

## CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

**BROOKS SIMPSON** is ASU Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University. His scholarship focuses on the Civil War and Reconstruction, with an emphasis on political and military affairs. Best known for his work on Ulysses S. Grant, he is currently at work on several projects, including one on Union strategy, another on the destruction of slavery during the war, and a third on the final two decades of Grant's life.

**LESLEY GORDON** earned her BA with High Honors from the College of William and Mary, and her MA and PhD in American History from the University of Georgia. Since 2016, she has been the Charles G. Summersell Chair of Southern History at the University of Alabama. She is the author of three monographs: *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998); *A Broken Regiment: The 16th Connecticut's Civil War* (Louisiana State University Press, 2014); and most recently, *Dread Danger: Combat and Courage in the American Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), which was a finalist for the 2025 Gilder-Lehrman Lincoln Prize. She has also co-edited four volumes of essays and authored multiple book chapters, articles, and book reviews. Professor Gordon served as editor of the academic journal *Civil War History* (2010-2015), and President of the Society of Civil War History (2022-2024); as well as the chair of the Editorial Board for the University of Alabama Press (2022-present). During the 2024-2025 academic year, she was the Charles Boal Ewing Chair in Military History at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

**GORDON C. RHEA** received his B.A. in history from Indiana University, his M.A. in history from Harvard University, and his law degree from Stanford University Law School. He served as Special Assistant to the Chief Counsel of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities and as an Assistant United States Attorney in Washington D.C. and the United States Virgin Islands. He is presently the Attorney General of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mr. Rhea has written seven award-winning books about the American Civil War, including a definitive five-volume history of the 1864 Overland Campaign. He has lectured widely on topics of military history and the Civil War era and has served on the boards of historical societies, history magazines, and historical preservation organizations, including the Civil War Library and Museum, Philadelphia, and the Charleston South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission. His most recent book was, *Stephen A. Swails: Black Freedom Fighter in the Civil War and Reconstruction*.

**LORIEN FOOTE** is the Patricia & Bookman Peters Professor in History at Texas A&M University. She is the author of four books, editor of three volumes,

and writer of numerous articles and essays on the cultural, intellectual, and military history of the American Civil War. Her most recent book is *Rites of Retaliation: Civilization, Soldiers, and Campaigns in the American Civil War* (2021), which won the Organization of American Historians Civil War and Reconstruction Book Award. She is the co-editor, with Earl J. Hess, of *The Oxford Handbook of the American Civil War*. She is the creator and principal investigator of a digital humanities project, which is mapping the escape and movement of 3,000 Federal prisoners of war. The project includes contributions from undergraduate researchers at four universities. It can be explored online: <https://fugitive-federals.tamu.edu/>. Foote received her B.A. from the University of Kansas and her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. She is a ballroom dancer and a dog lover. Buzz, her nine-year-old Shih Tzu, is the mascot of the TAMU Study Abroad program and visits the office on campus regularly.

**DEAN CALBREATH** was part of the Polk- and Pulitzer-winning team that uncovered the biggest individual bribery scandal in Congressional history. With fellow journalists Marcus Stern and Jerry Kammer, they co-wrote *The Wrong Stuff: The Extraordinary Saga of Randy "Duke" Cunningham, the Most Corrupt Congressman Ever Caught* (Public Affairs). His presentation will focus on the subject of his book, *The Sergeant: The Incredible Life of Nicholas Said: Son of an African General, Slave of the Ottomans, Free Man Under the Tsars, Hero of the Union Army*. From his noble childhood in the kingdom of Borno to being kidnapped into slavery, the inspiring life-story of Nicholas Said is an epic journey that takes him from Africa and the Ottoman Empire through Czarist Russia and, finally, to heroic acclaim in the American Civil War.

**DAVID POWELL** is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute (1983) with a BA in history. He has published many articles in various magazines, and more than fifteen historical simulations. He is the author of many books including *The Chickamauga Campaign* trilogy, *The Maps of Chickamauga*, and *Failure in the Saddle*. He is currently in the midst of completing a five-volume history of the Atlanta Campaign. David and his wife Anne live with their brace of Bloodhounds in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois.

**KEVIN M. LEVIN**, author of *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* (University Press of Kentucky, 2012) and *Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019) is an educator and historian based in Boston. His research focuses on the Civil War era and historical memory. You can find his online writing at *Civil War Memory*, which he has maintained since 2005 [<https://kevinmlevin.substack.com/>].