

THE CIVIL WAR REPORTER

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MCHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

MCCWRT PRESENTATION

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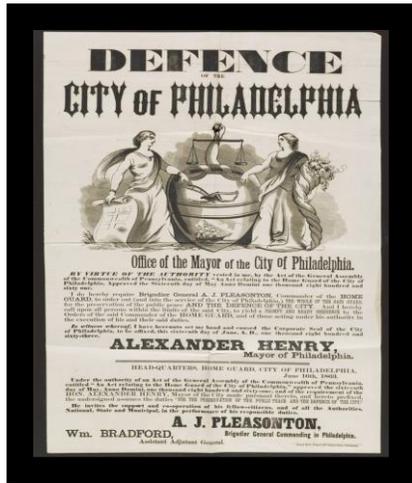
414 WEST JUDD STREET
WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS
TUESDAY

AUGUST 9, 2016
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

THE

PHILADELPHIA HOME GUARD

By Dave Noe



MCCWRT

NEEDS
PRESENTORS
FOR THE
2017

PRESENTATION
SEASON

CONTACT CHARLIE BANKS

McHENRY COUNTY
CIVIL WAR
ROUND TABLE
NOW CELEBRATING
EIGHTEEN YEARS
SERVING THE COMMUNITY
AND MCHENRY COUNTY
SINCE IT'S FOUNDING
AT UNION,
McHENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
SEPTEMBER 1998



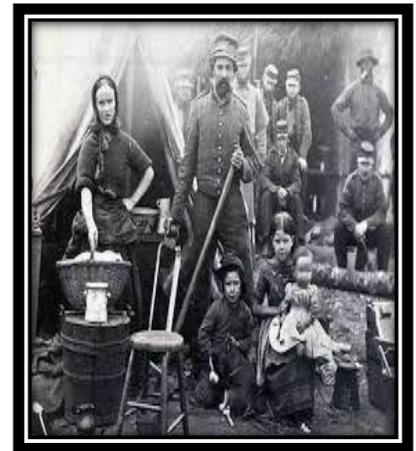
WHAT CAUSED THE CIVIL WAR?

While many still debate the ultimate causes of the Civil War, Pulitzer Prize-winning author James McPherson writes that, "The Civil War started because of uncompromising differences between the free and slave states over the power of the national government to prohibit slavery in the territories that had not yet become states

When Abraham Lincoln won the election in 1860 as the first Republican president on a platform pledging to keep slavery out of the territories, seven slave states in the deep South seceded and formed a new nation, to be known as the Confederate States of America. The Lincoln administration and many of the Northern people refused to recognize any legitimacy of secession.

They feared that it would discredit democracy and create a fatal precedent that would eventually completely fragment the no-longer United States into several small, and squabbling countries."

MCCWRT
DISCUSSION GROUP
AT THE PANERA BREAD COMPANY
6000 NORTHWEST HIGHWAY
CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS
SATURDAY
AUGUST 27, 2016
10:00 A.M. - NOON
WOMEN
AND THE
CIVIL WAR



Civil War women served their countries in various ways, but whatever way they chose, they often left behind some very interesting stories. Some women served in the camps of the armies, doing things for the soldiers, like sewing, fixing, and washing clothes, as well as cooking food. Others formed ladies' aid societies and worked at home, sewing uniforms, canning food, and making just about anything else that might be of use to the "boys" on the front lines. And yet other women chose to aid their cause by serving as nurses for the wounded and sick soldiers.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

KANKAKEE VALLEY CWRT

**AUGUST 2016
NO MEETING**

CHICAGO CWRT

**AUGUST 2016
NO MEETING**

SALT CREEK CWRT

**AUGUST 2016
NO MEETING**

LINCOLN/DAVIS CWRT

**AUGUST 16, 2016
CIVIL WAR
MEDICINE
HOLLYWOOD
STYLE**

By Gordon Damman

SOUTH SUBURBAN CWRT

**AUGUST 25, 2016
GENERAL
GEORGE THOMAS
By Jerry Allen**

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CWRT

**AUGUST, 2016
NO MEETING**

LAKE COUNTY CWRT

**AUGUST, 2016
NO MEETING**

KENOSHA CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

SECOND FRIDAY LUNCHBOX LECTURE SERIES

FRIDAY AUGUST 12, 2016

NOON

FIGHTING DICK ANDERSON LEE'S MOST MALIGNED GENERAL

By Lawrence Hewitt

**SUNDAY AUGUST 14, 2016,
1PM**

THE WISCONSIN NATIONAL GUARD'S 132ND ARMY BAND CONCERT

MCCWRT JULY PRESENTATION BATTERY H FIRST ILLINOIS LIGHT ARTILLERY

Battery H of the First Illinois Light Artillery was composed largely of Scandinavian men from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Two-thirds of the men were foreign born; 59 were of Swedish ancestry, others traced their roots to Norway or Denmark. One of these men was Peter A. Oberg, great-grandfather of our July speaker David Oberg who pointed out that Oberg is actually a military name to distinguish from such common names as Johnson or Swenson.

The elder Oberg came to the United States from Sweden, settling in the Rockford area. Captain Axel Silfversparre, also from Sweden, organized the company. Only 7 men had prior military experience. At Benton Barracks, Missouri Silfversparre trained the men hard.

They learned to use the 20 pound Parrott guns that became the mainstay of the unit. The First Illinois Light Artillery joined the Army of the Tennessee and arrived at Pittsburg Landing (Shiloh) on April 5th. The unit performed well in the ensuing battle using Silfversparre's custom fuses and held the line near the landing at the end of the first day's fighting. Generals Grant and Sherman thanked Battery H personally for their efforts.

From Shiloh, the regiment moved on to Corinth, Ms. Here they participated in the siege of that important rail center.

Desertions were becoming a problem owing to Captain Silfversparre's severe discipline. Court-martialed twice, he was acquitted both times. When finally re-assigned, Francis de Gress took command of the company and the desertions ended.

Battery H also took part in the siege of Vicksburg and then, after its fall, moved on to Jackson and Chattanooga. By early 1864, sixteen of the men were dead of wounds and disease. However, sixty of the original 140 volunteers re-enlisted.

After a furlough, the battery participated in the siege of Atlanta. In fact, they fired the first shot into the city which, unfortunately, killed a young girl. They were also briefly captured by the Confederates, but then quickly re-taken. Thirteen of the men were killed, wounded, or missing. Captain de Gress was promoted to major and Company H is now a focal point of the Atlanta Cyclorama. The company remained with Sherman for the rest of the war. They participated in the March to the Sea and capture of Savannah. From there they moved on to Columbia, S.C. where they fired shells into the capital building. Their last battle was at Bentonville, N.C. In May, 1865 they took part in the Grand Review in Washington D.C. Company H, which had marched 3060 miles, mustered out in June, 1865.

Sadly, 5 members died on their way home aboard the General Lyon when the ship burned. Captain Silfversparre ended up in Libby Prison but escaped and later actually served on a Confederate blockade runner. Major de Gress founded a company manufacturing firearms and died in 1883.

Bob Frenz

WOMEN AND THE CIVIL WAR CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Some of the most outstanding nurses of the Civil War were Clara Barton and Phoebe Pember. There were some Civil War women who wanted more excitement, and therefore became spies for their respective governments. Two of the most famous Civil War spies were Belle Boyd (above left) and Elizabeth Van Lew (above right). Other famous spies include Mary Bowser and Rose O'Neal Greenhow.

Finally, there were some women who needed even more excitement, so they decided to become soldiers. True Story! There were at least 400 women who disguised themselves as men and served in both the Confederate and Union Armies. Among these women can be found the fascinating stories of Jennie Hodgers and Loreta Janeta Velazquez.



In many ways, the coming of the Civil War challenged the ideology of Victorian domesticity that had defined the lives of men and women in the antebellum era.

In the North and in the South, the war forced women into public life in ways they could scarcely have imagined a generation before.

In the years before the Civil War, the lives of American women were shaped by a set of ideals that historians call "the Cult of True Womanhood." As men's work moved away from the home and into shops, offices and factories, the household became a new kind of place: a private, feminized domestic sphere, a "haven in a heartless world." "True women" devoted their lives to creating a clean, comfortable, nurturing home for their husbands and children.

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Did You Know?

More than 400 women disguised themselves as men and fought in the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War.

During the Civil War, American women turned their attention to the world outside the home. Thousands of women in the North and South joined volunteer brigades and signed up to work as nurses. It was the first time in American history that women played a significant role in a war effort. By the end of the war, these experiences had expanded many Americans' definitions of "true womanhood."

With the outbreak of war in 1861, women and men alike eagerly volunteered to fight for the cause. In the Northern states, women organized ladies' aid societies to supply the Union troops with everything they needed, from food (they baked and canned and planted fruit and vegetable gardens for the soldiers) to clothing (they sewed and laundered uniforms, knitted socks and gloves, mended blankets and embroidered quilts and pillowcases) to cash (they organized door-to-door fundraising campaigns, county fairs and performances of all kinds to raise money for medical supplies and other necessities).

But many women wanted to take a more active role in the war effort. Inspired by the work of Florence Nightingale and her fellow nurses in the Crimean War, they tried to find a way to work on the front lines, caring for sick and injured soldiers and keeping the rest of the Union troops healthy and safe. In June 1861, they succeeded: The federal government agreed to create "a preventive hygienic and sanitary service for the benefit of the army" called the United States Sanitary Commission. The Sanitary Commission's primary objective was to combat many preventable diseases and infections by improving conditions (particularly "bad cookery" and bad hygiene) in army camps and hospitals. It also worked to provide relief to sick and wounded soldiers. By war's end, the Sanitary Commission had provided almost \$15 million in supplies—the vast majority of which had been collected by women—for the Union Army. Nearly 20,000 women worked more directly for the Union war effort. Working-class white women and free and enslaved African-American women worked as laundresses, cooks and "matrons," and some 3,000 middle-class white women worked as nurses.

The activist Dorothea Dix, Superintendent of Army Nurses, put out a call for responsible, maternal volunteers who would not distract the troops or behave in unseemly or unfeminine ways: Dix insisted that her nurses be "past 30 years of age, healthy, plain almost to repulsion in dress and devoid of personal attractions." (One of the most famous of these Union nurses was the writer Louisa May Alcott.)

White women in the South threw themselves into the war effort with the same zeal as their Northern counterparts. The Confederacy had less money and fewer resources than did the Union, however, so they did much of their work on their own or through local auxiliaries and relief societies.

They, too, cooked and sewed for their boys. They also provided uniforms, blankets, sandbags and other supplies for entire regiments. They wrote letters to soldiers and worked as untrained nurses in makeshift hospitals. They even cared for wounded soldiers in their homes.

Many Southern women, especially wealthy ones, relied on slaves for everything and had never had to do much work. However, even they were forced by the exigencies of wartime to expand their definitions of "proper" female behavior.

Slave women were, of course, not free to contribute to the Union cause. Moreover, they had never had the luxury of "true womanhood" to begin with: As one historian pointed out, "being a woman never saved a single female slave from hard labor, beatings, rape, family separation, and death."

The Civil War promised freedom, but it also added to these women's burden. In addition to their own plantation and household labor, many slave women had to do the work of their husbands and partners too:

The Confederate Army frequently impressed male slaves, and slave owners fleeing from Union troops often took their valuable male slaves, but not women and children, with them. (Working-class white women had a similar experience: While their husbands, fathers and brothers fought in the Army, they were left to provide for their families on their own.)

During the Civil War, women especially faced a host of new duties and responsibilities. For the most part, these new roles applied the ideals of Victorian domesticity to "useful and patriotic ends." These wartime contributions did help to expand many women's ideas about what their "proper place" should be. Women during the 19th century filled a specific role in society historians called the "cult of domesticity."

Acceptable tasks for women often if not always confined them to the house. Historian Barbara Walters referred to a woman of this time period as the "hostage of the home." From an early age females learned to cook, clean, sew and raise children, domestic duties that gave women a supposed elevated position in society. The cardinal virtues of true women were seen as piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.

In 1866 Frank Moore, author of *Women of the War*, noted, "other wars have furnished here and there a name, which the world delights to repeat in terms of affection or admiration, of some woman who has broken through the rigidity of custom...but our war has furnished hundreds." Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Gave took female soldiers quite seriously in their multivolume *History of Woman Suffrage*, published in 1881. They showed that women could serve valiantly in the army; therefore an inability to serve in the army was not grounds to prohibit women's suffrage. At a time when society saw women soldiers as either unbalanced lesbians or erotic patriots who wanted to be Joan of Arc, some women did espouse a passion, on occasion described as "unadulterated patriotism," for their country, not unlike many men who served beside them. However most women soldiers wanted to accompany family members into battle instead of enduring the separation that often came with prolonged warfare. They included wives who, serving with their husbands, became pregnant while in ranks. One woman sergeant fought at the [December 1862] Battle of Stone's River while she was five months pregnant—without anyone learning she was a woman. Another woman soldier was not discovered until she gave birth on January 19, 1864. Not all women had to be soldiers to experience this new independence. Women on the home front ran businesses, joined national organizations and supported the cause through any means possible. Many were excited to leave behind the strict restrictions of society and do something for the cause. For them as for Little Women author Louisa May Alcott, who served as a nurse, there was an urge to contribute.

The women's rights movement had been gathering a following shortly before the war, and it resumed after the war's conclusion

The image of female empowerment in wartime brought the movement new energy. Women were now getting recognition, as when President Andrew Johnson wrote a letter praising Sarah Thompson, who served as a Union spy, calling her a woman of the "highest respectability."

The war had given women a chance to control their own lives, earning their own money and managing their own finances. Some women were no longer complacently filling the roles they had filled before the war.

In 1881 Scribner's Monthly Magazine published an article by a woman who wrote: "I want—I don't know what I want; I'm tired of everything; I'd like to be a queen or something—no, a bearded king.... We girls are such poor creatures slaves to circumstance and fate. Denied the warrior's glory and the conqueror's splendid state."

Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross, said that the Civil War caused "fifty years in the advance of the normal position" of women.

History may differ in its interpretation of the motives or mental state of the women who chose to serve, but their service supported not only their cause, but also the women's rights movement.



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www.mchenrycivilwar.com

DONALD PURN WEB MASTER

**THE CIVIL WAR REPORTER
McHENRY COUNTY
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
NEWSLETTER
KEITH FISHER EDITOR**