hanged. They had been tried, convicted and sentenced by their fellow prisoners for robbing and assaulting – and rumor had it, murdering – their fellow prisoners. They were part of a group of rogue prisoners known throughout the prison as “Raiders.”

Who were these six men? Were they actually guilty of the crimes they were accused of? Were they really murderers? Why are the names on some of their graves not found in any military records? What led them to the gallows? Drawing from diaries, military records, the recently discovered transcript of the raiders’ trial and prisoners’ memoirs that were published within five years of the prison’s closing, a detailed, clearer and more accurate picture of the raiders and the events leading up to their hanging finally answers these questions.

An unexpected offer to read a friend’s collection of letters from a Civil War sailor who died at Andersonville changed the course of Gary Morgan’s life. The letters led to the discovery of the sailor’s diary, kept while he was a prisoner of war at Libby, Salisbury, and Andersonville prisons. The sailor, Frederic Augustus James, wrote in his diary daily, and in the nine months that he kept it, he left only one blank – the name of the six men who were hanged at Andersonville as raiders. Because by now she was slightly obsessed by the sailor and his story, Gary went to look up the missing names and was surprised to find that there were seven names recorded, but only six men who were hanged. Sorting that out took two years and multiple trips up and down the east coast, looking at diaries, military records, and prisoner’s letters home, but by the time she was finished, she had it all sorted out and had enough material to write a book about the raiders incident, which she did, publishing *The Andersonville Raiders: Yankee vs Yankee in the Civil War’s Most Notorious Prison* with Stackpole Books in March, 2020.

*Gary Morgan is a History teacher in Western Massachusetts. She has spoken about the raiders all over the country, including three times at the National Prisoner of War Museum at Andersonville, Georgia. Her hobbies include crocheting, volunteering at a cat shelter, and genealogy (or, as her brother calls it, “Collecting dead people”). She is currently working on a second Andersonville related book, called *Unknown Andersonville*, which explores some of the lesser known aspects of the prison.*

## 2024-2025 TCCWRT PROGRAMS

November 19, 2024	“President Lincoln’s Response to the Sioux Uprising” Portrayed by Randy Duncan
December 17, 2024	“Elmer Ellsworth and the U.S. Zouave Cadets” By Doug Dammann
January 21, 2025	“Copperheads vs. President Lincoln 1864” By Stefan Lund, Ph.D.
February 18, 2025	“The Battle of Chickamauga” By David A. Powell
March 18, 2025	“Early Baseball and the Civil War” By Bruce Allardice
April 12 2025	Minnesota Civil War Symposium
May 20, 2025	“The Victor of Gettysburg: General George Gordon Meade” By Jennifer M. Murray, Ph.D.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
FOR A MOST  
SPECIAL OCCASION

PRESIDENT A.  
LINCOLN IS COMING  
TO THE TCCWRT!

TUESDAY, NOV. 19

BRING YOUR  
FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY



**HAPPY 70<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY TCCWRT!**



This January 2025, the Twin Cities Civil War Round Table will turn 70 years old. We need to have a party, pat ourselves on our backs, and remember any history about us that we can dig up. [I'm asking for volunteers to help plan the party.](#) Maybe someone can come up with Civil War treats, such as a cavalry birthday cake, artillery punch, and/or infantry appetizers. Maybe someone can help organize any historical highlights such as where we met, were there special presenters, and does anyone recall any funny bloopers?

For the last 70 years we have venerated the Minnesotans who served in the Civil War. I've created a poster based upon the six Civil War paintings that hang in the Minnesota State Capitol Building. This poster is 18 X 24 inches and framed. You will see four of them at the September meeting. **The cost is free if you donate \$50 to our TCCWRT College Scholarship Fund.** If we could get 40 donations, this would add another \$1000 to the scholarship fund after expenses for the poster. Tentatively, that would result in a \$2000 scholarship which could attract meaningful entry essays. These posters and a sign-up sheet will be on the reception table, and I'll be there to answer any questions. – Bob Svacina



### STEVEN SCHIER'S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

Major General William T. Sherman

### CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable

[info@tccwrt.com](mailto: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](mailto:earlofbuce@hotmail.com)