

# Lombard Historical Society To Establish A Civil War Re-enactors Group

In honor of the upcoming sesquicentennial of the Civil War in 2011, the Lombard Historical Society has launched a new program open to adults ages 16 and above that will re-enact a relatively unknown segment of the Union army, but one that was vital to the welfare of Chicagoans and that has a direct connection to Lombard's history: the Invalid Corps. Andy Dorsey, an intern with the Society, researched and developed the idea for the group and answers some questions about the program.

## *What was the Invalid Corps?*

The Invalid Corps (later renamed the "Veteran Reserve Corps") was comprised of soldiers who had contracted disease or been injured in the line of duty. While they could no longer fight on the battlefield, they were still able to provide service as guards, nurses, and clerks. Thus they freed able-bodied men to go to the front.

The unit we are portraying is the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment Veteran Reserve Corp, which served as prison guards at Camp Douglas in Chicago. The 8<sup>th</sup> was led by Colonel Benjamin Sweet, who moved to Lombard after the war. In fact, Sweet was one of the founders who platted the town in 1869.

Chicagoland played a vital role in the Civil War. Camp Douglas held thousands of confederate prisoners. Unfortunately, poor sanitary conditions and budgetary constraints led to the deaths of nearly 6000 of these prisoners over the course of the war. Camp Douglas is sometimes called the "Andersonville of the North." We re-enact the Invalid Corps in order to honor these dead and to pay homage to the valuable service provided by the men of the Veteran Reserve Corps.

## *What types of events will the Corps appear in?*

The Corps has planned a number of living history events at the Peck Homestead on Sundays during open hours in July and August. The Invalid Corps did not usually engage in battle, so the focus will be on camp life and the variety of political opinions that existed in Chicago during the Civil War. We will also provide insight into the many roles of women at the camp; from lowly washerwomen to the high society ladies of the US Sanitation Commission.

## *Corps Requirements*

The Corps is open to men and women ages 16 years and older who exhibit an interest, ability, and willingness to learn and pass information about Camp Douglas and the Veteran Reserve Corps. The group will meet at least once a month and participate in Civil War re-enactments.

## *Cost to join the Corps*

The annual dues are \$15. Appropriate uniforms are not included and must be purchased separately. Call 630-629-1885 if you are interested.