



The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

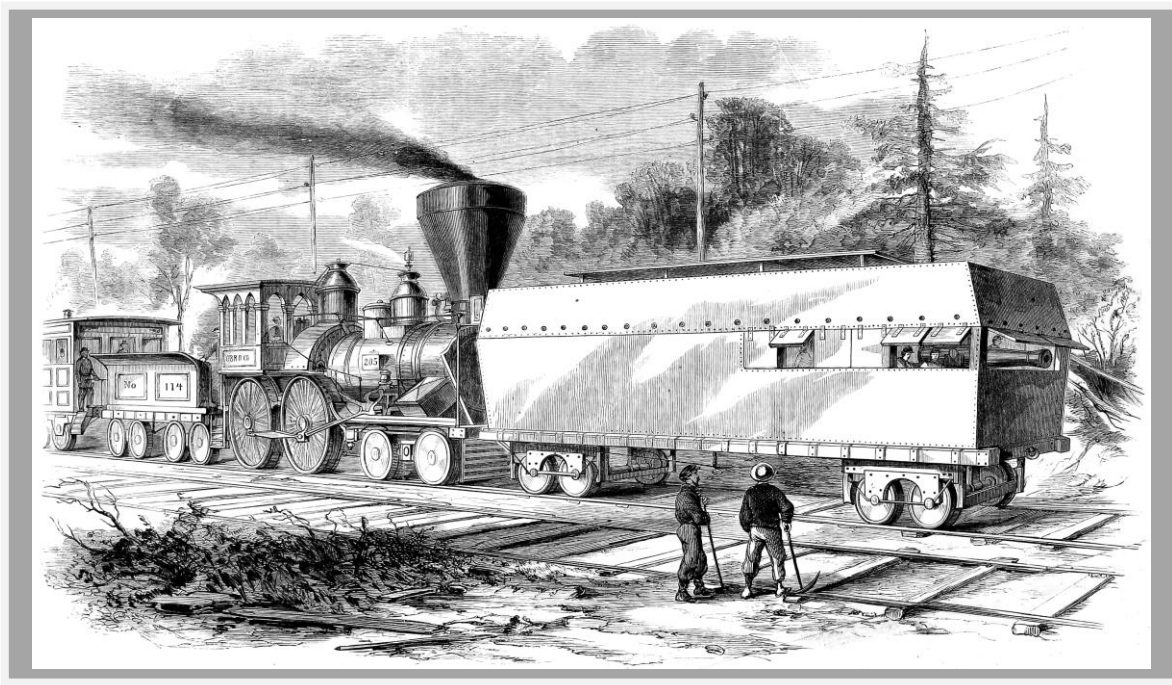
CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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Pictured above is an armored railroad car with a rifled artillery piece mounted within the car. These were known as railroad monitors, named after the USS Monitor of Hampton Roads fame. The armor on this type railroad monitor was relatively light and provided protection from small arms fire. Later monitors had sloped sides and thicker armor to deflect artillery shells. In this respect, they were similar to the modern tank. An armored train may have had a monitor at each end of the train. Coupled to these were rifle cars that carried infantry. These cars had shielding on the inside of the car. The locomotive and tender were in the middle of the train. Ironclad trains were generally employed to protect important stations, railyards, bridges and construction crews.

UP-COMING MEETING/EVENTS.

On Friday, October 13, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Judee Synakowski who will talk about Mary Todd Lincoln.

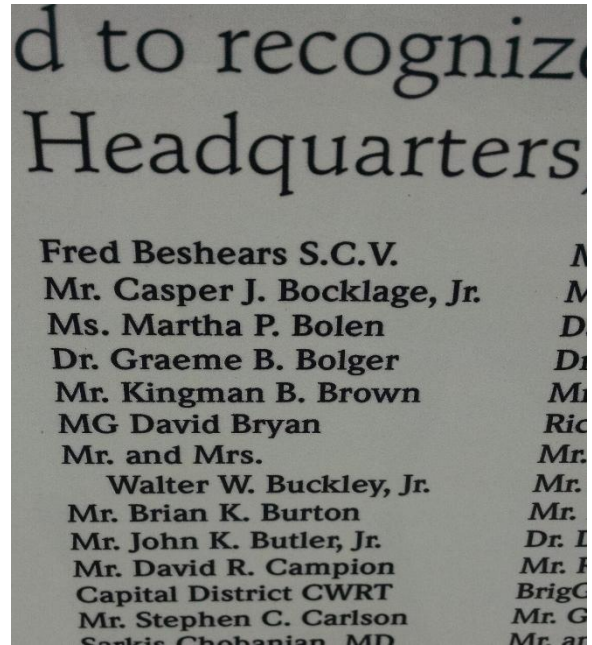
On Friday, November 10, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Dave Dixon who will talk about the Lost Gettysburg Address.

BUFORD'S VIEW – SEPTEMBER 2017

This column is provided by the Program Chair for the CDCWRT, Matt George.

Hopefully everyone had an enjoyable summer. The Round Table stayed active in July & August raising money for battlefield preservation. In Gettysburg (July 1-3), we made over \$500.00 at the re-enactment and subsequent mail order sales. On August 5 we made \$52.00 at the Civil War Music Festival at Windom.

While at Gettysburg I visited the newly restored Lee's Headquarters. Our Round Table made a sizable donation to this project. I was pleased to notice three large signs listing all the donors and on the middle sign was the "Capital District Civil War Round Table". So our contribution is recognized in print for visitors to Lee's Headquarters to see. I have some of the Gettysburg commemorative postal cancellations available for sale at our picnic and living history weekend August 18-20.



Plaque in front of restored Lee's HQ

On July 27 I attended the Underground Railroad Workshop's Y.A.T.S.I. (Young Abolitionists Teacher Scholarship Institute) open house at the Harriet and Stephen Myers House in Albany. It was truly inspirational to meet the many young adults who are involved in their various history and community related projects I was particularly impressed by one student originally

born in Malaysia whose dream is eventually to go to Law School. I encouraged him to never give up his dream. This organization is to be commended and supported.

In September (15-19) several members of the Round Table will be attending the National Civil War Round Table Conference in Centreville, Virginia. I hope to have a report as to what transpired in my October edition of Buford's View.

In the last column in June, I discussed part of Civil War historian Eric Foner's article "Our Monumental Mistakes" in his new book called Battles for Freedom. Continuing his analysis Foner points out that "especially but not exclusively in the South, Civil War monuments glorify soldiers and generals who fought for Southern independence, explaining their motivation by reference to the ideals of freedom, states' rights and individual autonomy – everything, that is, but slavery the 'cornerstone of the Confederacy' according to its Vice President, Alexander Stephens. South Carolina, has a marker honoring the 'faithful slaves' of the Confederate states, but one would be hard pressed to find monuments anywhere in the country to slave rebels like Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, to the 200,000 black soldiers and sailors who fought for the Union (or, for that matter, the thousands of white Southerners who remained loyal to the nation)."

Foner observes that fellow historian James Loewen points out, "most Confederate monuments were erected between 1890 and 1920 under the leadership of the United

Daughters of the Confederacy as part of a conscious effort to glorify and sanitize the Confederate cause and legitimize the newly installed Jim Crow system. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, 'one of the most vicious racists in history,' as Loewen puts it, was a slave trader, founder of the Ku Klux Klan and commander of troops who massacred black Union soldiers after their surrender at Fort Pillow. Yet there are more statues, markers and busts of Forrest in Tennessee than any other figure in the state's history, including President Andrew Jackson."

It should be noted, however, Foner's article was written in 1999. Since then there have been a few encouraging positive changes. Never the less, my observation at a CWT Conference in Memphis a couple of years ago does verify the continuing deification of Forrest. Part 3 will continue next month. I hope to see everybody at the picnic August 18.

REMEMBRANCE DAY – 2016

On November 19, 2016, the key-note speaker at the national military cemetery in Gettysburg was Levar Burton. The occasion was the 153rd anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Burton is probably best-known for his portrayal of Geordi in the Star-Trek series on TV and in the movies. Recent events have recalled Burton's well-delivered and well-received speech.

It has been brought to my attention that it is a rare occasion indeed when two of the honored traditions here in Gettysburg, Dedication Day and Remembrance Day should, by coincidence, fall on the same

calendar date. However, in truth and in full disclosure, I am not a big believer in coincidence and choose to believe instead that there is purpose in all that transpires, both in heaven and on this earth. So, as we gather on this day to pause and reflect and remember, I shall take my invitation to be here, to be part of some purposeful intent and with your kind permission, will use the time graciously given to me as an opportunity to share with you some of what is on my mind and on my heart these days. I will confess to you at the onset that recent events in America, have cause my heart to be disquieted and full of dismay and my Soul is discomfited.

When President Lincoln stood here one hundred and fifty-three years ago today, our nation was then, as it is now, in turmoil and he was faced with an America not dissimilar from our own; an America reeling from the effects of a very costly conflict. A conflict that was rooted in the opposition of ideas as well as ideals. And very much like today, a conflict where combatants on both sides of the divide who were once neighbors, friends, even family, now harbored hearts full of anger, dissention and distrust. In Lincoln's time, our nation

was locked in a struggle over the issues of race and class and the direction of our national economy, and we proved ourselves willing to wage a bloody war over which among us was to have access to the tenets of our nation's founding: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Fifteen decades later, these very issues confront us still and the promise of America has yet to be delivered to

too many of her children. So exactly what part of "All men are created equal" do we continue to fail to grasp?

No matter which candidate you supported in our most recent election, no matter which political ideology you embrace, we must finally come to the indisputable truth that we are indeed a house divided, and in another moment committed to our national memory, Abraham Lincoln once said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Not since the occasion we commemorate today has the chasm that separates us been so pronounced, so profound. So where do we go from here, America? I put it to you that we are, in this moment, a nation faced with a crisis that truly has the power to tear us asunder and unlike any outside force or influence, this crisis is of our own making, and has been over the past two hundred years fomented within the framework of our history.

Since our inception, the United States has revealed itself to possess a national character that is, at best, conflicted. We have forged for ourselves a duality of identity that, on the one hand, professes a love of freedom while on the other, engaging in the enslavement of our fellow man based solely on the color of one's skin. We say we treasure above all else a love of liberty, and yet we are willing to imprison over 100,000 of our Japanese brothers and sisters in internment camps during World War II. We claim to value justice, while making legitimate, through law and legislation, the oppression of any and

all that we can comfortably classify as “other.” And so I ask again, what part of “All men are created equal” have I failed to understand?

Whenever I have the opportunity to mention my Mother in public, I do. Erma Gene Christian. That is my Mother’s name. I believe that I am the man that I am because she is who she is! It is from my Mother that I have inherited my love of language and the written word. In my mother’s house you either read a book or got hit in the head with one. The choice was always yours, but she was determined that one way or another, you were going to engage with the written word!

Erma Gene’s first degree, in English Language and Literature, was from Philander Smith, an historically Black college in Little Rock, Arkansas. After two years at Kansas University, she transferred to Philander and graduated at the age of 19. She was the first person in her family to go to college. Her first career was as an English teacher at the high school level. Her second career was in the field of Social Work, and came after earning her second degree, a Masters in Social Work, from night school. While working a full time job as a social worker during the day, and raising three children by herself, my mother made it her priority to instill in me one of the most important values a human being can pass on to another. My mother taught me that “there are no limits to what I could accomplish in life, with the exception of those limits that I might self-impose.”

She instilled in me the importance of education because she knew that in America, a quality education is the ultimate leveler of the playing field. My mother knew that I would grow up and would, one day, inherit a world that would sometimes be hostile to my presence, simply because of the color of my skin. And she knew that the best thing she could do for me as my mother, was to, in a world full of inequality, give me a tool with which I could compete more equally with my melanin-challenged peers!

She didn’t sugar coat it. My mother explained to me that my journey in life was not destined to be an easy one. The truth was, she told me, that as a black male in America, my life would be fraught with injustice and frustration with the unfairness of that injustice. She taught me how in America, the color on my skin all but guaranteed that my journey would be perilous, sometimes life-threatening, but she assured me that I had the wherewithal to overcome it all. With a fierceness and intensity that indicated that my life depended on it, because it did, she drummed into me that I was capable to triumph over any adversity and that it was my right to define my destiny for myself!

The way forward is clear, America...we must re-dedicate ourselves to the proposition that in this country, all men AND women, are created equal and as such we are all, deserving of and entitled to, the dignity and respect we ourselves would want to be accorded. Otherwise the dead which surround us here in this place, will have died in vain.

Abraham Lincoln once called America, “the last best hope of Earth.” I have always believed that about my country. I still do. Like you, I know myself to be a patriot! I consider myself a man who loves his country and strive daily to lend my efforts to those who are similarly committed to the ongoing greatness of America. Are we a perfect Union? No! By no means...No! However we have demonstrated that when we put our minds to it, great things are possible. That when we pull together, we are capable of triumph over ANY adversity.

Ladies and gentlemen, as Lincoln said here 153 years ago today, “there is a great task remaining before us,” and once again it is Lincoln himself who sets our course and lights the way for us all. I will leave you with his words. “The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just ... a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must ever bless.” He speaks for me, “the way is plain, peaceful, generous and just,” and I pray that, as a nation, we find the courage and conviction to heed President Lincoln’s sage advice.

AFTER CHARLOTTESVILLE

At best, this is not a very comfortable time to identify yourself as a Civil War history buff. The removal of Confederate statues in New Orleans and the demands for removal of similar statues in Richmond and Charlottesville are explosive topics for those who defend the statues and those who see them as symbols of a shameful time in our history and an attempt to ‘whitewash’ that time as part of the “Lost Cause” movement. Remarks made at

the 1924 dedication of the Lee statue in Charlottesville certainly suggest that. The removal of Con-federate monuments, and the renaming of parks, schools and roads will continue. So the question can be put to all CWRT members, “Why do you want to study the lives and exploits of such men and their armies?”

Let’s look at our mission statement. **The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.”** Much of what we study is military history and the actions and responses of people during military conflict. Regardless of his political, sociological or religious beliefs, Lee’s actions as a commander at Chancellorsville, for example, are still studied by the U.S. War College. He can be admired as an enemy soldier in the same way that Patton studied and admired Rommel as a commander of tank forces in another war.

As is often the case, Lincoln shows the way.

An editorial by John Forney in the *Daily Morning Chronicle* (Washington, DC) appeared 3 days after Jackson’s death and expressed the views of many in the North. “While we are only too glad to be rid, in any way, of so terrible a foe, our sense of relief is not unmingled with emotions of sorrow and sympathy at the death of so brave a man.” Forney observed Jackson was not the first instance of a “good man devoting himself to a bad cause.” Lincoln wrote a personal note to Forney. “I wish to lose no time in thanking you for the excellent and manly article in the *Chronicle* on ‘Stonewall Jackson’”.

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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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