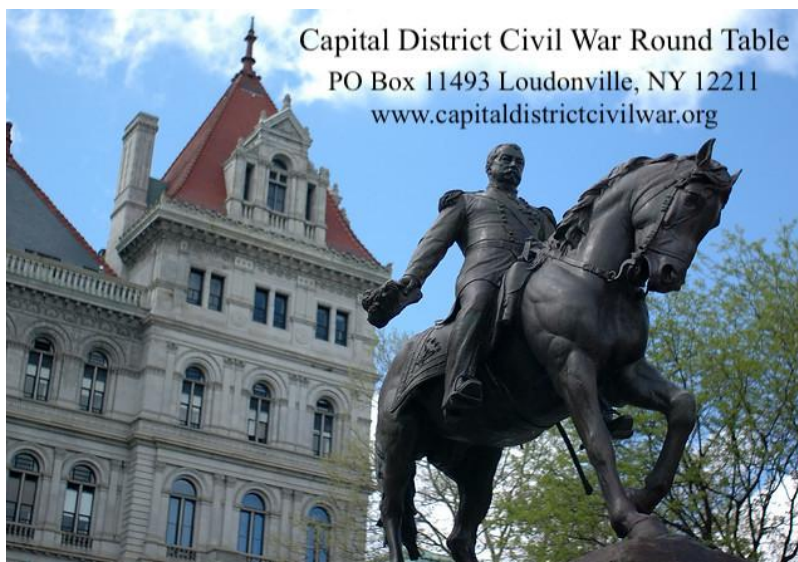


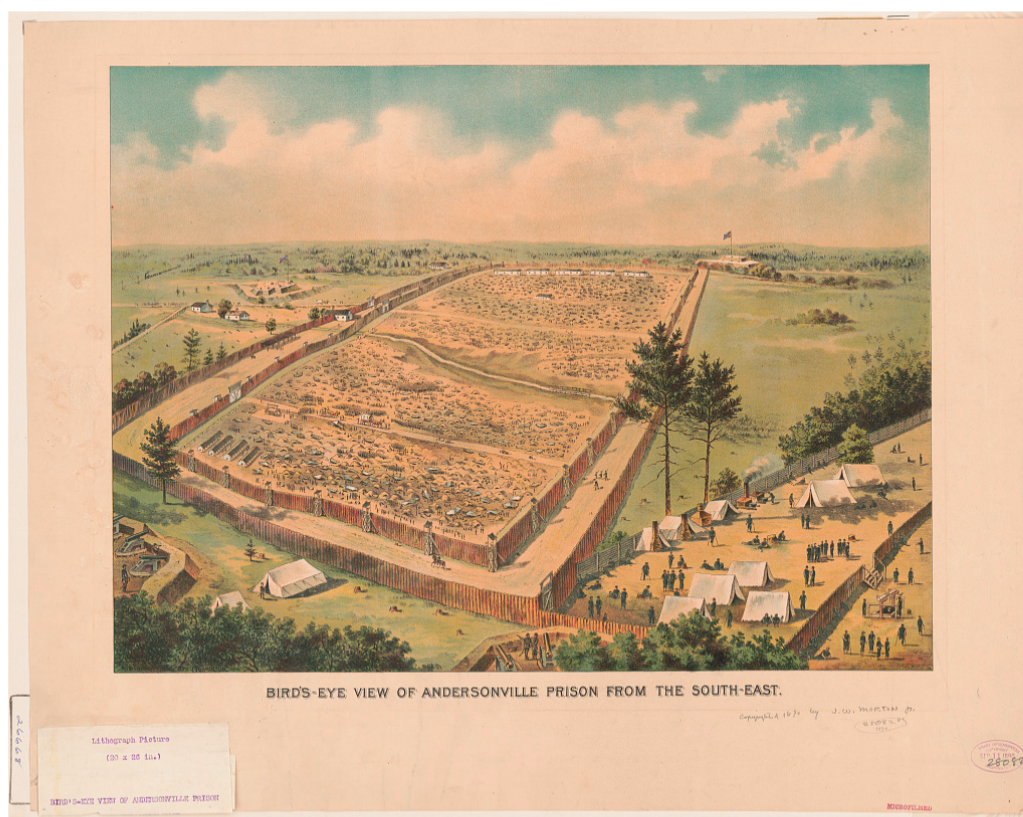
The Dispatch

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THE HORRORS OF ANDERSONVILLE



Bird's-eye view of Andersonville Prison from the south-east. United States Georgia Andersonville, ca. 1890. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003662987/>.

APRIL MEETING

Friday, April 9, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING USING ZOOM

GARY MORGAN

Andersonville Raiders: Yankee
versus Yankee in the Civil War's
Most Notorious Prison Camp

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

It was the most witnessed execution in US history. On the evening of July 11, 1864, six men were marched into Andersonville Prison, surrounded by a cordon of guards, the prison commandant, and a Roman Catholic priest. The six men were handed over to a small execution squad, and while more than 26,000 Union prisoners looked on, the six were executed by hanging. The six, part of a larger group known as the Raiders, were killed, not by their Rebel enemies but by their fellow prisoners, for the crimes of robbing and assaulting their own comrades.

Who were these six men? Were they really guilty of the crimes they were accused of? Were they really, as some prisoners alleged, murderers? What role did their Confederate captors play in their trial and execution? What brought about their downfall? Relying on military records, diaries, and memoirs written within five years of the prison closing, and the recently

discovered trial transcript, author Gary Morgan has discovered a version of events that is markedly different from the version told in later day “memoirs” and repeated in the history books. Here, for the first time in a century and a half, is the real story of the Andersonville Raiders.

Gary Morgan is a high-school history teacher in western Massachusetts, a long-time member of the Salisbury Confederate Prison Association, and recipient of a 2017 Friends of Andersonville grant.

ZOOM DIRECTIONS

- 1) **Download** Zoom program from the Internet at <https://zoom.us/download>
- 2) Once in Zoom, **create** a username and password **OR log in** through other methods such as your Facebook account username and password.
- 3) On the Zoom main page, you will see four icons. To join a scheduled meeting, click **“Join”** in the upper right side. Enter the meeting ID number and passcode. **Meeting ID: 876 3245 3907**
- 4) Your computer **camera** will turn on. A pop-up box appears and asks if you want to join with **computer audio**. Click the blue **“Join”** icon.
- 5) Click the **“mute”** button seen on the left side of the bottom black bar so a slash appears across the microphone.

Please keep your microphone **MUTED** during the presentation to eliminate interruptions of background noise.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 14: David Dixon will give his presentation: "General Willich: Warrior for Social Justice"

June 11: Bruce Mowday will present "Three Views of Gettysburg"

September 10: Ron Kirkwood returns to speak on "Women to the Rescue at Spangler"

THANK YOU, MEMBERS

The Round Table wishes to thank Matt George for his donation to the Preservation fund.

ANDERSONVILLE RAIDERS by Rosemary Nichols

The history of the Andersonville Raiders is one of the uglier of Civil War prison tales. It is an object lesson on the depths to which people can fall when placed in a horrible situation without any committed leadership.

The Raiders have been a not infrequent topic of interest for writers and filmmakers. This is no surprise. It is a compelling, if horrifying, tale.

As most of us know, Andersonville, or its originally assigned name Camp Sumter, was intended as a late stage prison camp for ordinary soldiers. It was designed to be as far from Northern military campaigns as possible, close to a railroad, and in a location where there would be ready access to food supplies and water.

When Andersonville opened in February 1864, it was intended to

house not more than 10,000 Union prisoners of war. At its height in August 1864, the prison housed 30,000 POWs. Under that strain, the infrastructure of the camp collapsed. There was never enough food, water, or shelter available.

The six Raiders "chieftains," the men who led what may have been as many as 500 other men, were known for vicious behavior to their fellow inmates. This abuse included murder.

On June 29, 1864 a newly admitted soldier named Dowd was attacked and beaten. His possessions, including a watch and money, were stolen. Dowd went to the front gate and demanded a response from the guards. He caught the attention of the camp's commander, Henry Wirz, who allowed creation of a group for internal control, the Regulators. Though Wirz disassociated himself from the acts of the Regulators, he gave them apparent permission to conduct trials and discipline offenders.

Most Regulator action took place between June 29 and July 10, 1864. Trials were held and punishment allotted. Most of the convicted received nonlethal sentences. The six Chieftains were sentenced to hang. This punishment was carried out on July 11 on a group scaffold constructed that day.

If you visit Andersonville today, you will see long rows of white military headstones in the cemetery to memorialize the graves of some of the 13,000 who died in this terrible place. At a little distance there is a row of six markers set off from the others. These are the marked graves of four soldiers and two sailors, the Raider Chieftains, executed for their misdeeds.

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met via Zoom on March 15. Matt George, our Program Chair, has speakers scheduled through the fall of 2021. We hope that by then we can have in-person meetings. Decisions regarding a summer picnic will be made closer to the summer and based on health guidelines at that time.

Treasurer Steve Muller reported that the Preservation Account has \$3,037.00 The Operating Account has \$4,027.68 in it. Thank you to all the members who renewed their membership this year.

The Board has been pleased with the number of people who join our Zoom presentation meetings or watch the recorded video on our Facebook page. Members are welcomed and encouraged to share the meeting information with interested friends.

CONGRATS TO ERIN

Our own Erin Baillargeon was recently honored as a Top Teacher by WNYT-TV. They had a charming film of Erin in her colonial history garb. Erin says teaching is the family business, with ancestors back to great-grandparents in that profession.

You can see the segment at: <https://wnyt.com/albany-ny-top-teacher/top-teacher-erin-baillargeon-doane-stu-art-school/6038418/?cat=10126>

The next time you see Erin in person or on Zoom, let her know how glad you are she is educating the next generation of people to be as passionate about history as you are.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

There were no winners from last month's trivia. The correct answers are:

1) Joe Hooker commanded the Union forces on the north end of the Antietam battlefield.

2) A few years ago (2009) the remains of an unknown soldier were found near the cornfield at Antietam. He was thought to be possibly from N.Y. and was brought to Saratoga National Cemetery to be buried.

3) Long time Round Table member Howie Young served on the Honor Guard.

Trivia is on hold for one month; it will be back in May.

A while back I mentioned a book I just finished reading entitled "Lincoln Takes Command – The Campaign to Seize Norfolk and the Destruction of the *CSS Virginia*" by Steve Norder. In 1862 Lincoln boarded the revenue cutter *Miami* and personally took charge of the effort to take Norfolk and recapture the Gosport Navy Yard. His plans and suggestions for military actions eventually led to a successful amphibious landing of troops resulting in Norfolk's capture and possession of the Navy Yard.

The enthusiasm of his commanders, including Joseph Mansfield (later killed at Antietam), left a lot to be desired. The eventual Military Governor of Norfolk was General Egbert Ludovicus Viele (pronounced Vee – lee). Viele was not only a very unusual individual, but he also had local connections, and his

unique mausoleum is a remembered highlight from our two Round Table trips to West Point.

Viele was born in Waterford, New York. His accomplishments before and after the Civil War are more remembered than his War exploits. He drew maps of Manhattan Island and the Bronx (street grid and sewer lines). Without them, the skyline of NYC would be completely different today. He did the surveying that eventually led to Central Park. However, his precise plan for the park was later rejected for one submitted by Frederick Law Olmstead.

Viele graduated from West Point in 1847. During the War, he took part in the campaign to capture Fort Pulaski. He was also part of Lincoln's plans to capture Norfolk. He showed more enthusiasm and competence than two other officers (Mansfield and Weber) in the bloodless conquest of the city. As Military Governor, his difficulties with both the citizens of an occupied city and the dictates of the Navy for a blockaded port were quite frustrating. In fact, his entire career was marked by controversy. Rumors continually circulated that he had been involved in kidnapping and selling free blacks into slavery. There were also accusations of embezzlement. He took a leave of absence in 1863. He was later reassigned as a draft officer in Ohio. He subsequently resigned and returned to New York City. He became Commissioner of New York City Parks and the president of a home building company. According to author Norder, his writing on the events in Norfolk remains invaluable. He passed away in 1902.

As I noted in the earlier column, his mausoleum at West Point is one of the strangest I've ever seen. It resembles an Egyptian pyramid with carved Egyptian symbols and hieroglyphics decorating the structure. It was explained to us on the tour that Viele believed in reincarnation and was convinced he would return from the dead. He installed a bell inside the mausoleum. Upon his return, he planned to ring and someone would let him out. It became a traditional prank by Cadets to sneak in at night and ring the bell. This native of Waterford was one of the more intriguing characters of the War.

I should mention the Norfolk campaign involves other players from our area. John Ellis Wool was the overall commander at Fort Monroe. He was an orphan at twelve and raised by his grandfather in Troy, N.Y. LeGrand Bouton Cannon was Wool's aide-de-camp. Quite progressive, Cannon recommended employing fleeing contrabands for pay cleaning their camps. Cannon educated children and adults, and hired a police force to protect them. He was involved in the iron rolling industry in Troy. Interestingly, Wool never acknowledged Lincoln's role in the Norfolk campaign. He took full credit.



Viele's Mausoleum at West Point

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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 \$35. The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.

Contact the Capital District Civil War Round Table through
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or email: cdcwrt@hotmail.com

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