

Issue 66: October 2025

MEMBER PROFILE OF THE MONTH: DAVID PETERSON



I joined the TCCWRT in approximately 1995 at the invitation of my friend Mark Seaquist. I have long had an interest in history, and so this beginning in my fascination with the Civil War was natural. At the time that I joined, the club was meeting at the Holiday Inn on Normandale Blvd. in Bloomington. Soon after joining, I read the book *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James McPherson after which my interest was thoroughly joined and was launched. This book is possibly the best book I have ever read. It received a Pulitzer Prize. It is brilliantly focused on politics, cultural setting, economic environment, and personalities of the war, not just the logistics of the battles. Masterful, well written, and readable!!

I enjoy the great programs that the club brings in each month. I have also done tours over my lifetime of the battlefields at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, Petersburg and ultimately, Appomattox. I have also been blessed to have attended the recreation of the funeral of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois. I have never seen so many Union Generals in all my life!! Having toured some of these battlefields with the irrepressible late Ed Bearss has been unforgettable.

I grew up in Albert Lea, Minnesota, and practiced law in New Ulm for 20 years (after attending Macalester College and William Mitchell Law School) before my family moved back to the Twin Cities. I now live in Eden Prairie after living in Bloomington for 30 years. I do not have military background in my family. My ancestors came to America after the Civil War, coming from Norway and Sweden in the 1880s.

The people I have met through the Club and the enjoyment of programs and camaraderie as a part of Club activities has provided richness to my life. The understanding of the history of the Civil War provides good context for some of the conflicts that are still present today. May we continue with the growth of our wisdom and enjoyment.

GARY GALLAGHER'S EXCELLENT PROGRAM SHARED BY SISTER CWRT OF FREDERICKSBURG

By Carol VanOrnum

On September 24, 2025, a small group of TCCWRT members were thrilled to view a Zoom presentation by Dr. Gary Gallagher on *The Common Misperceptions of the Civil War in 2025*. This opportunity was generously offered to all of our members from our Sister CWRT of Fredericksburg. The presentation and following Q&A were fascinating, and we appreciated the opportunity to be a part of it. The CWRTF meeting was attended by 97 in-person members. Here are some comments from our own:

“That was excellent. Gary Gallagher and James MacPherson are the two best historians of the Civil War.”

“Enjoyed the program. Slow start, but we made it through, and it was really quite worth the wait. So, there really might be something to this Sisterhood and sharing! Thank you!”

“Great presentation! Gary Gallagher was wonderful. I’m glad we’ve got this connection with the folks in Fredericksburg.”

“Great presentation! Thanks for your hard work in making this available to us.”

STEVEN SCHIER'S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What was the argument in the Dred Scott case?

(See the last page for the answer)

OUR OCTOBER MEETING – OCTOBER 21, 2025

Belmont to Fort Donelson – Curt Fields as General Grant

In November of 1861, Brigadier General U. S. Grant was ordered by Theater commander, John C. Fremont, to make a demonstration on the Mississippi river at Columbus, Kentucky and Belmont, Missouri, on the opposite side of the river. Instead, he chose to attack Belmont for several reasons, none of which he had orders to undertake. Only by the hardest, he won that fight, although some say he lost...

In February of 1863, after three more months of training at Cairo, Illinois, he was, at last, given permission by then Theater commander, Henry W. Halleck to attack Forts Henry on the Tennessee river and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. After Fort Henry fell easily to the navy under Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote, Grant moved on the twelve miles between the rivers to as easily take Fort Donelson. It proved to be a substantially harder nut to crack than was Fort Henry. General Grant will relate those efforts and the frustrations involved with both weather and insubordinate subordinates.



Dr. Fields has portrayed General and President Grant in 22 states as he travels the nation presenting his portrayal of General and President Ulysses S. Grant. He researches and reads extensively about the General and President in order to deliver an accurate persona of the General.

Presentations are in first person, quoting from General Grant's Memoirs, articles, letters and statements the General wrote, interviews he gave and first-person accounts of people who knew the General or witnessed him during events. Being the same height and body style as General Grant, he puts before the audience a convincing, true-to-life image of the man as he really looked.

In the 21st century, Curt is a retired secondary school administrator and college instructor. He also has a background in law-enforcement, having served as Memphis, TN, police officer and hostage negotiator.

OUR 2025 – 2026 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

October 21, 2025	“Belmont to Fort Donelson” – Curt Fields (Zoom)
November 18, 2025	“The Real Horse Soldiers” – Tim Smith
December 16, 2025	“Sherman’s Woodticks: The Remarkable Travels of the Eight Minnesota Infantry During the Civil War” – Paul Hodnefield
January 20, 2026	“Parole of Prisoners of War in the Civil War” – Stefan Lund
February 17, 2026	“Had it Been a Defeat Instead, the Nation Could have Scarcely Lived Over” Battle of Stones River 1862-1863 – Chris Kolakowski
March 17, 2026	“The Union in Peril: Lincoln and the Secession Crisis 1960 – April 1861” – Ian Iverson
April 25, 2026	Annual Symposium
May 19, 2026	“Disunion in the Confederacy or What If Lincoln Lived?” – Brian Jordan

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH OCTOBER BIRTHDAY

10/1 Steve Schier

10/6 Carol VanOrnum

10/9 Brett Johnson

10/9 Thurl Quigley

10/12 Jim Coughlin

10/12 Joe Fitzharris

10/15 Helen Rowland

10/16 Glenn Corliss

10/17 Dave Tabert

10/17 Clark Griffith

10/28 Bill Sullivan

Happy Birthday, Members!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



L to R: Don Priebe, John Metzger, Chris Williams and Patrick Wermer

Reproducing Civil War Hardtack: *How the First Minnesota filled a 50-pound crate in 15 man/hours* Stephen E. Osman

Our very first article for this newsletter dealt with hardtack. Recent discussion by the Symposium planning committee – and consideration of providing hardtack samples to registrants – now prompts this additional piece, the 57th article in our series.

Hardtack was the staff of life for Civil War soldiers. The dried flour biscuits with their familiar holes were a well-known food to generations of sailors, explorers, soldiers and homesteaders. By the Civil War, hard bread manufacture was a huge industry centered largely in the east to supply the maritime market. But even in frontier Traverse, Minnesota, a local bakery boasted sending over 12 tons of hardtack in one steamboat load down to Fort Snelling.¹ Then, as now, hard bread was made in factories, the mixing done by belt driven machinery and the biscuits baked on metal conveyor belts that moved through massive ovens. Over 30 years ago our reenactment unit, the First Minnesota, began filling 50-pound wooden crates with hardtack for our field rations at national events.

Hard Bread should be made of best quality of superfine...flour...[and] should be white, crisp, light, and exhibit a flaky appearance when broken.... In all cases it should be thoroughly cooled and dried before packing. Kiln drying, where practicable, for long voyages, is particularly desirable; but if really and thoroughly dried in the oven, hard bread will keep just as well, and its flavor is not destroyed. To make good hard bread, it is essential to employ steam; hand-work will not do... The dough should be mixed as dry



as possible; this is in fact very essential, and too much stress can not be placed on it. Good stock, dry mixed, and thoroughly baked, (not dried or scalded,) will necessarily give good hard bread. If salt is to be used, it should be mixed with the water used to mix the dough... The thickness of the biscuit is important; it should not be so thick as to prevent proper drying, or so thin as to crumble in transportation.²

Extant examples of Civil War hard bread vary greatly in size and thickness. Apparently, there was no government specification for dimensions. Rather, the bread was purchased and issued by weight. The marching ration for a Federal soldier was one pound of hard bread per day with nine or ten biscuits usually provided, according to John Billings.³ Two original examples in the author's collection were brought back by

¹ The Saint Peter Tribune, April 18, 1863.

² Kilburn, C. L., Notes on Preparing Stores for the United States Army, Cincinnati: W. A. Webb Steam Printer and Stationer, 1863.

³ Billings, John, Hardtack and Coffee, Boston: G. M. Smith, 1888.

Michigan soldiers and measure 3.75 X 4.25 inches and an estimated 4.5 inches square respectively. Both are approximately 5/8 inch thick.

There was likewise no specification for crate size. *The packages should be thoroughly seasoned, (of wood imparting no taste or odor to the bread,) and reasonably tight. The usual method now adopted is to pack 50 pounds net, in basswood boxes, (sides, top and bottom 1/2 inch, ends 5/8 of an inch,) and of dimensions corresponding with the cutters used, and strapped at each end with light iron or wood. The bread should be packed on its edge compactly, so as not to shake.*⁴ The cutters, of course, were metal dies used to cut and punch the biscuits before baking. We scaled our replica boxes from period photographs, and then sized our biscuits to form three layers when tightly packed in the crates. Not surprising, the filled crates weigh in at an *uncomfortable to carry* fifty pounds!

The key to successful hard bread production for our reenactment unit was a few simple pieces of equipment, hardworking volunteers, and partnership with a local pizza restaurant. Our group was incorporated as non-profit, educational corporation in 1974 and so had an obvious advantage in partnering with sympathetic



local business. Documented in-kind support through use of facility and utilities can be attractive to proprietors; a letter of thanks that enumerates the



quantity and value of items produced is important. More essential is that the amateur bakers maintain a respectful, grateful, and businesslike approach in use of a kitchen. This meant baking outside regular business hours and leaving every piece of equipment and floors absolutely spotless. We learned that a crew

of five to seven, working on an early Sunday morning, could produce from 400 to 600 biscuits per session.

Our flour was unbleached and high gluten, purchased through the pizza restaurant in ten-pound sacks. We have also used a similar product from the local grocery. Two bags or twenty pounds of flour, good for 225 biscuits, went into the big mixer along with a pound of softened lard cut into small pieces and a half-cup of salt. Up to six quarts of water were slowly added while the mixer worked to blend the dough just past the crumbly stage. More flour was added if the dough appeared too wet. The heavy metal mixing bowl was then used to carry the dough to a kneading table where it was hand folded and divided into flattened, loaf sized pieces. Each piece then moved to the most essential part of the operation: the dough press. We adjusted the thickness to



⁴ Kilburn, op. cit.

about one-half inch, but remembered to reset it to exactly what was previously set for pizza crusts! The dough made a pass through the rollers and onto a floured worktable.



Some specialized equipment sped the next operations. One of our members built a six-biscuit steel cutter in his workshop, and another constructed our wooden hole punches from quarter inch dowels and plywood. These tools were much faster to use than the old hand method, but the restaurant's own



curved pizza cutters were still handy to trim edges and separate the individual biscuits. Once cut and hole punched, then hand squared, 24 biscuits at a time went onto large aluminum baking trays we bought at a restaurant supply house. Meanwhile the pizza ovens heated up to 450 degrees. Each tray, two per oven, baked for around 30 minutes with progress carefully checked: the color should be just starting to brown, and the crackers hollow sounding when tapped on



the bottom. The trays of baked hard bread were then dumped onto the restaurant's stainless steel pizza preparation tables for the bread to cool.

Packaging took some care. We stacked the crackers on edge and solidly filled each wooden



crate for temporary storage. Grocery bags, carefully cut open, were about the right dimension to line the boxes. The freshly baked hard bread would mold



within weeks because of retained moisture if the boxes were now sealed. So additional drying was essential, and this had to be done at home. Our first sergeant, with approval of his long-suffering wife, took this year's production home to dry in the family oven at 200 degrees for an additional two hours. Then he very carefully repacked the crackers in the boxes, surrounded by brown paper, and nailed on the lids. These crates carried the stencil of an original manufacturer,

again taken from a period photograph. They always raise eyebrows when we burn them in our campfires. The hardtack thus produced is a consistent appearing and economical way to subsist a company in the field, and



lasts a season - if not decades – when correctly dried. Long storage is not advised, unless you aspire to this writer’s experience at a Perryville, Kentucky reenactment. There he noticed that the *second half* of his dawn hardtack breakfast *was moving*. While the scores of lively and authentic weevils were much smaller than assumed, they did prompt an immediate tactical move to half rations. So much for authenticity!



SHARE YOUR CIVIL WAR TRAVEL PHOTOS AND TRAVEL LOGS ON FACEBOOK

Do you have great photos and stories from your Civil War travels? Why not share them on Facebook. The TCCWRT has two pages. A Group (Private) page (**Civil War Round Table-Twin Cities Group**) and a Club page (**Civil War Round Table - Twin Cities**). Members of the Group Page can post their photos or travel logs anytime. Not a member of the Group page? You can go to the Group page and apply for membership. Membership is open to all TCCWRT members. We are currently revamping the Club page (**Civil War Round Table - Twin Cities**). More information on sharing your photos and stories will be coming in future editions of the newsletter.

JOIN OUR TEAM!

We're looking for a TECH person to help the TCCWRT grow to become video/media visible. No experience necessary, but if you've got it - all the better!

Assist with SOUND, CAMERA, VIDEO PREPARATION AND EDITING, and caring for the HARDWARE equipment.

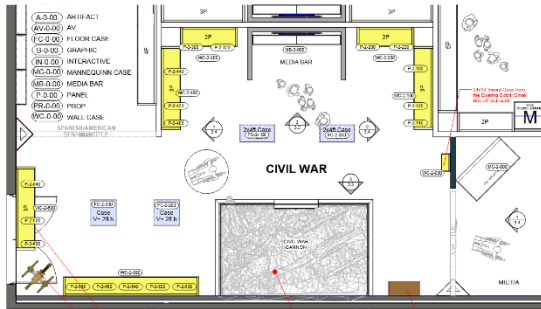
**Contact Bob Svacina
at bob_svacina@msn.com, James Mewborn
at jfmewborn1@gmail.com, or Brett Johnson
at brettbjohn@hotmail.com.**

SPOTLIGHT ON OCTOBER 1861: BATTLE OF BALL'S BLUFF

11 th	Battle of Dumfries, Virginia
12 th	C.S.S. Manassas rams the U.S.S Richmond at the Battle of Head of Passes.
16 th	The Confederate government begin the sale of postage stamps.
21 st	The Battle of Balls Bluff, Virginia
24 th	West Virginia secedes from Virginia

New Minnesota Military and Veteran's Museum Update

Construction is moving on schedule at 60% completion. Gun #3 from the USS Ward is now in the museum's paint shop for restoration, macro artifacts are going into place, and the galleries are being dry walled.



Draft text for the Civil War gallery has been completed. A preliminary list of artifacts and images has been prepared. Some items are from the museum's own collection with others on loan from the Minnesota Historical Society and private collectors.

Round Table member donations are coming in slow but steadily. We have a \$50,000 minimum challenge and now just over \$46,375 pledged of which \$27,925 has already been received from 32 TCCWRT donors. Have you pledged yet?

The challenge runs through 2026, so fully tax-deductible donations span two years. Some of us have used the required minimum distribution from our IRA's to donate, thus reducing our taxable income. Each donor will receive a personal acknowledgement letter from the 501(c)3 museum.



There are three easy ways to donate:

- Visit the museum website and make an electronic donation, noting that you are with the Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable. <https://www.mnvetmuseum.org/new-site-facility>
- Mail a donation to the museum, noting in the check memo “Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable.” MN Military and Veterans Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Highway 115
Little Falls, MN 56345-4173.
- Or hand a check to Stephen Osman at a meeting to be forwarded up to the museum.

Please let Stephen know *in all cases* that you have donated or that you intend to donate in 2025 or 2026 so that he can add you to the tracking documents. foragecaps@comcast.net

Check the museum web site to see a conceptual fly over and through the new building.

<https://www.mnvetmuseum.org/new-site-facility>

Here are two a live camera views of the museum under construction:

<https://www.mnvetmuseum.org/live-cameras>

OUR 2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

President: **Mark Pridgeon**

Vice President: **John-Erich Mantius**

Secretary: **Carol VanOrnum**

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Past President: **Rod Myers**

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Phil Baker, Brett Johnson, James Mewborn, Aidan Ruch, Gary Wittnebel, Lana Blumhoefer, Bruce Cooper and Bob Svacina

Webmaster: **Ron Whitehead**

NEWS Editor: **Bruce Cooper**

STEVEN SCHIER'S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

Dred Scott should be free because he had lived in a free territory.

CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable

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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