

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***

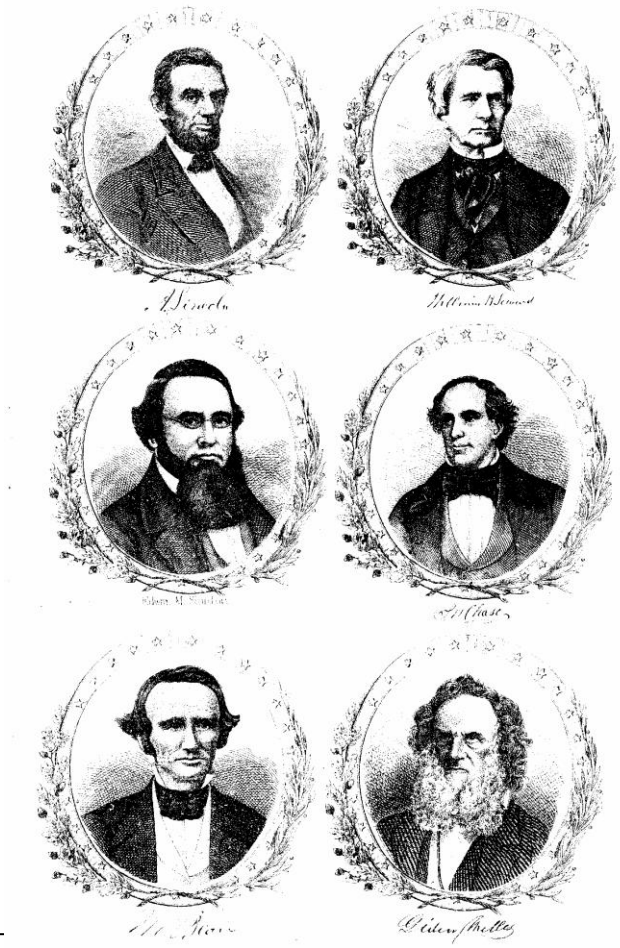
Volume 23 Number 6 **February 2006**

LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET

This is from an etching of Lincoln and his 1st cabinet. Lincoln and Seward were political competitors, yet Lincoln chose Seward as his Secretary of State.

Who was Seward, and what kind of a man was he?

For February, we usually choose a Lincoln topic, and the story of Lincoln and Seward is appropriate. Come join us on the 10th.



FEBRUARY MEETING

Friday February 10, 2006
Guilderland Library
2228 Western Ave.

SOCIAL HOUR	**6;00-7:00PM**
BUSINESS MEET	**7:00-7:30PM**
PRESENTATIONS	**7:30-8:30PM**
Q&A	**8:30-9:30 PM**

CDCWRT MEETING

The February meeting of the CDCWRT will be held in the Guilderland Public Library on Friday, February 10th, 2006 at 7:30pm. At last month's Potpourri Meeting we thought we had the Friday the 13th curse under control. The weather was spring-like and there was no rain, snow or sub-zero temperatures on the horizon for Friday night. The crowd was great and the Helderberg Room was full. Then disaster struck. The power-point projection system, which Lew Warner had set up, could not integrate with the laptop computer for Nancy Farina's presentation. The other speakers pressed on, but suddenly we were informed that we had to leave the library by 9:00pm, instead of the anticipated 10:00pm. There was no time for questions and viewing of displays.

So with some on-the-spot rearranging, Nancy Farina ***will talk about, "William H. Seward – A Man for All Seasons." This will be an expanded version of the talk that had been planned. The power-point projector will be tested and operational before the meeting. Our previously planned speakers for February and March have graciously agreed to move their talks back a month. The silver lining in all this rescheduling lies in the fact that the topic of Seward and his interactions with Lincoln, are appropriate for February and Lincoln's birthday.***

Most of us know Seward as a member of Lincoln's Cabinet, and as the man who was almost stabbed to death the night of Lincoln's assassination. We also may recall that he was responsible for the purchase of Alaska from Russia. However this complex New Yorker was much more, as Nancy will discuss in her presentation. There are local ties that abound, and Sward's relationship with Lincoln was much more complex and involved.

Nancy Farina, recently retired, has been involved with physical therapy education for many years. She graduated from the University of Rochester, and attended the School of Physical Therapy at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. She later became the Director of the School of Physical Therapy at Russell Sage College, and most recently held the same position at Nazareth College in Rochester. In between she obtained a Masters in International Education (Sage) and her EdD at George Washington University. She also served as the Director of Education for the American Physical Therapy Association and was on the faculty of Marymount University in Arlington, VA.

We will also repeat our **MAGAZINE EXCHANGE NIGHT** ***when the CDCWRT will sell old Civil War magazines for $0.50 apiece. There will also be a selection of used soft-cover and hardcover books for sale, in addition to CDCWRT baseball T-shirts and other gift items.***

PAST EVENTS

A full room was in attendance for the January meeting. After the technical failure,

Howard Young stepped into the breach and talked about breech-loading rifles. He had brought a great collection of primarily original weapons from the Brown Bess to the M-14. He traced the development of the musket to rifle in U.S. history. There were many questions from the audience, but unfortunately the collection was not on display very long because of the 9:00pm closure time. Perhaps Howard can bring a few back to each of the next several meeting to allow everyone to examine these artifacts close up.

Marian Jewell spoke about two interesting articles in local southern newspapers in the state where he daughter now resides. It was a history of the Black Confederate soldier who went to war with his plantation owner's son and after the war became a hunter and organizer of hunts for hire. He made the arrangements for Theodore Roosevelt to shoot a bear, but Roosevelt could not kill the confined beast. This led to the story of the "teddy bear," which shortly thereafter became a toy for children.

Finally, Bob Bruer spoke about the bike path signs along the Hudson-Mohawk Rivers trail from the Corning Preserve in Albany to Schenectady. He was involved in the research and posting of the signs, which describe the historical significance of various view-sheds along the path. He told the interesting story about the various islands in the Hudson, and the string of amusement parks that existed on one of the islands. Once again there was not enough time to look at the posters that were replicas of the signs. Perhaps Bob will bring these to the February meeting and hang them again.

BOARD MEETING

The January Board Meeting was held on January 31st, and was too late to be included in this newsletter. It will be summarized in next month's newsletter.

UP-COMING EVENTS

COVER MANIA – Saturday, February 18th, 10:00am - 6:00pm and Sunday, February 19th, 9:00am – 4:00pm. This is large stamp, cachet, postcard and letter show held yearly in Albany. The RT has always had a table at the show. It will be held at the Clarion (formerly the Quality Inn) on Watervliet Ave, just off I-90, exit 5. Volunteers are needed to help man the tables and just greet people and tell them about or group. Contact Sue or Joe if interested. Or just come to visit the show--- it's free!

On February 24-26, Friday to Sunday, The Underground Railroad Conference will be held in Troy, NY. This conference will highlight the underground RR movement in New York State. It will be held at Russell Sage College, and will include lectures, 35 workshops, tours of sites in the region, re-enactors, and music. For additional information, go to www.ugrworkshop.com.

The March meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, March 10th. J.J. Jennings will present a second installment to his series on Hancock. He has entitled this presentation, **"Hancock and the First Day at Gettysburg: Myth Versus Reality."**

THERE WILL NOT BE A CDCWRT MEETING ON FRIDAY, THE 14TH OF APRIL. THE SECOND FRIDAY IS OUR USUAL MEETING NIGHT, BUT THIS YEAR IT IS GOOD FRIDAY OF EASTER WEEKEND. THURSDAY, THE 13TH, IS PASSOVER. IT IS ALSO THE WEEKEND OF LINCOLN'S DEATH AND IRS TAXES. MEMBERS

ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONSIDER ATTENDING OTHER APRIL ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW. A DECISION HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE AS TO AN APRIL MEETING ON THE 21ST.

On Saturday, April 8th, the 10th Annual Full Duty Award Banquet will be hosted by the Vermont Civil War Council at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier, VT. The guest speaker will be Michael Kauffman, author of "***American Brutus,"*** the story of John Wilkes Booth. In past years, a number of our members have attended these banquets. The food is excellent, and there are Civil War sites to visit along the way, including Pleasant View Cemetery in Burlington. More detail will be in next month's newsletter.

The May meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, May 12th at the Guilderland Library. Jim O'Dell will present, **"Civil War Trains."**

June 10-11, Saturday and Sunday, mark the 14th Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend in Peterboro on route 20 between Utica and Syracuse. There will be a soldiers' encampment, period entertainment and performances, Civil War music, and crafts. There will be walking tours of the Gerrit Smith National Historic Landmark and Heritage NY Underground Railroad sites. There will be a skirmish on Saturday and Sunday, and a Blue and Gray Ball Saturday night. Our RT and other groups have information tables at this event, and a special postal cancellation will be available. For more information go to **www.the12thus.com.**

June 24-25, Saturday and Sunday, marks the 10th Annual Civil War Encampment at Prospect Park, Troy, NY. This is hosted by the 77th NYVI. There will be skirmishes each day, including artillery. The CDCWRT and the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway Museum will have displays and a special postal cancellation. Breakfast is available both days and a dinner is available on Saturday. This event was previously held at the King Solomon Masonic Temple in Troy, but had outgrown the site. This is becoming a great local event that deserves our support.

July 1-3, Saturday – Monday, marks the 143rd Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. These are the same dates as the original battle in 1863. The re-enactment is entitled, *High Tide of the Confederacy – Turning Point of the Civil War.* There will be battle scenarios every day, as well as walks on the battlefield with Park Service Rangers. This is a major event for the CDCWRT. Volunteers are needed. Plan ahead now, since rooms are very limited in motels for this event. Info is at www.gettysburgreenactment.com.

July 21-23, Friday-Sunday, also marks the 145th Anniversary cycle for the Civil War and the First Battle of Manassas (First Bull Run). The reenactment will be held at Cedar Creek Battlefield in Middletown, VA.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: HIS HUMOR AND WISDOM

As a young lawyer in Illinois, Lincoln was pleading a case before a jury when he became convinced that he was losing, even though right was on his side. He cautioned the jury to not reach an incorrect conclusion based solely on the facts. He told the jury this story.

"A farmer back home was sitting on his front porch," Lincoln said, "when suddenly his six-year old son came running from the barn

saying, 'Father, father, the hired man is in the hayloft with Big Sister. The hired man is pulling down his pants and Big Sister is lifting up her skirts, and I fear they are going to pee on the hay.'

'Now, now, Son,' said the farmer calmly, 'You have all the facts right but you have reached the wrong conclusion.'"

The jury roared with laughter and Lincoln won his case handily.

* * * * * *

A woman once approached the President rather imperiously. "Mr. President," she said, very theatrically, "you must give me a colonel's commission for my son. Sir, I demand it, not as a favor, but as a right. Sir, my grandfather fought at Lexington. Sir, my uncle was the only man that did not run away at Bladensburg. Sir, my father fought at New Orleans, and my husband was killed at Monterey.

"I guess madam," answered Mr. Lincoln, dryly, "your family has done enough for the country. It is time to give somebody else a chance."

* * * * * *

Writing to Hooker, who succeeded Burnside, Lincoln said:

"I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not indispensable, quality. You are ambitious, which within reasonable bounds does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel with your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother-officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it is not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship."

* * * * * *

After a long period of inaction on the part of the Union forces, a telegram from Cumberland Gap reached Mr. Lincoln, saying that firing was heard in the direction of Knoxville. The President simply remarked that he was glad of it. General Burnside was in a perilous position in Tennessee at that time, and those present were greatly surprised at Lincoln's calm view of the case. "You see, it reminds me of Mistress Sallie Ward, a neighbor of mine, who had a very large family. Occasionally one of her numerous progeny would be heard crying in some out-of-the-way place, upon which Mrs. Ward would exclaim, 'There's one of my children not dead yet!'"

* * * * * *

When Lincoln was in Richmond after it came into the possession of the Union forces, he looked for the house of George Pickett. "Is this where George Pickett lives?" he asked a woman with a baby in her arms. She said she was Mrs. Pickett. Then he told her who he was, insisting that he came not as President, but simply as "Abraham Lincoln, George's old friend." He took the little one in his arms, and thus did this noble conqueror restore the Union in one heart. He had known Pickett in

Illinois and Lincoln obtained for him his appointment at West Point.

MISCELLANEOUS

RT member, Jon Olson, has donated his entire collection of Civil War magazines for this month's sale. They include the magazine sleeves also. They are priced to sell primarily as three year sets for $5-8 (depending on the magazine), which also includes the magazine case. Included are 54 issues of ***America's Civil War,*** 86 issues of ***The Civil War Times,*** 54 issues of ***North and South,*** 29 issues of ***Blue and Gray,*** and 34 issues of ***Military Images (*****SOLD).** If you are interested in a block of magazines, call Matt Farina before the meeting. Otherwise all will go on sale for $0.50 each.

Jon also said he would donate $25 to the RT if he could sell for $200 an unframed, Dale Gallon print entitled, **"Last Promise."** It depicts Brig. Gen. John Reynolds and Catherine May Hewitt entering into a secret engagement before he reports to the Army of the Potomac. Jon's phone is 785-1700.

* * * * * *

On December 1st, 2005, Betty King, long-time member of the CDCWRT, died in Albany Medical Center. On January 15th, the father of Mike Spaulding, Board member, died suddenly at work Many members of the RT attended services. The company and support of friends at these times, is most appreciated.

THE LAST FULL MEASURE

As many of you are aware, the third Civil War film in the Shaara series will not be made (see Baltimore Sun January 12th). Ron Maxwell owes $300,000 to Washington County (MD) for not responding with film plans by the December 2005 deadline. ***Gods and Generals*** was a public flop for Ted Turner, as he sank over $70 million of his own money into making the film, while realizing a box-office gross of only $12.9 million. Many experts attribute the failure of the film to the narrowness of the focus.

Instead of sticking to the original book, ***Gods and Generals*****,** by Jeff Shaara, Turner elected to highlight Stonewall Jackson almost exclusively. Hiring James Robertson, the great Jackson biographer, as Technical Director almost guaranteed that this would happen. As a result, the narrow focus did not realize a wide audience. Turner needed a very wide audience if he expected to make a profit from the film.

What made ***Gettysburg*** popular and successful was its effective use of multiple viewpoints and multiple actors. This is the typical Shaara style. Unfortunately, the screenwriters came up with something a bit different. *(From an e-mail sent by Chris Kolakowski in the wilds of Kentucky).*

* * * * * *

Montgomery County (MD) has agreed to buy an 18th-century house with an attached log cabin that was once home to a former slave whose autobiography inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, "**Uncle Tom's Cabin."** The Planning Board is expected to approve the $1 million contract for the three-bedroom home and acre of land on Old Georgetown Road in Rockville.

A log cabin off the dining room was once a detached "summer kitchen" where Josiah Henson and other slaves lived in the late 1700s and early 1800s as part of a 3700-acre plantation owned by Isaac Riley. The county plans to open the house and cabin to the public for an educational experience. A

committee of historians, experts in black history and neighborhood residents will help decide its use and how it will be restored. The dirt floor than Henson wrote about from her slave days, has been replaced by creaky pine floorboards, but the same stone fireplace stands at one end of the 13 x 17 foot room. *(from the Washington Post)*

* * * * * *

For years, the cosseted canines of North Arlington have had the run of a scrap of land at a historic Civil War fort (**Fort Ethan Allen)**, exasperating history buffs who ache at the sight of dogs taking care of business on a parade ground where President Abraham Lincoln once reviewed the troops. Everyone in Arlington thought the matter was finally settled in 2004 when the County Board voted to move the park to a less historically significant site 200 yards away. The county plans to build a $430,000 "canine exercise area" with a urinary drainage system, deck and $44,000 water fountain system for humans and dogs.

The controversy has now been re-ignited when construction workers began uncovering Civil War artifacts, and historians began to urge a halt in digging until a complete archeological survey can be done. Wally Owen, the author of ***Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington,*** protected the Chain Bridge, a main artery into Washington. (*from the Washington Post)*

And Congress appropriated how much money for the purchase of battlefield land in 2005? And you don't think the Civil War touches your life every day? *(Ed.)*

* * * * * *

For the past two years, we have canceled our October battlefield trips. The reasons have been complex and multiple. In the past, we have sponsored trips, which ranged from $269 to $575. This included ALL transportation, hotels, most meals, including a banquet, top guides, all entrance fees, and with enough left over to make a donation to a particular battlefield. All arrangements were made for members on the tour.

One of our members went on a nationally sponsored tour about the same time as our last tour. His tour was entitled, "In the Footsteps of Stonewall Jackson: Part III." This was the cost breakdown:

Registration – member $375
Non-member $450
Bonus Bus Tour - $65
Hotel Room - $286
Amtrak - $194
Taxi - $8
Total for 3 days $1003
This did not include meals, and he made his own travel arrangement (train) to arrive at the site for the tour.

With the increased cost of fuel since last summer, all transportation costs have risen, especially bus costs. One of the issues the Board will discuss is the topic of future trips. It is very likely that trips will cost substantially more, and bus travel from Albany less likely. Reservations for such trips will be earlier, requiring early announcements, so members can make financial plans. Likewise, there may be sizeable, non-refundable deposits necessary.

In lieu of 3-4 day trips, the Board will also explore shorter (one day or overnight), less expensive, "local" trips as alternatives.