



The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 14871, Albany, NY 12212-4871

CDCWRT's web site: www.cdcwrt.org

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HERE RESTS IN
HONORED-GlORY
AN AMERICAN
SOLDIER
KNOWN BY

In memory of our fallen service members.

JUNE MEETING
FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 10TH
GUILDERLAND PUBLIC
LIBRARY
WESTERN AVE. ROUTE 20
GUILDERLAND, NY

SOCIAL MEETING	6:00-7:00
BUSINESS MEETING	7:00-7:30
PRESENTATION	7:30-9:00

CDCWRT MEETING

The May meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Guilderland Public Library on Friday evening, June 10th. Our speaker is CDCWRT member, Ray Wemple. Ray's presentation is entitled, "The Civil War: A Bird's Eye View."

Who were those daring and courageous aeronauts who risked life and limb daily for the Army of the Potomac during the Peninsular Campaign? Find out about the world's very first aircraft carrier! Ray will discuss the use of military balloons during the Late Unpleasantness, and will also discuss the activities of several aeronauts, including John LaMountain from Troy, NY. How did they get those things in the air while in the field? Come and discover the answers to these questions on June 10th. This topic has never before been presented at one of the CDCWRT meetings.

MAY MEETING

A good crowd was on hand to hear RT member J.J. Jennings talk about the wound and subsequent death of Winfield Scott Hancock. J.J.'s presentation was (pardon the pun) **SUPERB**. In a fact-filled, entertaining and relaxed talk, he covered the events leading up to 3rd day Gettysburg

when Hancock was seriously wounded by a rifled ball that passed through the saddle and into the groin of the General. (Subway trains will never be the same for me!) J.J. even had a reproduction McClellan saddle on hand for demonstration purposes. He cleared up the misconceptions about the relationship between Hancock and Armistead that was advanced by Michael Shaara in *Killer Angels*. This was J.J.'s first presentation, and based on the enthusiastic response of the audience, he will be a regular for the RT. Anyone who missed the presentation can ask J.J. the titles of the best books about Hancock. Also ask him about mashed potatoes.

BOARD MEETING

At the April Board Meeting it was announced that the RT grossed \$776 in sales at the History Conference in Gettysburg, and grossed \$3279 in sales at the 140th anniversary of the surrender at Appomattox. The treasurer announced that the balance in the regular account was \$2279.61, and in the preservation account the balance was \$15,649. The Gettysburg trip was successful for those who attended the conference, as well as those who went on the battlefield tours.

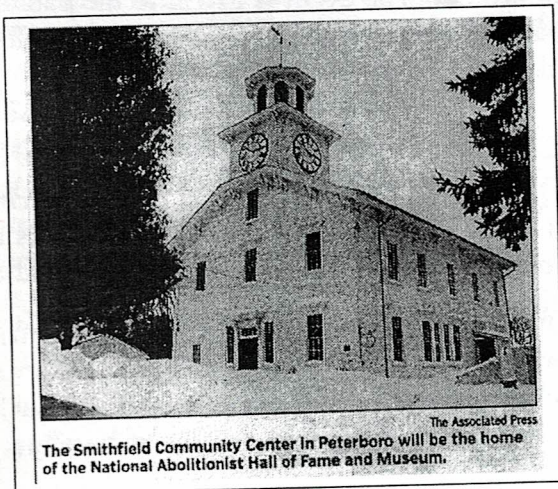
A small number of RT members attended the Full Duty Banquet in Vermont. While the banquet itself was the usual delicious event, the guest speaker was somewhat disappointing. Artist, Don Troiani, did not speak about how he came to be a military artist. He opened a Q and A session, and let his audience draw him out. It was not the polished talk and Q & A of Ken Burns two years ago. Troiani did note that the topics of his artwork are chosen by those who commission it. If we commissioned him to paint Willard and the 125th NYVI at Gettysburg, he would meticulously research the topic and paint the scene. Prints would

then be made and sold. He does this about four times a year. More of his topics are about Confederate actions because more of his commissions are from patrons interested in those actions.

It was also announced that the mother of lifetime member, Sue Knost, died recently after a long illness. On behalf of all members of the Round Table, the Board wishes to express our sincerest sympathies.

UP-COMING EVENTS

Peterboro Civil War Days will be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 11th and 12th. This small village on route 20 near Syracuse was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Each year the village sponsors a Civil War weekend with encampments, presentations, entertainment and period foods. A number of Civil War groups participate, including the RT with a commemorative postal cancellation. **The Smithfield Community Center in Peterboro will be the home of the National Abolitionist Hall of Fame and Museum. The NPS has designated the Gerrit Smith Estate in Peterboro as a National Historic Landmark.**



On Saturday June 18th, the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga will have a Civil War Weekend and Encampment. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SUNDAY DATE HAS BEEN CANCELLED. The RT will be represented by an information table along with various exhibits.

Gettysburg – 142nd Anniversary – Friday, July 1st to Monday, July 4th. This is always an exciting event with many tours provided by the Park Service, free lectures by authors at the Greystone Bookstore tent, and the daily re-enactments. This is also a major event for the RT to raise money for preservation activities. The RT will have a block of rooms in the nearby motel. Rates will be higher this year however. Budget cuts for the Park Service may also impact upon the number of guided tour available to the public. More details will follow.

Civil War Days in Troy will be held on Saturday, July 9th and Sunday July 10th. The site will be in Troy's Prospect Park. This has been held at the King Solomon Masonic Temple the past several years, but it had become popular and has outgrown that site. Prospect Park allows for a larger venue. Activities include an encampment and a re-enactment of a Civil War battle. There will be other types of entertainment. The RT will need volunteers for our information tables.

On Monday, July 11th, at 1:00pm, there will be a History Teachers' Summer Institute at Union College. We are looking for volunteers to present in a mini-conference for the teachers, entitled, *Teaching the Civil War*. Interested members should contact president, Matt George for details.

On Sunday, July 17th, the Round Table will have its annual picnic at Thatcher State Park, south of Albany. The picnic will be at the Horseshoe 2 area, which is near the swimming pool. Reserve this date now.

Sunday, July 31st, is Induction Day at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The RT will have a booth for sales of cachets and T-shirts. Volunteers are being sought.

Chamberlain Days in Maine will be held on Wednesday, August 10th through Saturday, August 13th. President, Matt George has attended this activity several times. He states it is a great experience for Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans, and will give anyone more details about the event.

CIVIL WAR HERITAGE DAY, 10:00 – 3:00, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2005

The Civil War Monument at Albany Rural Cemetery contains the names of **648** Albany County residents who were **“Killed in Action.”** The bronze plates on the monument were cast from a melted-down Civil War cannon. During the four years of war, **Albany averaged 13.5 dead and about 50 wounded per month.** In the days following a major battle, casualties could hit 4 or 5 times that.

On June 7, 1862, in the midst of the carnage, the Trustees of Albany Rural Cemetery donated a section, which was named the **Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Plot** to bury and honor these soldiers. The Trustees resolution read: *“--- a sufficient and suitable piece of ground be set apart to inter the remains of officers and soldiers of the Army of the Union who have fallen or may fall in endeavoring to suppress the present Rebellion.”*

The schedule for the day will include:

10 am to 3 pm: Regimental Camp set up by soldiers of the 125th NYVI Reenactment Regiment, 61st NYVI Reenactment Regiment, and a Zouave contingent from the Hudson Valley.

10 am to 1 pm: Civil War tours will be conducted, both walking tours and horse drawn tours. There will be a charge for the horse drawn tours.

10:30 am to 1:30 pm: Music will be provided by John Quinn’s 77th New York Regimental Balladeers, a nationally recognized Civil War group which has several CD’s to their credit.

All Day: Exhibits and Tables featuring the Capital District Civil War Round Table, the Watervliet Arsenal, Albany Rural Cemetery, and others.

2:00 pm: Rededication Service will include a Civil War Color Guard, presentation of several dignitaries, history of Albany Rural, Chaplain’s Invocation, President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, wreath laying ceremony, and military volley salute and taps. At the conclusion of the service, visitors will be invited to place a flower on the grave of their selected soldier.

President and Mrs. Lincoln have been invited and have advised us that they plan to attend. The event is FREE to the public, but we request a \$3.00 per car donation for parking to offset expenses.

LINCOLN MEN AND SONS OF DIXIE - A New Feature of *The Dispatch*.

If you have a Civil War relative who was a soldier, please send a brief biography and a picture, if available, to the editor.

MEMORIAL DAY

A Note Upon the Death of Colonel Edward Frisby

By Robert E. Mulligan, Jr.

"Colonel, you are hit." Major Chrysler had noticed and hurried to his colonel's side. Now he could see the blood streaming from the shattered jaw; see the gauntleted hands tighten around the reins of his horse. "Major, to your post!"

Colonel Edward Frisby of the 13th New York Volunteers had been urging his men forward. Again brandishing his sword, Frisby started his horse forward. His regiment was charging at the double quick, at the forefront of the Division. It would not do to have it fail at so perilous a moment, to fail in so public a manner.

But scarcely had Frisby "uttered the words of command, when he was struck on the top of his head with another bullet, which passed through and came out on the opposite side, killing him instantly."

Frisby dropped from his horse, and lay on the battle field, surrounded by 2 officers and 47 enlisted men of his regiment also killed at the great Union disaster which was the Second Battle of Bull Run. Two officers and 12 men would die of wounds after the battle; 4 officers and 76 men would recover from their wounds, and 2 officers and 34 men would be taken prisoner.

It was a harsh initiation to war for this virgin regiment, and later casualties would not even approach the severity of loss suffered on August 30th, 1862.

Edward Frisby was born in 1809 in the town of Trenton, Oneida County, New York. Orphaned as a teenager, he came to Albany

when he was 17 to live with a brother. He was apprenticed to John Mayell, a member of that prominent family of Albany hatmakers. Sober and hard working, Frisby went into business for himself, prospered, and married Mary A. Stevens in November of 1832. For amusement he served as an officer of the Militia. (You must remember that in the pre-electronic age, membership in fire companies, mandolin orchestras, church societies, and yes, militia companies, was one of the means of companionship, entertainment and political influence.

Colonel Frisby commanded Albany's 25th regiment of Militia in 1856 when he was promoted to Brigadier General of the 11th Brigade, 3rd Division. He resigned in 1860 owing to advancing age. He was then but fifty-one years old.

He accompanied the 25th on its three months of service when it set off for Virginia in response to President Lincoln's request for troops to defend the Capital in the early spring of 1861. The need for trained officers was so great however, that he left when he was offered, and accepted, the command of the 30th Regiment, then being formed in Troy for two years service.

The regiment saw little action, before and after Bull Run. But it was certainly in the forefront of the battle on that day. Frisby lay dead on the field for four days, until he was buried by the surgeon of the 22nd NY Volunteers, and the grave marked. Most Federals were eventually buried in mass graves by the Confederates. The surgeon's marker allowed a deputation of Albanians to travel through enemy lines, locate the grave, and recover the body, which was brought back to Albany.

There, on September 22nd, an immense throng of persons crowded the sidewalks of

Broadway, as Frisby's body was borne on the horse-drawn trolley car, north to the cemetery entrance. Businesses were closed and minute guns fired to mark the grief of the community over the loss of such a prominent citizen. It was prophesied that his fame would long endure, and that the sacrifice of such a patriot would not be forgotten.

And if you have read this far, then Frisby is not forgotten: although his memory rests today upon no more than a time-worn headstone topped with an eagle, and a single chapter in an old and very rare book.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY: A SHRINE TO AMERICA'S HEROES

During the Civil War, there was a shortage of space in which to bury the many dead. In June 1864, without public fanfare or formal ceremonies, the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, designated the estate of Robert E. Lee's wife as a military burial ground. At that time it was no honor to be buried at Arlington, since only those who died unknown or whose families could not afford the cost of private burial were interred there. Over the years it has become recognized as perhaps the most well-known military cemetery in the United States. Within Arlington's 657 acres are buried more than 250,000 people.

Arlington House was originally built to be a living memorial to George Washington. It was built by Washington's adopted son, George Washington Parke Custis. He had amassed a huge collection of memorabilia and artifacts that had belonged to the First President. Custis lived there with his wife and daughter, and their daughter's husband,

Lt-Col. Robert E. Lee. Lee lived there for nearly 30 years, but never owned the property. When Custis and his wife died, their daughter was given the right to inhabit and control Arlington House for the rest of her life. Upon her death, the property would pass to her eldest son, George Washington Custis Lee. Thus, Robert E. Lee never owned the property.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the lands were confiscated by the Union Army because of Lee's decision to leave the Union, and because of the commanding artillery position of the estate overlooking Washington, D.C. Mrs. Lee wrote letters to Brig. Gen. Irwin McDowell and to General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, asking that the home be well protected. Despite reassurances, Arlington House became a headquarters for the Union Army, and many of the irreplaceable heirlooms of the Washington, Custis and Lee families were lost. On June 7, 1862, Congress passed "An Act for the Collection of Direct Taxes in the Insurrectionary Districts of the United States," which allowed the government to confiscate private property in Confederate states for governmental use. Because Mrs. Lee did not come personally to Washington, D.C. to pay the assessed tax, the Federal government "purchased" the property for the exact amount of the assessed value.

Now that the government owned Arlington, it fell under the direct control of the quartermaster general of the Army, Brig. Gen. Montgomery Meigs. By 1864, with the continuation of the war and its heavy Union casualties, Meigs was asked to submit suggestions for additional cemetery space. He suggested the immediate lands around Arlington House, and Stanton quickly agreed. It was clear that Meig's intention was to bury soldier within the immediate proximity to the mansion, rendering it

uninhabitable should the Lee family attempt to return.

There may have been a secondary reason for Meigs' selection of the Arlington estate for a military burial ground. Records indicate that more than a month prior to his proposal to Stanton, Meigs had ordered the first burial of military dead on Arlington's grounds. By June 15, when Meigs had written to Stanton, more than a dozen soldiers were already buried there. On May 13, 1864, Private William Christman, a farmer from Pennsylvania, and a member of Company G of the 67th Pennsylvania Infantry became the first soldier to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His grave is in section 27 near the north boundary of the cemetery. The earliest burials took place in Section 27, which was actually far from Arlington House.

Meigs expected to bury as many soldiers as possible around the mansion. However, at first the soldier quartered at the mansion objected to the placement of graves near the house, and ordered the burial details to inter the bodies far from the mansion. When Meigs visited the cemetery in August of 1864, he expected to find the house nearly unapproachable due to the number of new graves. Instead he found it much as it had been when the mansion was first occupied by Federal troops in May 1861. Meigs was furious, and demanded that 26 bodies be brought immediately from the hospitals in Washington. He personally supervised the burials on that hot August day, and had the bodies placed around Mrs. Lee's once famous rose garden. These graves remain in their original locations, and can be seen encircling the restored garden.

In April 1866 Meigs ordered the construction of a stone and masonry burial vault, 20 feet in diameter, and 10 feet deep

in the rose garden. In the vault, he placed the remains of 2,111 unknown soldiers whose remains were found in trenches or scattered over battlefield within a 25 mile radius of Washington. Nearly 1800 came from Bull Run. Despite its checkered origin, this monument proudly stands today as Arlington's memorial to the Unknown Dead of the Civil War.

Montgomery Meigs and his wife are buried within 100 yards of the rose garden. Nearby is his son, Lt. John Rodgers Meigs, who was killed late in the war in cold blood by /southern guerillas, The manner of young Meigs' death, further contributed to his father's bitter hatred toward the South.

After the war, Robert Lee's son, Custis Lee challenged the government's process by which it obtained the property. The legal case wound its way through Virginia courts to the U.S. Supreme Court five years later. By a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that the United States had denied Mary Lee her property without due process when its tax commissioners had refused to accept the payment of taxes from anyone but the owner. (*Adapted from James Edward Peters book Arlington National Cemetery.*)

DECORATION DAY

Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day was first observed nationally on May 30, 1868 when flowers were placed on the more than 20,000 graves of Union and Con federate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. After World War I, it was changed from honoring just those who died in the Civil War, to those Americans dying in any war. Although Waterloo, NY was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, several cities also claim to be the birthplace.