



Nashville Civil War Roundtable

Founded April, 2009 – Nashville, Tennessee – Now Part of the Battle of Nashville Trust, April 2025

Visit our web site: www.nashvillecivilwarroundtable.wordpress.com

September 16th, 2025 – Our 171st meeting!! We continue our sixteenth year!

The next meeting of the Nashville (TN) Civil War Roundtable will be on Tuesday, September 16th, 2025, in the visitor's center of Ft. Negley Park, a unit of Metro Parks, Nashville, TN. This is located at 1100 Fort Negley Blvd. off I-65 just south of downtown between 4th Avenue South and 8th Avenue South on Edgehill Avenue/Chestnut Avenue. Take Exit 81, Wedgewood Avenue, off I-65 and follow the signs to the Science Museum.

The meeting begins at 7:00 PM and is always open to the public. Members, please bring a friend or two – new recruits are always welcomed.

This month's program – *“Captain William S. Cain, 12th United States Colored Troops and His Civil War”*

The 12th United States Colored Troops was raised in Middle Tennessee in mid-1863 with many of the men in their ranks being former laborers who built the fortifications around Nashville. After forming and drilling, one of the regiment's first jobs, along with the 13th USCT, was to help build the Nashville & Northwestern Railroad heading to Johnsonville on the Tennessee River from Kingston Springs just west of Nashville. The 12th's first major combat action was in the Battle of Nashville as part of Cruft's Provisional Division which attacked Overton Hill. While not successful, their bravery in the assault elicited notices from troops and officers of both sides. This month's program will provide an inside look at this regiment from one of its officers, Captain William S. Cain.

In 1908, Captain William S. Cain, Company C, 12th USCT, decided to write a brief autobiography on himself and several relatives for his family posterity. The advent of the Civil War drew William and his brothers in on the side of the Union. He enrolled in the 8th Kansas Infantry on September 10, 1861. He was promoted as 1st Lieutenant, 1st Regiment USCT Infantry, under Colonel Charles Thompson, as Adjutant, and in 1863 was appointed Captain of Company C, 12th USCT, July 5, 1864, at Nashville. Later, as an officer of U.S. Colored troops, he wrote, "my association with the officers was very pleasant. They were all men of more than average culture, all had to pass a rigid examination before a board of generals in the school of the soldier, company, and battalion. Our Chaplain was a Christian churchman, and a good educator for our ignorant soldiers – all ex-slaves."

This brief intriguing missive from Captain William S. Cain led to more detailed research in looking for any references to this brave regiment that played a part in the battle of Nashville. The result opens the door to, hopefully, more research.

Our speaker this month is our own Howard Mann. Howard is a longtime student of the war and is past president of the Kansas City CWRT and current president of the Nashville CWRT. He has spoken to us before and offers very well researched programs.

We hope you will join us for this program which has significant local importance.

July Program

Casey Gillespie, Director of Interpretation at Belle Meade Historic Site and Winery, gave us a fine program concerning Middle Tennessee starting with the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson (February 6-16, 1862) through the abandonment and Federal capture of Nashville (February 25, 1862). The result of this massive calamity was the loss of a huge section of Tennessee, save for the strip along the Mississippi River and East Tennessee. With Tennessee only joining the Confederacy officially on June 8, 1861, this was a big morale blow and the loss of foundries and other manufacturing establishments (although some was shipped down to Atlanta) put the economic base of the Confederacy behind the eight ball. Additionally, this also removed a lot of crop land plus the loss of mules (Tennessee was Number One for mules) and horses (Tennessee was Number Two for horses). It is no wonder that the recovery of Middle Tennessee and Nashville in particular became the focus of Confederate strategy for the rest of the war in the Western Theater. Casey delved into the main characters and events in detail and wove a tale of failure for one side and triumph for another. Thanks Casey for speaking to us!

FUTURE PROGRAMS:

October 2025 - Bob Stewart, historian/author – *“The Battle of Munford, Alabama, April 1865”*

November 2025 – Shirley Farris Jones, author/historian – *“Martha Ready Morgan: From Wife to Widow in 630 Days”*

January 2026 – Ross Hudgins, historian/author – *“Maggie Vaulx and the Great Panic in Nashville”*

February 2026 – Ross Massey, historian/author – *“McFadden’s Bend in the Stones River Campaign”*

March 2026 – Cheryl McCauley, historian/author – *“Thaddeus Lowe, Civil War Balloonist”*

April 2026 – William Parker, historian/director Fort Defiance Interpretive Center – *“Feeding Civil War Armies”*

Some of our speakers are authors and bring books to sell at our meetings. Please support them by buying their books.

MEMBERS AND DUES – Our new dues structure is listed below. The new fiscal year is now January 1st through December 31st. Thus, we will begin collecting dues for the 2026 campaign year starting in December/January. Our new dues schedule is thus:

\$50 – individuals and families. This also gets you some nice perks too like two gifts and some discounts to events!

\$25 – military – active duty and veterans

Students are free.

When your dues are paid you will be issued a new name badge with the fiscal year on it. If you do not have a name badge then you are not current.

Our dues go to paying for speakers as well as donations for Civil War preservation causes especially those of a local nature. Please be sure to pay your dues so we can offer the best programs possible for you! We also utilize donated items for sales each month to help add to the treasury. If you have something you would like to donate for these auctions, please bring them to the meetings. Books, art, or anything Civil War, works very well. Thanks very much to all of you who have made such donations!

Lastly, if you have not been back to the Nashville CWRT in some time please come again. We would love to have you back with us!

Flags of the 12th United States Colored Troops by Greg Biggs



Considering our program this month relates to the 12th United States Colored troops and, since I am a historian of Civil War flags, I thought the membership might like to learn about some of the battle flags carried by this Middle Tennessee raised regiment. Sadly, only two of these survive today.

The National colors of the 12th USCT (West Point Museum). To date no information has been located to know when this flag was issued to the regiment but it is an example of one of the National flags made under contract through the Philadelphia

Quartermaster Depot. The pre-war flag sub-contractor was Samuel Brewer, but with the coming of the war, Brewer retired and was replaced by noted militaria maker Horstmann Brothers plus local flag makers Evans & Hassall and William Scheible. As this flag bears 34 stars, it was likely made before the admission of West Virginia as the 35th state which took place on June 20, 1863 with their star officially becoming part of the US flag on July 4th, 1863 pursuant to the Flag Act of 1818. As this flag bears a center star it was likely made by Hortsman Brothers or Evans & Hassall. The unit designation is on the red bar at the bottom end of the canton and reads, "12th Regt. U.S. Colored Troops."



Regimental colors of the 12th USCT (West Point Museum). This flag would have been issued to the regiment along with the National colors above. This is an example of a regimental color made by Evans and Hassall through the Philadelphia Depot. The now worn away unit designation on the ribbon below the eagle was identical to that on the National colors.

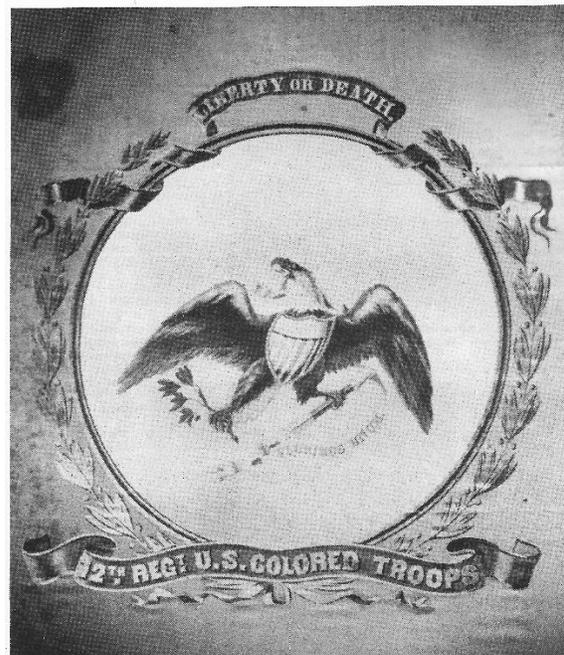
These flags were probably the banners carried into action in the Battle of Nashville when they assaulted Overton Hill. According to the report of Captain Henry Hegner, *"I must mention Corpl. Miner Carter, Company C, who took up the national colors after two regimental color-bearers had been shot down; also Private E. Steel, Company I, who took the regimental colors, and after the regiment was falling back, remained alone in the open field, in spite of the murderous fire of the enemy, until called by his officers to return."* Captain Henry Romeyn, 14th USCT, coming up in support, noted the valor of Corporal Carter, *"the only man of it left on his feet, standing beside his color, the staff of which he had driven into the soft ground, and loading and firing...Before many seconds had passed a glancing shot struck the side of his head, and pulling up his flag he drew from beneath the dead (color) sergeant (next to him) the stars and stripes, and with both under one arm, and his musket in the other hand, the blood streaming down his face, he strode proudly back through the supporting line."*

On July 28, 1864, an article in the *Nashville Daily Times & True Union* reported, *"We learn that the 12th U.S.C.T., was presented with an elegant banner at the review of the Colored Troops yesterday. The banner is very tasteful and handsome, appropriately painted and decorated by a negro artist of Philadelphia, of unusual skill and talents. It cost one hundred and fifty dollars, and was paid for by the colored people of Nashville."* The artist was David Bustill Bowser.

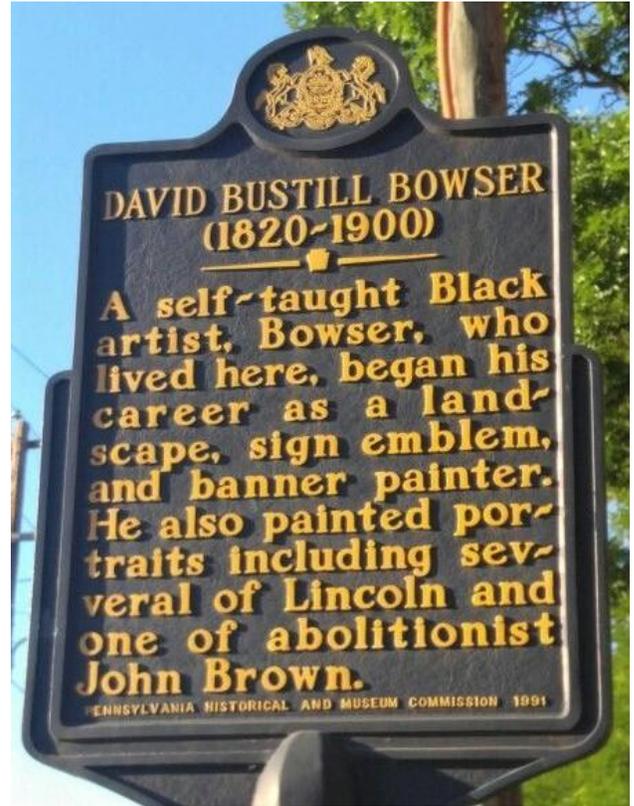
Bowser was a noted painter who painted firemen's helmets, banners and portraits (including John Brown and Abraham Lincoln). Along with his wife, he also ran a regalia business. After the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas authorized the official raising of black regiments for the Union Army (although the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry pre-dated this by some months in late 1862), most Northern states began to create training camps for these new units particularly Pennsylvania at Camp Curtin in Harrisburg. Most of the of Pennsylvania USCT regiments would be raised here and many of them would receive regimental flags painted by Bowser in presentation ceremonies. As these flags were noted in Northern newspapers, that is probably how the Nashville residents found out about him and ordered one through him to be sent to Tennessee.

Bowser only painted regimental colors on the traditional blue field. The central devices were very ornate and often depicted a black soldier as part of the artwork. The reverse side depicted the Federal eagle in a style different from those made through the three U.S. Quartermaster depots. Also adorning the flags were patriotic slogans. After the war, the Bowser painted flags were sent to the West Point Museum for storage. However, there wasn't the proper climate-controlled storage facility back then and many of these silk flags deteriorated over time. In fact, on some of the flags would be listed as "rotten and torn" in later catalog descriptions. Around the start of World War Two, many flags in the collection were destroyed by burning as they were beyond salvation; these included all of the Bowser flags in the collection. Fortunately, these were photographed for posterity. Thankfully, several of his flags survive today that were not at West Point.

Below are both sides of the Bowser painted flag of the 12th USCT.



Below is an image of Bowser along with a Pennsylvania State Historical marker about him.



CIVIL WAR NEWS AND EVENTS

8th Annual Fort Donelson/Dover, Tennessee Civil War Show – October 4-5, 2025

Time again for the annual Civil War Show in historic Dover, TN. The event will be held once again at the Stewart County Visitors Center, 117 Visitors Center Lane, across and just west of Fort Donelson National Battlefield. This is located right off US Highway 79, next to Mama Mea's Italian restaurant. Here's the details:

50+ Tables of Civil War Artifact Displays & Collections

- Museum Quality Artifact Displays
- Educational Displays
- Buy, Sell, Trade Tables as well!

Admission: \$5.00 *per person*
(Kids 12 and under Free)

Saturday October 5th 9:00am - 4:00pm
Sunday October 6th 9:00am - 2:00pm

NASHVILLE CWRT OFFICERS

President – Howard Mann - hgmann2930@gmail.com

Philip Duer – Treasurer and Preservation Liason – pwduer@gmail.com

Greg Biggs - Program Chair – Biggsq@charter.net

Krista Castillo – President Emeritus