

## Twin Cities Civil War Round Table

The Twin Cities Civil War Round Table was first organized in January of 1955. It was originally called the Minneapolis-St. Paul CWRT and was held at the Nicollet Hotel (now demolished). Founding fathers were Wallace Schultz, Kenneth Carley, and William E. Lahr, Jr. From there, they moved to the Normandy Inn's Barrister's Club Room, where the men-only group smoked cigars and discussed aspects of the Civil War. Other Charter Members were William Rowe, Ray Horton, Roger Johnson and Albert Schroeder.

Ken Carley, who worked for the Star Tribune newspaper, and later, the author of **Minnesota in the Civil War: An Illustrated History**, took out a full-page ad indicating that a Civil War discussion group was getting started. From that ad, attendance at the CWRT increased substantially. Once a year, women were invited to the Christmas party. Eventually, they were invited to join the organization. Membership now averages around 145 members and is the largest of the 10 Minnesota Round Tables.

Other meeting locations over the years were Lee's Broiler (then Metropolitan Hotel), the Normandy Hotel, the Holiday Inn, the Officers' Club at Fort Snelling, and others. Its current meetings are held at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Bloomington, MN.

For many years, the September meeting was held at the St. John's University in Collegeville, MN and was always considered the highlight of the program year. The past several years, the TCCWRT has held an annual Civil War Symposium in April at Historic Fort Snelling where Minnesota's Civil War regiments mustered in.

Notable speakers in the past have been: William B. Hesseltine, Bell I. Wiley, T. Harry Williams, James I. Robertson, Edward C. Bearss, E. B. Long, Virgil Carrington Jones, John C. Pemberton III, Thomas L. Connelly, Otto Eischenschiml, Stephen Ambrose, and Al Stone.

The following is a history by William Roe:

On the night of December 3, 1940, 16 men gathered for dinner in the Walnut room of the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago. They gathered to hear a talk by one of the group, Percival F. Hart, on Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign. This occasion is recognized by Civil War buffs as the first Civil War Round Table meeting held in the U.S.A. The other 15 men at this meeting were: Newton C. Farr, Ralph G. Newman, Alexander J. Isaacs, Elmer Gertz, Fred C. Evers, C. Norton Owen, Monroe R. Cockrell, Otto Eisenschiml, Vernon Hanson, David H. Annan, Seymour J. Frank, Walter S. Holden, Henry W. Lackey, Walter W. L. Meyer and James Rosenthal.

Although W. Norman Fitzgerald started the Milwaukee Round Table in 1947, the other two biggest round tables organized a bit later. The New York CWRT organized in 1950; and the Washington CWRT in 1951.

Who originated the name, "Civil War Round Table"? When the 16 men met in Chicago in December of 1940, they "just got together" to share their interest in Civil War history. At the end of the meeting, member Alexander J. Isaacs suggested that they meeting regularly; and that they call themselves "The Civil War Round Table."

*Carol VanOrnum*

*February 4, 2019*