The Grapeshot Newsletter

October 2026

Scottsdale Civic Center
Library
Copper Auditorium
Tuesday, October 20, 2026
6:00 pm
Doors open at 5:00 pm
for social hour, meet the speaker,
book sale, and Civil War Video

Join the meeting on YouTube:
https://youtube.com/live/pQymdzb5gmM?feature=share
or go to Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable YouTube channel

Follow us on Facebook

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable. Inc.
501 (c) (3) nonprofit Corporation,
Founded 1978

The Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable

Welcomes

Nicole Etcheson

Presenting

Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era

Table of Contents

Page 3 About Our Speaker: Nichole Etcheson

Page 4 Speaker Schedule

Page 5 History Discussion Group Schedule

Page 6 President's Letter

Page 7 Officers, Board, and Committees

Page 8 Photos

Page 9 *Southern Pro-Union Secret Societies* by Richard P. Cox

Page 13 This Month in Civil War History

Page 14 Trivia Questions

Page 15 Membership Form

Page 16 Online Opportunities

Page 17 Trivia Answers

About Our Speaker

Nicole Etcheson

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable welcomes Nicole Etcheson, author of Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era. She will discuss the violent 1850s territorial conflict that was one of the triggers of the Civil War, and the role of arguments over self-governance, political liberty, and the moral and economic aspects of slavery in that dispute.

Nicole Etcheson is the Alexander M. Bracken Distinguished Professor in the Department of History at Ball State University. Her book A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community (2024) won the 2012 Avery O. Craven Award from the Organization of American Historians. She received the 2018 Frederick Jackson Turner Award for Lifetime Contributions to Midwestern History from the Midwestern History Association.

SCOTTSDALE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
SPEAKERS & PROGRAMS
Sept. 2026 - May 2027

Oct. 20	**Nicole Etcheson, "Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era"**
Nov. 17	**Mark Graber, "The Constitution of the Confederate States of America"**
Dec 15	**Jared Peatman, "The 20th Maine at Gettysburg and Beyond"**
Jan. 19	**Megan Kate Nelson, "Three Days in November 1864: The US Army and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West"**
Feb. 16	**Steven L Smith, "Civil War Music"**
March 16	**David Connon, "Iowa Confederates"**
April 20	**Floyd Gray, "Buffalo Soldiers in the Civil War"**
May 18	**Shelby Harriel, "Forbidden, Hidden, and Forgotten: Women Soldiers of the Civil War"**

HISTORY DISCUSSION GROUP TOPICS SET FOR 2026-27
LOCATION AND MEETING TIMES

SCWRT's History Discussion Group is an informal monthly get-together for Civil War buffs in the greater Phoenix area to discuss topics in Civil War history.

We meet at the Wildflower Bread Co. in the Seville Shopping Center, at the northeast corner of Indian Bend and Scottsdale Roads. The McCormick Stillman Room, which is a partitioned meeting room at the back of the restaurant, has been reserved for us.

Our meetings start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 7:30 p.m. There is ample parking in the shopping center parking lot. In exchange for the Wildflower's hospitality, we encourage but don't require attendees to buy some food and beverages from the restaurant before our meetings.

Everyone – members, non-members, family, friends, and visitors – are welcome. We're casual and have lots of fun talking about history! Come and check us out!

The following is our schedule and list of topics for the coming season:

10/29/26 Was war inevitable? Could North and South have reached a compromise?

NO MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

1/28/27 The War on the Waves: The Union and Confederate Navies

2/25/27 Jefferson Davis and his Generals

3/25/27 If the South had won, would a Confederate States Government have been successful?

4/29/27 More "What Ifs"

(1) What if Lee had chosen not to fight it out at Gettysburg?
(2) What if Grant had not come East in 1864?
(3) What if Lincoln had not been assassinated?

NO MEETING IN MAY

Letter from our President

Mark Stoler

We will be announcing the signup for the Civil War Era Tucson Trip soon and you'll have an opportunity to sign up at the October meeting or online. It includes special guided tours of the Presidio and Fort Lowell, along with a speaker on the Civil War years in Tucson. The date is Saturday, January 23, 2027.

And speaking of October, the speaker this month is Nicole Etcheson, who'll be speaking on Bloody Kansas, one of the most important controversies leading to the Civil War. This will be the first time the Scottsdale Roundtable has had a speaker on this subject.

Between renewing members and some new members we are already above 200 members for this season. If you haven't already renewed, you can do so by going to the homepage of the Roundtable website www.scottsdalecwrt.org and either downloading the application form in the lower right corner and signing up online by clicking on the membership tab in the upper right.

GENTLE REMINDER

For those of you attending events in the library auditorium,

Please remember to turn off your phones and

keep voices down during the presentation. Thanks!

2026-27 Roundtable Officers, Board & Assignments

President:	Mark Stoler
Vice-President:	Richard Cox
Treasurer:	Bruce Washburn
Secretary:	Hal Bliss

(All Officers serve until 6/1/27)

Board Members

Elise Moore, Jim Payne, Cheri Stegall (until 6/1/27)
Tom Merrill, Joe Schelzo, John Taylor, Pat Toftoy (until 6/1/28)

Assignments

Program:	John Taylor
Grapeshot:	Richard Cox
Greeters:	Jim Payne
History:	Richard Cox, Joe Schelzo, Bruce Washburn
News Media:	Joe Schelzo
YouTube Channel:	Tom Merrill
Book Sale:	Pat Toftoy
Membership:	Cheri Stegall
Travel & Tours:	Elise Moore

Support

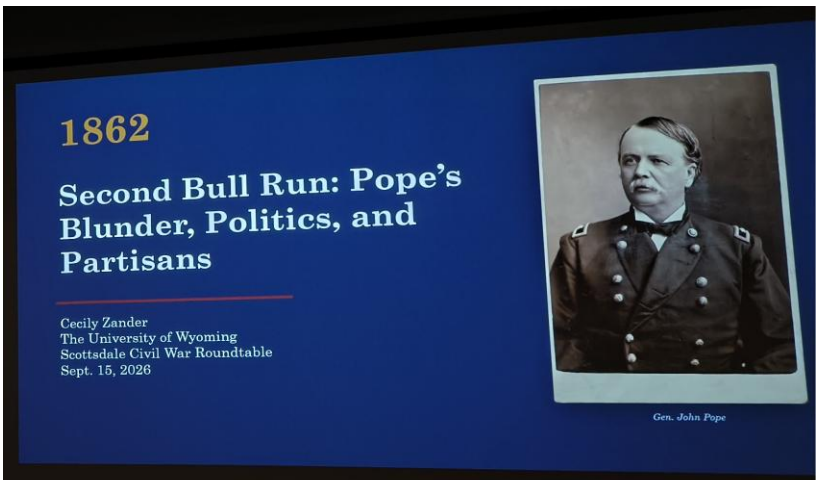
Grapeshot:	Barbara Ray
Databases:	John Machir
Book Sale & Set Up:	Michelle Craig, Bryan Seaman
Website:	Marc Echeveste

Photos from September Meeting

Left: Ready for the influx of attendees
Below: Lively banter among friends before the meeting

Right: Professor Zander chatting with George R.

Left, Below: Professor Zander's presentation



SOUTHERN PRO-UNION SECRET SOCIETIES

© 2026 Richard P. Cox. All rights reserved.

Much attention has been paid over the years to anti-Union activities in the North during the Civil War, but little has been said about whether similar groups existed in the South. Were there groups like the Knights of the Golden Circle, the Sons of Liberty or the more loosely organized Copperheads in the Confederacy?

Indeed, there were. Here is a review of some of the more important groups:

The Peace and Constitutional Society. In the fall of 1861, a roundup of twenty-seven men charged with treason against the Confederacy revealed a secret group known as the Peace and Constitutional Society. Unionists in Van Buren, Arkansas had created the group to aid Confederate deserters and to pledge assistance to the Union Army when it reached the state. It was the first organized peace society of the Civil War.

Exact numbers are hard to calculate, but the total membership throughout Arkansas may have been as high as 2,400. Communication within the society was through with signs and signals. There were oaths involved, including one that resulted in death to any member who disclosed the group's secrets.

After the existence of the group was exposed in December 1861, loyal Confederates convinced 111 of the group's members to turn themselves over to local authorities in exchange for leniency if they enlisted in the Confederate Army. Most remaining members joined the Union Army or as the federal army when it arrived in the state.

The Alabama Peace Society. The Peace Society was organized in northern Alabama and over time became powerful enough to extend its influence into East Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and possibly Florida. The mountainous regions of northern Alabama were never a hotbed of

of pro-slavery sentiment and many of its independent-minded people believed they were better off under the "old Constitution" than under the new Alabama and Confederate governments. One county even tried to secede from the state.

Their early objectives were to give refuge to deserters and help others avoid conscription. Senior members, known as "Eminents," knew the true objectives of the society and would give orders to lower members. Lower members did not know one another and could only communicate through symbols and secret handshakes. Confederate officials suspected its existence in 1862 but did not investigate until the Society successfully influenced the August 1863 elections and sent six legislators to the Confederate Congress who advocated ending the war and returning to the Union. Prominent members traveled throughout the South trying to recruit members who would subvert the Confederacy's war efforts in any way possible. Some members joined the Confederate Army to subvert war aims. Their success in carrying their ideas into the army became evident when in December 1863 sixty Peace Society members in Brigadier General Ames H. Clanton's brigade attempted to mutiny, lay down arms, and go home on Christmas Day.

By 1865, Alabama was full of deserters and men who had avoided conscription. How much of the collapse of the political and military situation in the state can be attributed to the Peace Society is unknown, but it appears the Society's efforts gained substantial popular support and did play a role in the demise of the Confederacy in that part of the South.

The Heroes of America, aka the Red Strings. One of the best documented and organized southern secret societies was the Order of the Heroes of America, whose nickname was the "Red Strings." The society was formed in the aftermath of North Carolina's secession from the Union on May 20, 1861. It was a clandestine pro-Union organization among pacifist communities in the state's northern Piedmont region, notably those communities with Quacker and Moravian roots with traditions of opposition to slavery and war.

Meeting of a Southern Secret Society

The group drew it strength from small farmers, working-class whites and religious dissenters who rejected the Confederate cause. Their structure derived from Freemasonry with secret oaths, handshakes, graded initiations, and symbols including a red cord or string inspired by the biblical account of Rahab in the Book of Joshua, used as a signal for safe havens.

Their motto – "Truth, Virtue, Honor, Fidelity, Justice" – and passwords like "United We Stand" responded by "Divided We Fall" underscored commitments to restoring the Union without violence where possible, though early oaths imposed severe penalties for betrayal to ensure loyalty amid rising Confederate pressures following the April 1862 Conscription Act.

The group facilitated direct contact with Union forces by guiding escaped Union POWs across the Appalachians into Tennessee and Kentucky. Members also maintained a network to transport Union sympathizers, deserters, and spies to northern territory. They provided safe passage for runaway slaves. Their propaganda efforts included clandestine meetings in army camps and distributing pamphlets urging soldiers to desert, exploiting grievances over the Confederate Act that exempted wealthy slaveholders. Their contacts with the Federal armies allowed them to report on Confederate army movements and strength.

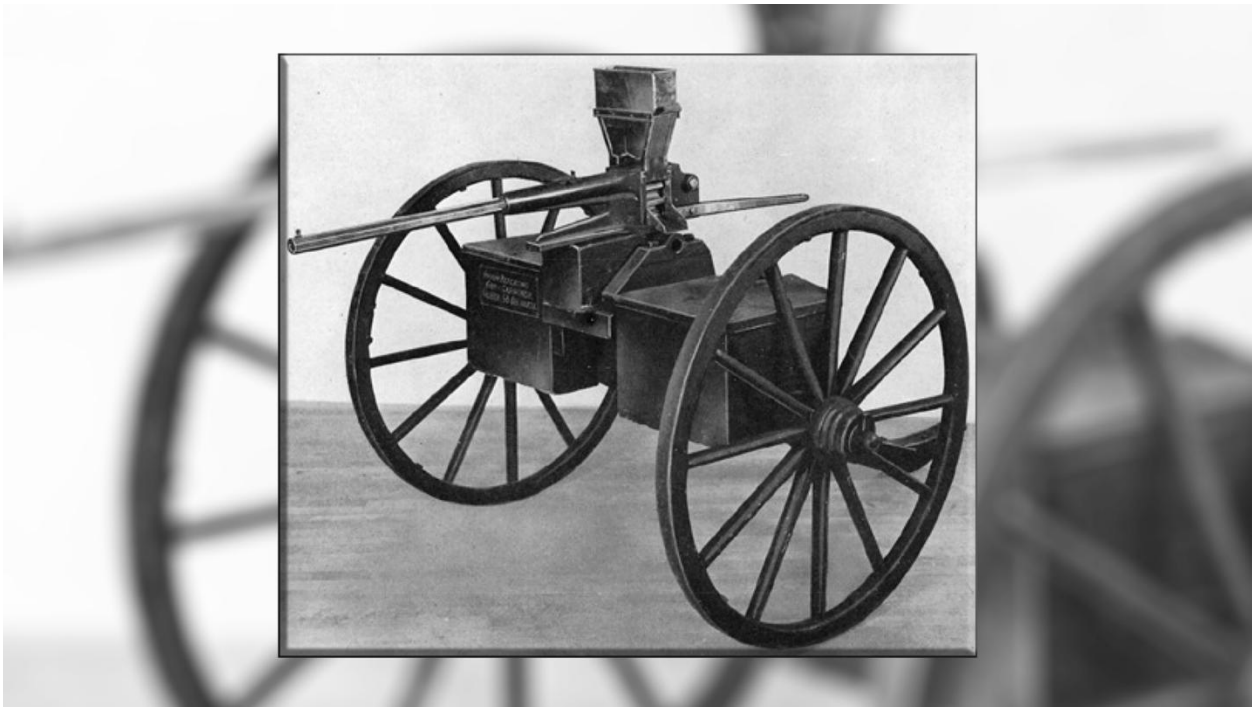
Although strongest in North Carolina, the Red Strings had members in eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia as well. It's estimated that the group may have had 10,000 adherents during the war.

Because records are scarce and the societies stressed secrecy, it's difficult to assess how effective they were in undermining the Confederate war effort. But based on what we know, it's safe to say they were more successful in their mission than the anti-Union societies organized in the North.

Dick Cox is SCWRT Vice President and Chair of the History Committee.

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY

October 12, 1861. A salesman visits President Lincoln selling "machine guns," sometimes called "coffee mills." Lincoln buys ten of them for $1,300. This is the first machine gun order in history. The actual inventor is unknown.



OCTOBER TRIVIA

1. At the first Battle of Bull Run (Manassas), who was credited with saying, "There stands Jackson like a stone wall?"

2. What Union corps commander was killed at Gettysburg on the first day?

3. Who was John Summerfield Staples of Stroudsburg Pennsylvania?

4. Who was the surgeon attached to Stonewall Jackson's command, assisted with the amputation of Jackson's arm, and later became president of the American Medical Association?

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

Scottsdale, AZ 85258

NAME:

_____

ADDRESS:

_____

CITY, STATE, ZIP:

_____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Student Membership (no charge)

Active-Duty Military (no charge)

Lifetime ($500) $_____

Individual Annual ($35) $_____

Family Annual ($45) $_____

Additional donation $_____

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

Online Opportunities

A series of free lectures on **Fridays hosted by the Civil War Round Table Congress** (CWRTC). Check out their website for topics and to register.
2026 Lectures | CWRT Congress

CWRT Congress Fridays With U.S. Grant for a special series with Dr. Curt Fields. www.cwrtcongress.org › videos › grant.html

YouTube Channel for CWRT Congress includes 40+ recorded past talks:
CWRT Congress - YouTube

From Chambersburg Civil War Seminars and Tours
For schedule and registration www.civilwarseminars.org/lectures

See Your Round Table Online
Watch past speakers on our YouTube Channel
Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable - YouTube
Visit our website: Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable - SCWRT Home
Follow us on Facebook: Facebook

Gary Gallagher presents a series of 48 lectures entitled “The American Civil War.” Available on Audible as part of The Great Courses.

Chris Mackowski hosts The Emerging Civil War Podcast. New episodes on Tuesdays.

Find articles by **Gary Dorris** on his blog at alincolnbygadorris.com.

Pioneers’ Cemetery Association YouTube Channel Pioneers' Cemetery Association - YouTube

TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Brigadier General Barnard E. Bee of Georgia, who was killed soon thereafter.

2. Major General John F Reynolds.

3. Although not required by law, Abraham Lincoln hired Staples as his substitute to serve in the Union Army during the last year of the war. Staples served in the 2nd District of Columbia Guard, survived the war, and died in 1888.

4. Dr. Hunter McGuire