

The Grapeshot

Newsletter

April 2023

This month's presenter:

Lesley Gordon



**The Scottsdale Civil War
Roundtable welcomes**

Lesley Gordon

as she presents:

***A Badge of Conspicuous
Gallantry: Allegations of
Cowardice in a Civil War
Regiment***

Scottsdale Civic
Center
Copper Auditorium
April 18, 2023,
5 pm
Also on Zoom

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Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable. Inc.

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About Our Speaker

Lesley Gordon



On Tuesday, April 18, the Scottsdale Civil War Round Table will host Civil War historian Lesley Gordon. Professor Gordon has published widely on Civil War topics throughout her career. In 1998, she published a biography of Maj. Gen. George Pickett

and followed that with a history of the 16th Connecticut Volunteers in 2014. Her lecture, "A Badge of Conspicuous Gallantry: Allegations of Cowardice in a Civil War Regiment," focuses on a Confederate cavalry unit.

The 2nd Texas Infantry Regiment went to war with high expectations that they would perform bravely in battle. Soon after their baptism of fire at Shiloh, however, they faced stinging accusations of cowardice. For the rest of their military service, these allegations cast a shadow, even after the martyred death of their colonel and their designation as elite sharpshooters at Vicksburg. After the war and beyond, acknowledgment of these charges was largely forgotten, replaced with the rhetoric of the Lost Cause and a celebration of Confederate heroism. Dr. Gordon's talk recounts the experience of this unit and the wider significance of exploring cowardice in the Civil War.

Lesley Gordon is a native of Connecticut. She earned her doctoral degree at Emory University. Currently she holds the Charles Summersell chair in Southern History at the University of Alabama. She was the editor of **Civil War History** from 2010-2015 and now serves as the President of the Society for Civil War history.

Dr. Gordon's lecture will begin at 5PM in the Copper Auditorium located on the lower level of the Civic Center branch of the Scottsdale Public Library, 3839 N Drinkwater Blvd., Scottsdale. Doors open at 4PM. The public is welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the Scottsdale Civil War Round Table.

Final speaker of Spring 2023 will be on May 16 will be

Garry Adelman "Battlefield Preservation Extravaganza: People, Politics, Parcels, and Progress"

Topic: Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable,
April 18, 2023 Time: 05:00 PM Arizona

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85776666048?pwd=aG1VMqeAbFwnZDO7R84KQbUU8ZaC3Q.1>

Meeting ID: 857 7666 6048
Passcode: 374195

Letter from our President

Mark Stoler



Next month we'll close out our 2022-23 season with Garry Adelman on Battlefield Preservation. We've never had a speaker specifically on this topic and I'm sure Gary will provide us with a dynamic and entertaining talk on preservation in the 21st century.

In this issue of The Grapeshot you'll find our schedule for the 2023-24 season. We're pretty excited about the collection of speakers and topics Program Chair David Ward has put together. Five of our speakers will be first-timers and returning speakers include Tim Smith on Grierson's Raid and Will Greene on the Petersburg campaign. The lineup has a wide variety of topics from battles and campaigns, including the critical turning point of the fall of New Orleans in April 1862, the stories of Mosby's Rangers and of the first Union wartime martyr Elmer Ellsworth, and the impact of the war on civilians from the citizens of Sharpsburg after the Battle of Antietam to Walt Whitman and Louisa May Alcott and their time in Washington.

We kick off the season on September 19.

The special discounted offer for tickets for Ben Butler has expired, but tickets are still available by going directly to the Don Bluth Front Row Theater website (\$30 adult or \$27 for seniors). The event, a matinee at 2PM on May 20, should be a lot of fun and will provide attendees with a extra added attraction - a Q&A with the actors and director at the end of the play. The theater website can be found at this link:

<https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?ticketing=bluth>

Here's what some critics had to say about the play:

"Just call it splendid . . . The beauty of the script . . . is how it approaches thorny topics. In short, it's a hoot."
- The New York Times

". . . simultaneously thought-provoking and sidesplitting." - [TheaterMania.com](https://www.theatermania.com)

"An extraordinary, artful script . . . spirited, intense, often humorous dialogue makes this show completely captivating . . . " - [BroadwayWorld.com](https://www.broadwayworld.com)

JUST ANNOUNCED!!

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable Speaker Schedule for 2023-24

September 19: Brian Jordan, “A Monopoly on Misfortune: The Odyssey of an Immigrant Regiment in the Civil War”

October 17: Tim Smith, “The Real Horse Soldiers: Benjamin Grierson’s Epic 1863 Civil War Raid through Mississippi”

November 14: John Matteson, “The Concord Nurse and the Brooklyn Bard: Alcott and Whitman in Washington”

December 12: Meg Groeling, “First Fallen: The Life of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, the North’s First Civil War Hero”

January 16: A. Wilson Greene, “Leaders and Leadership at Petersburg”

February 20: Peter Carmichael, “The Fate of a Confederate Deserter After Gettysburg”

March 19: Steven Cowie, “When Hell Came to Sharpsburg: The Battle of Antietam and Its Impact on the Civilians”

April 16: Eric Buckland, “Mosby’s Rangers”

May 21: Mark Bielski, “A Mortal Blow to the Confederacy: The Fall of New Orleans, 1862”

Meeting times will change to 6:00 pm starting September 2023.

The General Was A Bishop

By Gary Alan Dorris

Although, he was probably a better Bishop than he was a General!

Leonidas Polk was an Episcopal Bishop and priest, whose wife owned several slaves through inheritance and he benefited from their toil. He had no problem with the concept of slavery and believed it justified and biblical. As a young man he was educated at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, from which he was graduated in 1827. He was a vocal supporter of secession, and he later became a General in the Confederate Army.

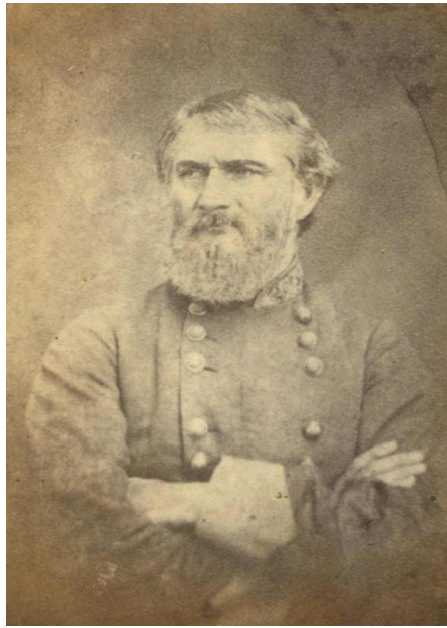
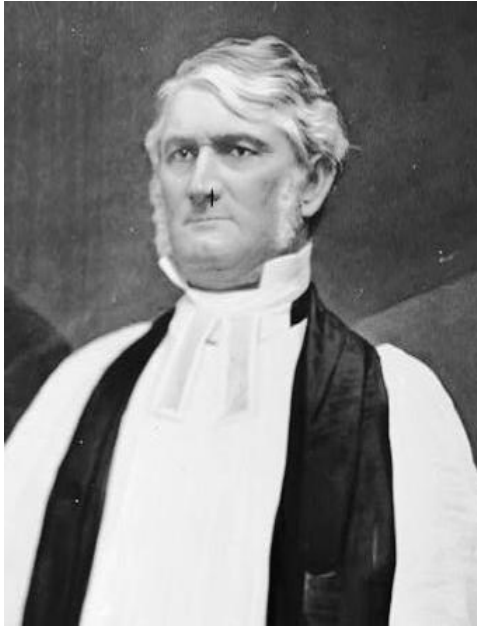
He had been raised in a religious family and said that as a young man, while he understood the values of a spiritual basis, he was not devout. But, before his graduation from West Point, he met and was influenced by an Episcopal Bishop and during his senior year as a cadet, had a life-altering religious conversion. Shortly after graduating, he requested to be relieved of his new commission as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army and entered the Virginia Theological Seminary (Episcopal) in Virginia.

In 1831, following his religious studies, Polk was ordained a [deacon](#) and priest in the Episcopal Church. He was considered devoted, charismatic, well organized and a natural leader by elders of the church, and he advanced rapidly through the hierarchy. By 1841 he was named Bishop of [Louisiana](#), although his primary residence was in Tennessee where his wife's wealthy family held large tracts of land. He and his wife lived an aristocratic life on a large plantation with a significant number of house and field slaves. While it seems inconceivable today that a clergyman would support slavery, the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches of the South, (and a few others) had developed a theology over the prior generations, which justified slavery as a benevolent, proper, and Biblical institution. Polk, unlike some other Southerners, was known to treat the slaves owned by his family as "*God's creatures*", although clearly a subservient race. He believed, similar to that expressed by Robert E. Lee, that God would determine a time (in the future) when slaves would be gradually freed. (But just not right then!) One reason he stated for his interest in founding a new Episcopal University was that it would, over time, educate Southern aristocratic families to become more responsible for improving the welfare of the slaves. In 1860, before the Civil War started, he acquired the land for the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee for just that purpose. He said that he hoped it could become a symbol of enlightenment similar to Oxford and Cambridge in England.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Polk pulled his Louisiana diocese out of the Episcopal Church of the United States to form the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America.

Although he hoped that secession would result in a peaceful separation of the North and South, and suggested that he was reluctant to take up arms personally, he did not hesitate to write to his friend and former classmate at West Point, Jefferson Davis, President of the new Confederate States of America, offering his services in the Confederate States Army. Polk was commissioned a major general on June 25, 1861.

When asked by a contemporary in Richmond if he was putting off the gown of an Episcopal bishop to take up the sword of a Confederate general, he replied, *"No, Sir, I am buckling the sword over the gown."*



Soon after receiving his commission, however, Polk embarrassed Davis and harmed the diplomatic balance in the neutral state of Kentucky, when, without specific orders, he took a small contingent of troops to occupy nearby Columbus, Kentucky in September 1861. Polk's action caused the Kentucky Governor to request Union assistance to *"expel the invaders"*. Polk had unwittingly handed Kentucky to the Union and one contemporary said, *"Polk lost Kentucky without a battle or a shot."* In fact, his troops would not see battle against Union Forces until November 1861. But, Jefferson Davis continued to support Polk, and that was all he needed.

Polk constantly argued about tactics and strategy with his subordinate Generals and even with superior officers. Once, resentful that a former West Point classmate, the highly regarded General Albert Sidney Johnston, was giving him orders, he wrote a letter of resignation to President Davis, who promptly turned it down.

One of the officers on the staff of General Braxton Bragg (Polk's Superior) later said, *"Besides being a basically incompetent general, Polk had the added fault of hating to take orders."*

Bragg despised Polk and once said *"He is an old woman, utterly worthless"*, and thought he often failed to appropriately discipline his men. Unfortunately for Bragg, and possibly for the Confederate Army, Polk remained a favorite of Jefferson Davis. So, despite ridicule from Bragg, Polk kept getting important commands.

Perhaps because of his status as a Bishop and priest, unlike many officers, Polk never used profanity. Once he listened as one of his Generals yelled to troops, *"Give 'em hell, boys!"*, and

Polk wanting to share the enthusiasm, yelled, *"Give it to 'em, boys; give 'em what General Cheatham says!"*

Once, Polk disregarded orders from Bragg to attack a small group of Union troops and Bragg noted Polk's failure in a battle report. Then, at a subsequent battle (Chickamauga), Polk was ordered to initiate an attack to prevent the Union Army from fortifying their positions, but he was late forming his troops. His delay allowed the Union defenders time to strengthen their defenses and then repel subsequent Confederate attacks.

Bragg's exasperation with Polk is clear in his reports. He wrote to President Davis, *"Gen'l Polk by education and habit is unfit for executing the plans of others. He will convince himself his own are better and follow them without reflecting on the consequences."* And, Bragg wrote after the war that if Polk had attacked on time at Chickamauga, *"Our independence might have been won."* While the speculative statement was probably not accurate, it was still a very damning comment by one General about another!

But President Davis simply transferred his friend Polk away from General Bragg.

On June 14, 1864, Polk was scouting enemy positions near Marietta, Georgia, with his staff when he and his company were spotted by a Union artillery group, which then promptly opened fire. While the first two shells came close to General Polk, causing he and the others to scamper, the third round directly struck Polk, killing him instantly.

One historian wrote that the shell that killed General Polk was, *"One of the worst shots fired for the Union cause during the entire course of the war, as Polk's incompetence made him far more valuable (to the Union) alive than dead."*

Bishop/General Polk died four years before classes opened at his planned University of the South.

POST SCRIPT: Even before this post, I had received numerous questions from readers about the fact that many Confederate leaders (including Polk, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis) were devout Christians, but they supported slavery a seemingly incongruous position to us today. After further research in the coming months, I will attempt to explain their theology which justified slavery, as they practiced it. However, as an amateur historian, I may prove to be an even weaker theologian, but I will try.

Contact the author at gadorris2@gmail.com or see more articles under "Blogs" at the website.

Photos from the March 2023 Meeting



Richard Cox
and
Hal Bliss
Offer the New
**Scottsdale Civil War
Roundtable**

Tote Bag!

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Barbara Ray
Guest Dianne Blumberg
And
Richard Cox

Greeting
Attendees and Guests
At the March Meeting



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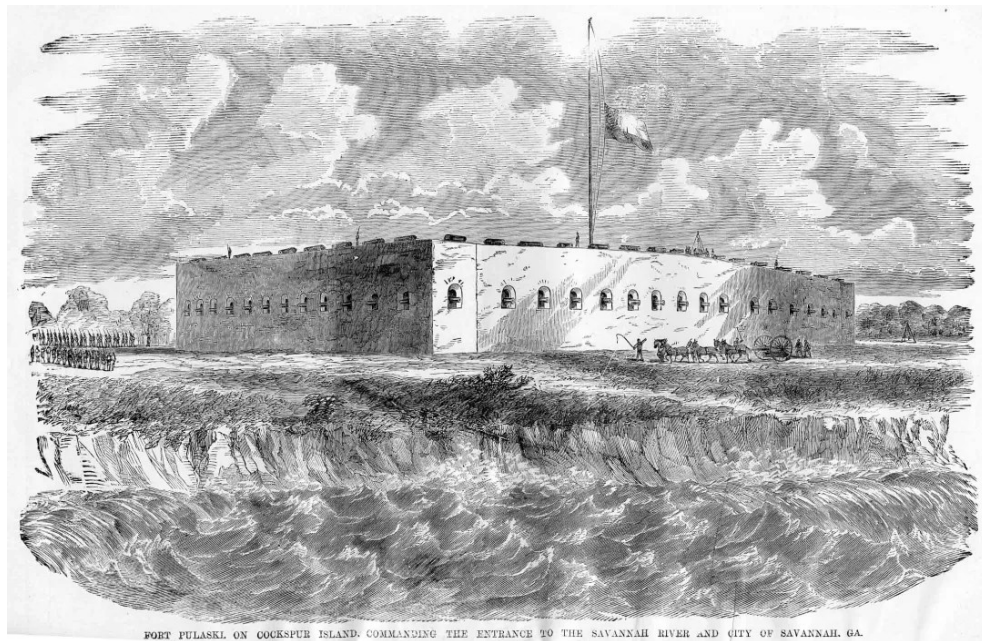
Website: www.scottsdalecwrt.org

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Scottsdale AZ 85258

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY

April 10-11, 1862. Union forces begin bombardment of Fort Pulaski, which guards access to Savannah, Georgia. Using new rifled cannons, they breach the walls within two days. This advance in artillery ends the era of huge coastal forts; no more will be built.



FORT PULASKI, ON COCKSPUR ISLAND, COMMANDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE SAVANNAH RIVER AND CITY OF SAVANNAH, GA.

April 2023 Trivia Questions

1. What two Confederate generals engaged in a pistol duel on September 6, 1863?
2. Name the Union general whom Gen. Winfield Scott sent to Richmond early in the war as a spy to gather information about the Confederates. He was so successful the Confederates sent him back to Washington thinking he was *their* spy.
3. Who was the highest-ranking officer in the Confederate army?
4. There were many foreign-born officers in the Union armies, some in very high command. There were only two in the Confederate armies who rose to the rank of major general. Who were they?

Answers on final page

AMERICAN LEGION

AZ Legion Webpage Articles Recap Report

Cave Creek - Suicide Prevention Poker Run - 22 April 2023

**Camp Verde - Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day - 29 March -
2 April 2023 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day - Cost of
Freedom Tribute - March 29 - April 2 - Camp Verde, AZ**



March 29th - April 2nd

Wednesday, March 29

- ★ 8:00 am - Posting of Colors
- ★ 1:00 pm - Pinning Ceremony

Friday, March 31

- ★ 10:00: Native American Veterans Recognition Day

Saturday, April 1

- ★ 1:00 - Welcome Home Ceremony

HISTORY DISCUSSION GROUP MEETINGS

Please join us for a relaxed and informal conversation at the Roundtable's History Discussion Group meetings. All are welcome, including non-members. Our discussions tend to center around a topic the previous week's speaker has presented. These are participant-led discussions, not lectures, facilitated by a Roundtable member. You can add your comments, thoughts, questions or just listen. It's always fun and interesting and sometimes goes off in unexpected directions.

Location:

Scottsdale Civic Center Library

SHC Program Room (on the right side of the Scottsdale Heritage Connection (SHC) Room on the main floor of the library. Just ask at the front desk if you have trouble finding the Program Room.

Discussion group meetings begin at 5:00 pm.

Here is the schedule for the remainder of the year with this season's topics:

April 25: How did the Union and the Confederate Armies Deal with Desertion, Bounty-Jumping and other disciplinary infractions?

No meeting in May

Hope to see you there!

Scottsdale Civil War Round Table Membership Form

Please Join Us!

Your membership enables the SCWRT to donate towards civil war preservation projects and attract the best Civil War experts from around the country to speak at our meetings, from September to May! Please fill out this form and return it with your check payable to Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable. Mailing address:

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable

7349 N. Via Paseo Del Sur, Ste 515-274

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TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

The Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable is an Arizona non-profit corporation and a U.S. 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

Website: www.scottsdalecwrt.org

All members receive our monthly publication, The Grapeshot, from Sept-May

Follow us on Facebook at Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable

Other Opportunities via Zoom

A series of free lectures on **Wednesdays hosted by the Civil War Round Table Congress (CWRTC)**. Check out their website for topics and to register.

<https://www.cwrtcongress.org/speaker.html>

CWRT Congress Fridays With U.S. Grant for a special series with Dr. Curt Fields. To register (free)

<https://www.cwrtcongress.org/grant.html>

YouTube Channel for CWRT Congress includes 40+ recorded past talks: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cwrt+congress

From Chambersburg Civil War Seminars and Tours

Zoom presentations 15th and 30th of every month. Nationally known speakers. \$5 per registration

For schedule and registration

<https://www.civilwarseminars.org/lectures>

April 2023 Trivia Answers

1. Maj. Gen. John Marmaduke and Brig. Gen. Lucius Walker. Walker was mortally wounded and died two weeks later. The nature of the dispute has never been revealed.
2. Brig. Gen. Lafayette Baker, head of the military secret service.
3. Samuel Cooper was appointed full general on May 16, 1861, and served in Richmond throughout the war as adjutant and inspector general.
4. Maj. Gen. Camille Armand Jules Marie, Prince de Polignac, of France, and Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne, born in Ireland.