



The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org



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Gen. U.S. Grant to Speak in Watervliet



Gen. U.S. Grant will journey to Watervliet, NY as part of a post-war tour of facilities that put forth an enormous war effort in the Late Unpleasantness. He is scheduled to visit the Watervliet Arsenal where ammunition and carriages for the 3-inch ordinance rifle were manufactured. He will also stop in Troy to view Henry Burden's famous horseshoe machines.

An informal meeting of some of the region's noted history scholars is scheduled for Friday evening after dinner with Erastus Corning. The scholars are members of a "round table" who will question the General about various aspects of his campaigns.

The image above is a colorized version of M.B. Brady's photograph taken during the war.

MARCH MEETING

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

General Grant Remembers President Lincoln

By Steve Trimm

Social Hour	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Business Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Presentation	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Questions & Answers	8:00 – 8:30 p.m.

The regular meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, March 10, 2017. Our guest speaker will be Steve Trimm, tour guide and educator at Grant Cottage State Historic Site. He will do a living history program where he will portray General Grant. The title of his presentation will be, "General Grant Remembers President Lincoln."

Steve will look at the factors that made Grant and Lincoln a good team. This will include some things they had in common in their personal histories. Speaking as Grant, Trimm will describe how he and Lincoln were not sure of each other at first, and of the incidents during the war that persuaded them that they could trust each other. Grant will of course describe face-to-face meetings with the President at the White House and at City Point. He will make some observations about Robert E. Lee, Robert Lincoln, and Mary Todd Lincoln. The talk will go right up to the last day Grant and Lincoln were together...which happened to be the very day Lincoln was shot. The General will outline the events that

followed the assassination, and he will compare Andrew Johnson and Abraham Lincoln as Chief Executives and as men.

When he is not in the role of U.S. Grant, Steve is a NYS retiree from the Office of Mental Health. As a teenager during the centennial of the Civil War, he was given an assignment to research the activities of the 128th NYI which got him hooked on the Civil War. He subscribed to Harper's Weekly which was being reprinted every week from 1861 to 1865 (Remember, all this was before Wikipedia!). Additionally, his grandfather, who was born in 1879, knew many Union veterans, and he shared their stories with Steve. He still consults his grandfather's 10-volume set of A Photographic history of the Civil War which was published in 1911. This treasured set was all Steve wanted from his grandfather's estate.

FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

At the meeting on February 20th, the treasurer reported \$1,403.98 in the Regular Account and \$4,046.71 in the Preservation Account. Our President Baillargeon's request for an end of year donation, netted \$555.00. A \$500.00 donation to the Civil War Trust was made for a 14.96/1 match to preserve battle land at Harpers Ferry and Cedar Creek.

The Civil War Trust has thanked the Round Table for its donations, and has informed us that the Round Table is one of the top 300 donors in the Trust.

Paid membership now stands at 65. The CDCWRT will participate in the Masonic Civil War Days in Troy on June 3-4.

DUES ARE DUE

This is a reminder that the annual dues of \$30 are due. The Treasurer will be present to accept cash, real Confederate money or checks. Checks may also be mailed to the CDCWRT at the address in our letterhead.

UP-COMING MEETING/EVENTS.

On Friday, April 14, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Terri Olszowy who will talk about the Elmira Prison Camp.

On Friday, May 12, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Chris Mackowski who will talk about Spotsylvania and the fighting at the Mule Shoe.

On Friday, June 9, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Amy Bracewell who will talk about Battlefield Preservation at Cedar Creek and Saratoga.

THE UNION'S LAST IRONCLAD SAILOR

By Steve Glazer, Lt. Colonel USA (Ret.)

On April 19, 1945 -- less than three weeks before the end of World War II in Europe -- *The New York Times* carried an article headlined, "Veteran of Monitor, 101, Dies." The U.P. news report, datelined the previous day from Vineland, New Jersey, began, "Andrew Fenton, who served on the iron-clad Monitor during the Civil War, died today in the Soldiers Home here." Thus was born a tortuous tale that continues to this day.

The Times' report drew the attention of numerous historians over the years. Professor Jay Hoar of the University of Maine wove an elaborate tale describing how Fenton suffered the partial loss of sight and hearing in action against Fort Sumter when one of the *Monitor's* guns unexpectedly discharged, and how he later dramatically survived the iconic ironclad's sinking. (*The North's Last Boys in Blue*, Higginson Book Co., 2006, pp. 352-57.) Hoar largely relied on an interview of the old sailor published in 1938.

On the other hand, John Quarstein, Director of the USS *Monitor* Center in Newport News, Virginia, concluded that there is no proof for Fenton's purported service on the *Monitor*. Indeed, Quarstein goes much further. He categorically and repeatedly asserted in his book on the ship's crew that "there is no indication of *any* naval service" by Fenton.

(*The Monitor Boys*, The History Press, 2011, pp. 299-301.) The *Monitor* Center's website similarly now asserts that "no records of naval service have been found" for Fenton.

Both Hoar and Quarstein, as well as *The Times*, were mistaken. Moreover, there are abundant official records documenting Andrew Fenton's distinguished military service, making him New Jersey's last known survivor of the Union Navy, and the nation's last known survivor of the Civil War's ironclad monitors, albeit not the USS *Monitor*.

Andrew Fenton was born in St. Augustine, Florida, on Christmas 1843, but his family moved to Philadelphia when he was still an infant. According to unearthed naval records, Fenton enlisted for three years as a 1st Class Boy at the U.S. Naval Rendezvous in Philadelphia on September 2, 1862, on the receiving ship *Princeton*. Soon thereafter, he was sent to the USS *Patapsco*, a *Passaic*-class ironclad monitor first launched later that month from Wilmington, Delaware, by shipbuilder Harlan & Hollingsworth. *Patapsco* was commissioned on January 2, 1863, when Fenton was formally assigned to her according to his service records. Fenton and his ship would be engaged in combat operations for the next two years,

According to naval records, on the afternoon of November 2, 1863, while firing at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, a premature explosion of one of *Patapsco's* guns instantly killed a crew member and injured several others, including then-landsman Andrew Fenton. (*Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XV, p. 88.) And on the night of January 15, 1865, the *Patapsco*, on station for picket duty some 700 yards from Fort Sumter, struck a large torpedo and sank in the harbor's channel within 15 seconds, taking the ship's complement with her. Most perished, but Ordinary Seaman Andrew Fenton survived. (*Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XVI, pp. 178-79.) Two weeks later, Fenton reported for duty on the USS *Pawnee*, which saw action the following month in South Carolina against numerous Confederate artillery batteries.

On July 26, 1865, *Pawnee* was decommissioned at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where Fenton was honorably discharged the same day, according to the ship's final muster roll. However, Fenton was not done serving his country. One year later he re-enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and after that term expired, he enlisted yet again.

After his years at sea, Fenton made his home in Fairfield and Mount Holly, New Jersey, as well as in Philadelphia, where he was a member of Anna M. Ross G.A.R. Post No. 94. In 1881, he married Susan Cecelia Bamford of Bridgeton, New Jersey, one year later having a son, Andrew Percy Fenton. On April 18, 1945, the ancient mariner passed away in Vineland, being buried in Overlook Cemetery in Bridgeton, marking the end of a direct link to the Civil War and its transformation of naval warfare.

BUFORD'S VIEW – MARCH (A column by our Program Chair by Matt George.)

Tomorrow I will be attending the Underground Railroad History Project's mini-Conference on local African Burial Grounds. It was originally scheduled for February 18 but, was moved to the 25th. Also attending will be individuals from Schenectady, Albany, Kinderhook, Nassau, Troy, the NYS Museum, the NYS Office of Historic Preservation, and the Schuyler Flatts Burial Project. The main Underground Railroad Public History Conference entitled "Americans at Risk – Race, Denial, Privilege, and Who Matters" Will be held March 24-25 at Schenectady County Community College. Our Round Table has always supported this excellent Conference.

The Siena College Living History Day will be held Saturday, April 8 on the front lawn from 10:30 AM - 4:00 PM. The Round Table will have a booth there. Anybody wishing to join me is welcome. On Thursday, March 2 the Ravena, Coeymans, Selkirk Community Library will be holding their first in a series of conversations exploring different facets of the

Civil War experience. These discussions will be based on a selected number of assigned readings. The first book the group will be discussing is a historical novel called "March" by Pulitzer Prize winner Geraldine Brooks. Since I am the official facilitator of this 5 part program, I am currently reading the novel now to make sure I am well prepared to guide discussion and ask questions. It is very well written and raises many thought provoking considerations about the war's purpose, one's pre-assumed moral certainties, and the durability of individual idealism. The main character's name is March and it's a spin off from Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women". Brooks has expanded the character of the absent father who has gone off to war leaving the family behind. You are more than welcome to join us. Of course, you'll have to read the book by noon on Thursday March 2.

In July, we will again be doing the postal cancellation in Gettysburg. Joining me in raising money for battlefield preservation will be our high school potpourri speaker in January Richard Lalosh III, his father and his grandfather as well as my cousin (and Round Table member) Mark Allen from Thurmont, Maryland. Finally, I am almost through with the history course I'm auditing at Union College. It is not a course on the Civil War but a study of the history of pre-colonial through colonial eras in the Americas. There is a slight emphasis on social history. I've really enjoyed it and it certainly has been interesting sitting in a class with mostly 19 and 20 year olds.

DEMOCRACY IS DEPENDENT ON WAR

This is a synopsis of a review of a new book in the January 7-8, 2017 *The Wall Street Journal*. It is a very thought provoking book, **Forged Through Fire: War, Peace and the Democratic Bargain**, by political scientists John Ferejohn and Frances McCall Rosenbluth.

It begins with the paradox that humans have inflicted untold horrors on each other through wars, but these wars have been responsible for fostering one of our most cherished values, namely modern democracy, with its unique combination of universal suffrage and property rights. The authors do this through the Peloponnesian wars to Vietnam. The emergence of democracy depends on a particular kind of warfare.

Here's the logic. The rich and powerful are disinclined to share wealth or power with the poor. The poor become valuable when the elite are faced with external military threats. Armies have traditionally required manpower, and this requires large-scale mobilization of the population. This forces the elite to grant political concessions to the common man. While not an original thought, the authors make their case in explicit and persuasive detail.

In 508 B.C. Athenian aristocracy promised to turn political power to the Athenian public in exchange for their help in repelling Spartan and later Persian incursions. Athenian naval supremacy rested in the hands of the thousands of commoners who rowed the triremes. Similar dynamics led Rome's elite to grant freedom, land, citizenship and the franchise to an expanding body of commoners. Roman military accomplishments rested on wide manpower mobilization, rewarded by political voice.

But not all wars produce democracy. In medieval Europe, feudal lords were able to rely mainly on small forces of heavy cavalry to sustain their power. This eliminated the need to offer political concessions to commoners in exchange for military service. Later, the effective use of gunpowder tipped the balance away from cavalry in favor of mass armies. For a time however, European governments were able to finance armies with plunder from the New World. Pressures to democratize remained minimal and episodic.

In the 19th and 20th centuries conditions once again favored the widespread expansion of democracy. By the end of the 19th century, both France and Germany had enormous standing armies, and both had adopted representative governments with universal suffrage placating the masses, but counterbalanced by protections for property rights to assuage the concerns of the wealthy. But in much of Europe it took the white, hot wars of the 20th century, which required money and manpower, to favor representative government.

It happened quickly. Norway and Sweden initiated universal military conscription in the early 1900s, and within 10 years both had granted universal male suffrage. British conscription began in 1916, and by 1918 universal male suffrage had been granted. By the end of WWII, 60 million people were dead, but democracy had become the norm throughout the West.

The book is full of grim lessons. One lesson: warfare has been near-constant throughout human history. Lesson two: Those with power have rarely been inclined to relinquish it voluntarily. Only fear and threat have driven the elite to share with history's have-nots. However, even with all the right conditions present, coercion and propaganda were sometimes sufficient to thwart the development of democracy. Russia and China, for instance, have managed to buck the trend so far.

All this leads to an uncomfortable question. Wealthy modern states can once again increasingly outsource their security to private contractors. In addition, new military technologies are reducing the need for mass armies. This makes it possible to shift the balance of power away from ordinary citizens and back towards governing elites.

"When armies no longer need flesh and blood, what can take their place to stabilize democracy?" the authors wonder. Forged through war. Can democracy survive peace?

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Created in 1984, the Capital District Civil War Round Table is an incorporated non-profit educational organization. Meetings are held monthly in various locations in the Capital District. This newsletter is published eleven times per year. Annual dues are \$30. The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.

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