



General Orders

Harrington's Brigade

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NOVEMBER, 2020 MEETING
Thursday, November 19, 2020, 7:00 pm

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
(please refer to article on page 3 of
September's newsletter for detailed
information regarding using Zoom)

The HCWRT Presents Brian Steel Wills Speaking on:

“Inglorious Passages: Noncombat Deaths in the American Civil War”

All wars exact terrible tolls on their participants. The American Civil War proved exceptionally brutal. Yet, so many of those who perished during the hostilities, soldiers and civilians alike, did so from effects that occurred beyond the deliberate fire of the opposing forces. The letters, diaries, journals and newspaper accounts from individuals on both sides recorded the results of such perils, often in poignant and dramatic fashion, as disease and accident added to the ever-lengthening lists of the dead.

Cold statistics, when they existed, have tended to shift away from the intensely personal aspects of these fatalities. However, the losses were just as real to the family members who would not see loved ones returning home. Indeed, some comrades feared that the focus on memorializing those who fell in combat would obscure the “inglorious passages” of so many more of those who also paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service to their respective causes.

Every form of mortal danger added to the staggering totals, ranging from murder, suicide,

“friendly fire,” drowning, lightning strikes and sunstroke to railroad, steamboat and other transportation accidents and mishaps. Individuals were not immune to death from preventable blunders and missteps or equipment failures. For civilians the impacts could be just as devastating, from unintended battlefield incidents to factory explosions and other accidents occurring in the course of their roles in support of the military operations. Taken together, the undoubted real cost of the conflict far surpasses the traditional numbers for mortality in the cataclysm that the Civil War represented.



Brian Steel Wills

About Brian Steel Wills

Brian Steel Wills is the Director of the Center for the Study of the Civil War Era and Professor of History at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Ga. Dr. Wills is a member of the Georgia Civil War Commission and past President of the Atlanta Civil War Round Table. He is also the author of numerous works relating to the American Civil War. His latest publication *Inglorious Passages: Noncombat Deaths in the American Civil War* (Kansas, 2017) received the 2018 Richard Barksdale Harwell Award for the best book on a Civil War topic for the year 2017.

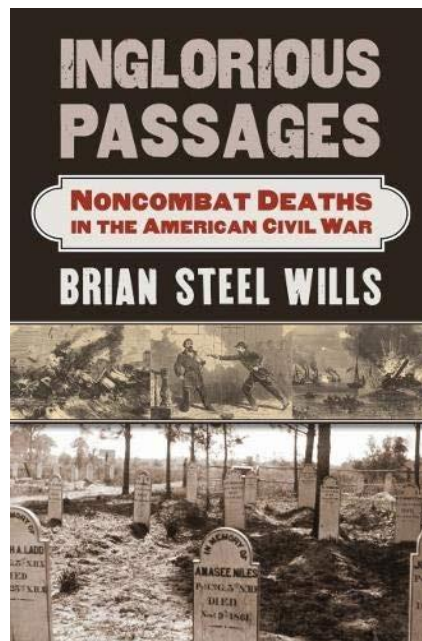
This award is presented by the Atlanta Civil War Round Table.

His biography of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, *A Battle from the Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (HarperCollins) is currently in reprint as *The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest* (Kansas). This work was chosen as both a History Book Club selection and a Book of the Month Club selection.

His other titles include *The River was Dyed with Blood: Nathan Bedford Forrest and Fort Pillow* (Oklahoma, 2014); *Confederate General William Dorsey Pender: The Hope of Glory* (Louisiana State University, 2013); *George Henry Thomas: As True as Steel* (Kansas, 2012), which was the recipient of the 2013 Harwell Award; *Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); *The War Hits Home: The Civil War in Southeastern Virginia* (Virginia, 2001) and an updated edition of the James I. "Bud" Robertson, Jr., *Civil War Sites in Virginia* (Virginia, 2011).

In 2000, Dr. Wills received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Commonwealth of Virginia, one of eleven recipients from all faculty members at public and private institutions across the state.

Brian Wills is one of our most popular speakers. He has appeared before our Round Table several times in recent years, and hosted our 2015 Fall Field Trip of the Atlanta campaign. His talks are always a treat – powerful, interesting, and witty.



2020 VANDIVER AWARD PRESENTATION TO BRIAN STEEL WILLS

The Houston Civil War Round Table is honored that the 2020 Frank E. Vandiver Award of Merit will be presented to Brian Steel Wills at the November 19, 2020 meeting. Since 1982, the HCWRT has presented its highly respected Vandiver Award annually in recognition of an individual or organization making a substantial contribution to the preservation of our Civil War heritage.

Dr. Wills epitomizes all of the criteria, and then some: historian, professor/teacher, preservationist, author, speaker, tour guide, and field trip leader! His acceptance talk at our November meeting will be "*Inglorious Passages.*"

The Vandiver Award is named for the late Civil War historian and former president of Texas A&M University, the University of North Texas, and Rice University, who was also one of the first members of the HCWRT. Past recipients include a "who's who" of Civil War notables.

Lynda Crist, a long-time member of HCWRT and editor of the Jefferson Davis papers at Rice University, was the first recipient in 1982. Recipients include the late Ed Bearss, Frank O'Reilly, Don Troiani, Ed Cotham, William C.

“Jack” Davis, Richard Sommers, John Nau, James “Bud” Robertson, Gordon Rhea, James McPherson, Eric Jacobson, Dave Roth, and A. Wilson Greene.

The 2020 Vandiver Award Committee consisted of Gene Boisabuin (chair), Keith Altavilla, Gary Chandler, Jim Godlove, and John Stevens.



COMMANDER'S CORNER

By Mike Harrington

At our October meeting, the Houston Civil War Round Table met remotely via Zoom for the second time in the 65-year history of our organization. If you were with us at both of those meetings, you know that our October meeting went off much more smoothly than our first Zoom meeting, largely as a result of my stepping aside as the host in favor of our technologically adept Programs Chair, Keith Altavilla. While virtual meetings will never replace in-person get togethers over drinks and dinner, they do give our membership the opportunity to learn from some of the most outstanding of today's Civil War historians.

Speaking of outstanding contemporary historians, our next meeting in November promises to be special. Brian Wills' combination of scholarly erudition and downhome humor makes him one of my favorite speakers. Our members who have had the pleasure of hearing one of his talks will agree with me, I'm confident.

Last month, at the invitation of the publisher of the *Civil War News*, I drew up a list of my top ten all-time favorite Civil War books and wrote a brief account of my rationale for choosing each

of them. Other members of the book review staff of the *Civil War News* did likewise, and the results appear in the November issue of the magazine, which was recently published. My purpose in mentioning this exercise is not to promote the *Civil War News*, which needs no endorsement from me. Instead, I want to encourage each of our members to draw up a similar list, even if it's only done mentally and not reduced to paper. What are your five or ten favorite Civil War books? And why? If you're like me, you'll find yourself scratching your head before you complete your list, if only because there are so many good Civil War books to choose from. In the process of settling on your favorites, you may just learn something about your own tastes, your individual preferences, that you had not realized. Going forward, you can apply that same learning to narrowing down your reading list to the few books in the virtual sea of Civil War titles most likely to interest you.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Walker Agnew

The HCWRT is blessed to have top quality speakers each month. There is always so much to be learned from each speaker's presentation. Even with the current Zoom arrangement, we are still managing to have great events. I believe this is a key reason so many of us are members; and why we should keep working to invite others also interested in knowing more. So, consider asking a friend to join you for the next meeting. A personal invitation is still the best way to get the word out. Let me know of any ideas you may have for the membership committee. My email address is walkeragnew@comcast.net.

If you have not paid your dues yet, please send in to Barry Brueggeman (the mailing address can be found on the return address page in this newsletter).



2020 - 2021 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

- Nov. 19, 2020 Brian Steel Wills: *"Inglorious Passages: Noncombat Deaths in the American Civil War"* (2020 Vandiver Award Recipient - rescheduled from May 21, 2020)
- Dec. 10, 2020 Stephen Davis: *"Hood's Great Attack East of Atlanta, July 22, 1864 (Or, Why Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville Succeeded and Hood's Did Not)"*
- Jan. 21, 2021 Danny Sessums: *"Arkansas Post"*
- Feb. 18, 2021 Lorien Foote: *"The Dogs of War"* (rescheduled from April 16, 2020)
- Mar. 18, 2021 Timothy B. Smith: *"The Real Horse Soldiers: Benjamin Grierson's Epic 1863 Civil War Raid Through Mississippi"*
- Apr. 15, 2021 Stephen Kinnaman: *"Merrimack: Biography of a Steam Frigate"* (rescheduled from March 19, 2020)
- May 20, 2021 Don Frazier: *"Tempest Over Texas"*

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