

THE CANISTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table



Serving the Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana since 1956

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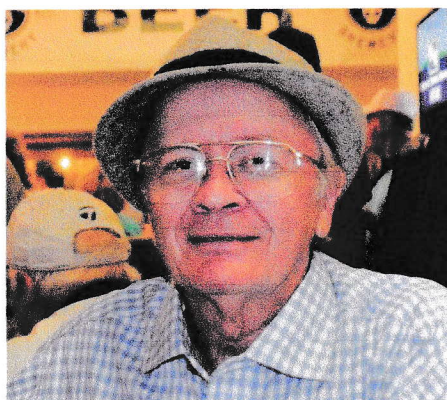
March 19, 2026 Program

German Heritage in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky

Presented by

Don Heinrich Tolzmann

We welcome Dr. Don Heinrich Tolzmann back to the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table on March 19 when he will speak about the German Heritage in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. Dr. Tolzmann was our speaker in January 2025 when he spoke about "Cincinnati's Germans in the Civil War."



Dr. Tolzmann holds a master's degree from the University of Kentucky and a Ph.D. from U.C. He is the author and editor of numerous books on German-American history and culture. He has received many awards, including the National Award of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz) of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Ohioana Humanities Book Award, the Distinguished German - American of the Year Award, the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Society for German-American Studies, and is listed in Who's Who in America. He served as Curator of the German-Americana Collection and Director of German-American Studies at the University of Cincinnati and is well known as "Mr. German-Americana."

*Submitted by Dan Bauer,
Program Chair*

Have you renewed your CCWRT membership yet?

If you have not renewed your 2026 Round Table dues yet, could you print out the 2026 Annual Membership Renewal form found on the last page of this newsletter, fill it out and send it to the CCWRT treasurer with your payment in one of ways listed on the form.
Thank you.

President's Letter

Thanks to Eric Gutttag for his presentation on the Underground Railroad. It was quite informative, entertaining, and, among other things, highlighted Cincinnati-area figures involved in helping escaped slaves make their way to Canada, which meant safety from being captured by slavecatchers.

Eric showed a picture of the monument in Spring Grove Cemetery at the grave of Levi Coffin, who was referred to as the "President of



the Underground Railroad." Coffin was born in North Carolina in 1789, but his Quaker family moved to Indiana in 1826 because they opposed slavery and to avoid the increasing persecution of Quakers because

of that religion's opposition to slavery. He moved to Cincinnati in 1847, where he operated a warehouse that sold only free labor goods and in the next decade he assisted hundreds of runaway slaves in their journeys northward.

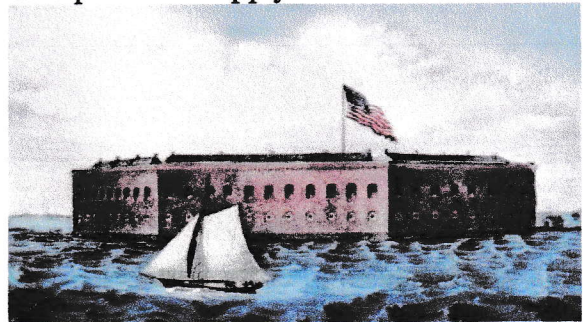
Since Coffin is buried in Spring Grove Cemetery, that got me thinking of the other Civil War figures interred there.

There are 41 Civil War generals and nearly 1,000 soldiers at Spring Grove. They include Joseph Hooker, who was the commanding general of the Army of the Potomac during the Chancellorsville campaign; four members of the "Fighting McCook" family – 15 McCook family members served in the war, six attained general officer rank, and four of those are at Spring Grove; William Lytle, killed at Chickamauga; Jacob Cox, a very competent "political" general and later Governor of Ohio; and Godfrey Weitzel, who, as a corps commander, received the surrender of the City

of Richmond on April 3, 1865. Salmon Chase, President Lincoln's first Treasury Secretary and later Chief Justice of the United States is there. Philip Noland Lockett is the only former Confederate general buried at Spring Grove. He served in the Trans-Mississippi theater, went to Mexico in May 1865 rather than surrender to federal forces, returned to the United States later that year but was incarcerated for several months during which time his health deteriorated, and then moved to Cincinnati to be cared for by relatives until his death in 1869. I highly recommend a tour of the Civil War sites at Spring Grove Cemetery.

Notable Civil War events in March:

- March 29, 1861 – (OK, I know the war had not yet started.) Having decided not to give up Fort Sumter, President Lincoln decided on a plan to resupply the installation with



provisions only and not send any additional troops or ammunition. A few days later the federal government notified South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens that only sustenance supplies would be delivered. In doing so, Lincoln forced the Confederacy to decide whether to allow the fort to remain in union hands for an indefinite period or fire the first shots of the war. Confederate President Jefferson Davis refused to permit resupply and ordered the local commander, General P.G.T. Beauregard, to demand Fort Sumter's surrender and initiate hostilities if surrender was refused. The first shots were fired on April 12, 1861.

- March 7 – 8, 1862 – the Battle of Pea Ridge. This engagement, sometimes referred to as the Battle of Elkhorn Tavern, was a decisive Union victory in northwestern Arkansas that secured the State of Missouri for the

union. On March 6, Confederate Major General Earl Van Dorn (shown in picture), commanding the 16,000-man Army of the West, moved to attack the Union position near Pea Ridge. Learning of Van Dorn's approach,

Union Brigadier General Samuel Curtis and his 10,000-man

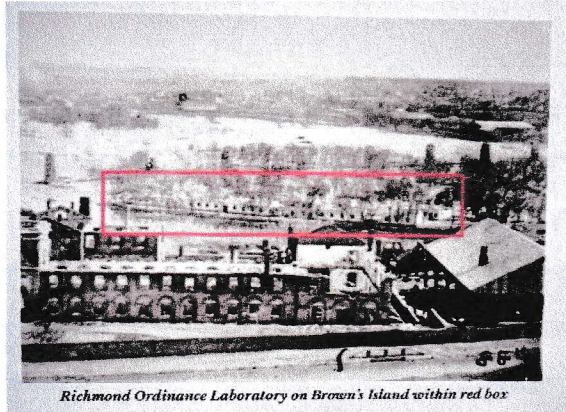
Army of the Southwest

marched to meet the rebel

advance. The forces met three miles south of the Missouri state line. Two Confederate brigadier generals, Ben McCulloch and James McIntosh, were killed on the first day, halting the rebel momentum. Curtis consolidated his forces during the night and counterattacked the next morning, successfully employing his superior artillery. Running short of ammunition, Van Dorn abandoned the battlefield. Following this Confederate defeat, Union forces controlled Missouri for the next two years.



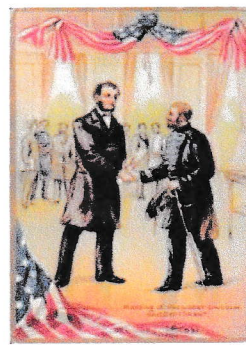
- March 13, 1863 – Explosion at the Confederate States Laboratory on Brown's Island near Richmond, Virginia. Due to the carelessness of a worker, who accidentally



detonated a device on which she was working, a massive explosion killed 69 workers, of whom 62 were women. The facility manufactured cartridges, fuses, and caps. The fact that such a high proportion of the casualties were women was the direct

result of the Confederacy's response to wartime needs: to make men available for military service, women not only took the place of men on farms but also in industrial settings. The place is now a six-acre pedestrian-only park situated on the James River near the Tredegar Iron Works site, which is shown in the foreground of the photo.

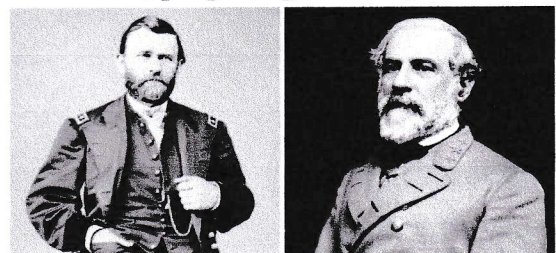
- March 8, 1864 – U.S. Grant arrived in Washington, D.C. Obeying President Lincoln's direction for him to come to the nation's capital to receive his commission as Lieutenant General, Grant and his son,



Frederick Dent Grant, age 13, arrived in the city and checked into the Willard Hotel, where the desk clerk did not recognize Grant and originally assigned him to a nondescript room (which changed after Grant's identity became known). Later that

evening, Grant attended a reception at the White House, where he and President Lincoln met for the first time. The next day Grant received his promotion and the assignment to lead the Union's armies.

- March 2, 1865 – General Robert E. Lee, in his capacity as General in Chief of Confederate forces, sent a message through the lines around Petersburg to Lt. General U.S. Grant, proposing that they meet in a



“military convention” to try to reach “a satisfactory adjustment of the present difficulties,” i.e., to reach an agreement settling differences between the Confederacy and the United States. Lee's

proposal was the result of a conversation between Confederate Lt. General James Longstreet and Union Maj. General Edward Ord (they met to discuss prisoner exchanges) in which Ord reportedly said Grant would respond favorably to such a suggestion. Grant, however, refused Lee's overture, saying he had no authority to become involved in a military convention. He did so because participating in a military convention would be an implicit recognition of the Confederate army as a sovereign military force, which the Union refused to do for the entire conflict.

Please join us on March 19. Don Heinrich Tolzmann will make a return visit to our Round Table and speak about German Heritage in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky and its relationship to the Civil War. His prior presentation to us was interesting and informative, and this talk promises to be the same.

Submitted by Tom Robisch, President

Future Speakers for Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

April 16, 2026 **Discovering Ormsby Mitchel**, Phil Shoemaker

May 21, 2026 **Union and Confederate Calvary Operations in the Gettysburg Campaign**, Dr. Peter Mansoor

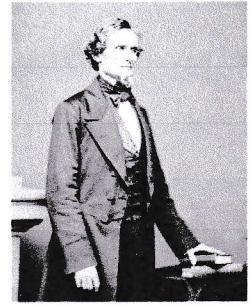
Cincinnati CWRT Meeting Details

Location	Raffel's Evendale Banquet Center, 10160 Reading Rd., Evendale, OH 45241
Date	Thursday, March 19, 2026
Time	5:30 Sign-in and Social 6:30 Buffet Dinner 7:15 Business Meeting 7:30 Speaker
Time Reservations	You MUST make a reservation if you would like Dinner . Please Email reservations to: CinCWRTreservations@gmail.com Or Call, or text Jeff Mikutis, Vice President: 937-623-4879 Reservation Deadline Sunday, March 15, 2026
Cost	Dinner, meeting and speaker – \$30.00 Meeting and speaker only – \$7.00 . No reservations are required.
Cancellations	We are charged for the number of dinners called in to Raffel's after the deadline. You will be charged if you do not cancel by the reservation deadline, unless a late-comer can be substituted.

Quiz

1. In what Kentucky community was Abraham Lincoln born?
2. In August of 1863, Lincoln was asked by Union supporters to address a rally in Springfield, IL to be held on September 3rd. In response he wrote a letter to a longtime lawyer-friend and former mayor of Springfield and asked him to read it to the mass gathering. The letter was accompanied by a note: "I cannot leave here now. Herewith is a letter instead. You are one of the best public readers. I have but one suggestion. Read it very slowly." The letter, in which Lincoln described himself as a servant of the people, was a spirited defense of the Emancipation Proclamation. In the letter, Lincoln addressed each objection to the Proclamation that had been raised by persons who otherwise supported the Union. The letter reads as if the writer were delivering a closing argument to a jury, methodically dismantling each of his opposing counsel's arguments. Who was Lincoln's lawyer-friend to whom he sent the letter to be read to the crowd?
3. Underground Railroad routes often terminated in Canada, where escaping slaves found freedom because slavery had been abolished in the British colonies. What other country was a primary destination on the Underground Railroad?

By February 19, 1861, Jefferson Davis had appointed the following men to cabinet positions in the Provisional Confederate government. Name the cabinet position to which each had been appointed.



4. Judah Benjamin
5. Stephen Mallory
6. Christopher Memminger
7. John Reagan
8. Robert Toombs
9. Leroy Walker

February Meeting

Twenty-nine members and guests attended the February 19th meeting. Our dues-paying membership is now up to 45. If you have not renewed yet, please respond to the reminder email from CinCWRReservations@gmail.com sent February 14th or to the renewal form on the very last page of this edition of the *Canister*.

The speaker for the February meeting was our own Eric Gutttag. His presentation was titled



Freedom: The Underground Railroad

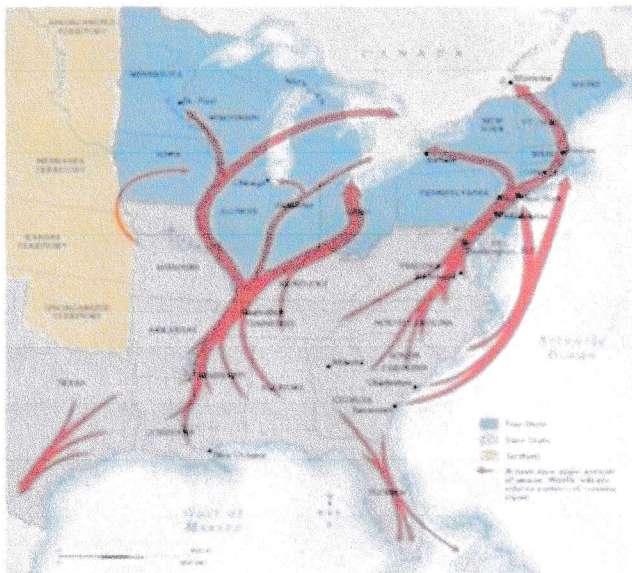
Cooperative gameplay

"Conducting Slaves to Freedom – The Underground Railroad." Eric's talk was unique in that he based it on *Freedom – The Underground Railroad*, a board game published by Academy Games and designed to teach junior-high school and older students about the Underground Railroad. We did not play the game; Eric just used some game pieces as props; but there was a lot of audience

participation. If you ask “Are you smarter than a fifth grader?” well, most of us made the grade.

Escaping slaves were not safe upon reaching a free state. There was still a Federal Fugitive Slave law that overrode state laws outlawing slavery. They were not safe from slave catchers until they reached Canada. The Underground Railroad was not a national organization but comprised a loose collection of separate local and regional organizations that interacted with each other. The means of moving the escapees included wagons, ferries, ships, and trains. Particularly interesting was the fact that many railroads actively supported the Underground Railroad, some as a matter of policy, it being the case that many railroad executives were abolitionists.

There were essentially three sets of Underground Railroad routes to Canada. One for slaves escaping along the eastern seaboard from the adjacent slave states of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware went through the free



states of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and New England. A central route for those escaping from Kentucky and northwestern Virginia went through Ohio, eastern Indiana, and Michigan. And a western route for those escaping from Missouri and western Kentucky went through western Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. Destinations in Canada West (Ontario) included St. Catharines, Hamilton, and York

(Toronto) in the east; Amherstberg, Chatham, Colchester, and Sandwich (Windsor) in the west; and London in between.

The participants in the Underground Railroad had various roles: Shepherds initiated contact with slaves, encouraged them to escape, coordinated the activities of their local stations, made the necessary contacts, and plotted the escape route. Conductors would guide them from station (a safehouse or other hideout) to station. Stationmasters were the proprietors of the safehouses. Stockholders, who provided the financial resources to fund the journey, were mostly wealthy, white abolitionists in the North. Another critical role was that of the Preachers: clergymen and others who acted as leaders and speakers, eliciting moral and monetary support for the cause.

Churches played an important part. Slaveholders often allowed their slaves to attend their own church services out of earshot of white overseers. This gave them a chance to share information with each other about escaping via the Underground Railroad. In the early years the staunchly abolitionist Friends (Quakers) played a prominent role assisting escaped slaves. Their distinctive speech and clothing signaled to fugitive slaves that these were white people who would willingly aid them in their journey.

The capture of fugitive slaves in free states was often met with force. Abolitionist Vigilance



Committees in northern cities were not above using violence to free captured fugitives if normal legal channels failed. Eric told of a mob storming the Boston jail to free a fugitive slave. And in Oberlin, Ohio, a group surrounded the hotel where a federal marshal had an escaped slave named Price in custody, freed him, and sent him on his way to freedom in Canada. When a federal grand jury indicted 37 members of the group who freed the prisoner, Ohio authorities arrested the U.S. Marshal and deputies who had captured and detained Price.

The Compromise of 1850 amended the Fugitive Slave Act by increasing the penalties for violation of the law. It also barred testimony by suspected fugitive slaves. These changes inflamed anti-slavery sentiments in the North, and did nothing to suppress the activities of the Underground Railroad. After war came, the activities of the Underground Railroad were supplanted by military action. In 1864 the Fugitive Slave Act was repealed. After the war, many of the formerly enslaved persons who had fled to Canada returned to the United States. Although there are no records, it is believed that the Underground Railroad helped upwards of 150,000 enslaved persons gain their freedom. It was a small but significant portion of the 4 million persons who were enslaved in the United States in the 19th century.

Book Review

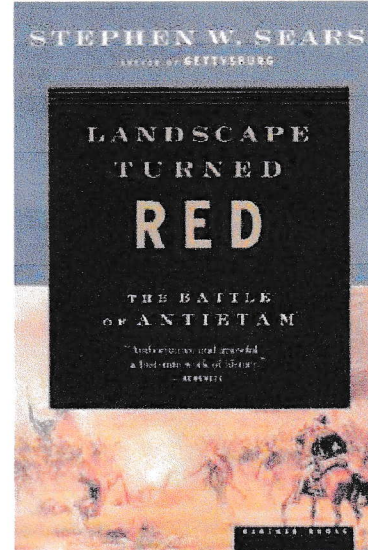
Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam

By Stephen R. Sears, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983, 431 pages, paperback/\$27.99

Antietam is often referred to by Civil War scholars as one of the early turning points in the American Civil War. Almost by happenstance in the fall of 1862, this battle was fought near a meandering stream close to the small Maryland town of Sharpsburg not

far from Washington, DC. That battle was fought between Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and McClellan's much larger Army of the Potomac.

Stephen Sears is truly one of the great historians in writing on the American Civil



War. That includes being one of George McClellan's chief biographers. And in a *Landscape Turned Red* (which I have read at least a couple times), he again does a masterful job of telling the story of this one-day

fight, certainly one of the bloodiest battles up to that time.

On September 17, 1862, a massive battle erupted on that Maryland landscape. It cascaded progressively from the north in the morning to the south in the afternoon over rolling terrain dotted with copses of trees, various farms and a sunken road. It added yet another Cornfield and Bloody Lane to the American Civil War lexicon.

During this battle, McClellan squandered a significant Union advantage in numbers by putting his forces in piecemeal. Even so, Lee's greatly outnumbered army was in serious danger of being trapped on the wrong side of the Potomac River. Only a heroic forced march by A. P. Hill's division from Harper's Ferry, which arrived just in time, prevented the surging Union forces that had crossed Antietam Creek in the late afternoon (at the bridge later to be named for Ambrose Burnside) from reaching Sharpsburg and cutting off the Army of Northern Virginia from its line of retreat across the Potomac River at Boteler's Ford.

In my opinion, *Landscape Turned Red* is the seminal book on this early and pivotal battle in the American Civil War. In writing this book, Sears does a masterful job of not only explaining the specifics of this battle in a highly readable form, but in also putting it in the context of the larger story of America's most costly war. If you want to read the "go to book" on the battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg), Sears' tome is the one you need in your Civil War library!

*Submitted by Eric Guttag,
Publicity & Membership*



American Abolitionist leader Harriet Tubman (far left) stands with family and formerly enslaved people whose escape she assisted.

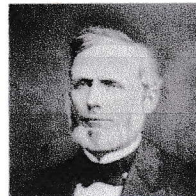
Wanna Know

On March 4, 2026, local National Public Radio news station, WVXU – 91.7, published a Q&A article in their "OKI Wanna Know" section answering the question "When did the first people escaping slavery arrive in Cincinnati?" You can read/hear Reporter Bill Rinehart's response by following the link to the story below.

[When did the first people escaping slavery arrive in Cincinnati? | WVXU](#)

Quiz Answers

1. Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, on Sinking Spring Farm, just under three miles from the village of Hodgenville, Hardin County, Kentucky.
2. James C. Conkling. Conkling was married to Mary Todd Lincoln's close friend, Mercy Levering. He was a Member of the Illinois House of Representatives 1850-52, and one of four Sangamon County delegates, including Lincoln, to the 1856 Bloomington Convention, which established the Illinois Republican Party.
3. Mexico, which had officially abolished slavery in 1837, fueling the southern Underground Railroad. It was less organized than the northern route, relying heavily on the support of the community as well as individual knowledge of the terrain. The Mexican government refused to return the escapees despite the American slave owners' repeated attempts to negotiate extradition treaties.
4. Judah Benjamin, Attorney General.
5. Stephen Mallory, Secretary of the Navy.
6. Christopher Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury.
7. John Reagan, Postmaster General.
8. Robert Toombs, Secretary of State.
9. Leroy Walker, Secretary of War.



The Quiz, Quiz Answers, and the February Meeting summary, were all written by Dave Stockdale, Treasurer

Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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*The **CANISTER** is regularly published eight times per year, in January, February, March, April, May, September, October, and November; sometimes more often, if we have a lot to say to our members.*



2026 Membership Renewal

Please fill-in all the contact information below. Addresses and phone numbers change. We want to make sure our information is up to date. After completing the form, please return it to the Treasurer along with your payment for the membership level you have chosen. You may:

1. Print the form and bring it with your payment (cash, check, or credit card) to the next meeting.
2. Print the form and mail it with your check to the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table, 8067 Paddington Ln., Cincinnati, OH 45249-1534.
3. Email the form with your credit card information (name, account number, expiration date, and CVV/security code) to cincwrtreservations@gmail.com. A credit card processing fee in the amount charged to the Round Table will be added. Your credit card information will not be saved.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

☐ Land Line Phone: _____ ☐ Cell Phone: _____

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☐ Single Regular Membership - \$50

☐ Couple Regular Membership - \$65

☐ Single Sustaining Membership - \$65

☐ Couple Sustaining Membership - \$100

Couples: second person's Name: _____

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The Round Table is a 501(C)(3) charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Code. Sustaining membership fees in excess of the regular membership fees are a tax-deductible donation.