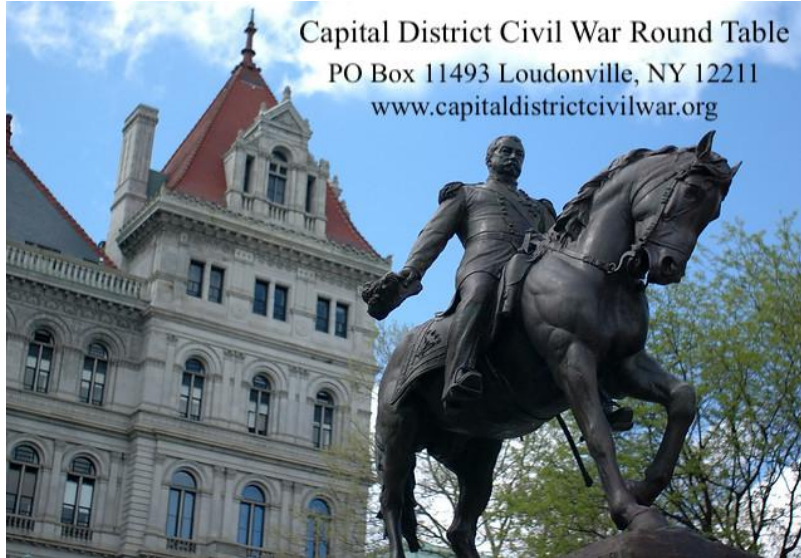


The Dispatch

Volume 38, Number 9

November 2021



THE INTERESTING LIFE OF LEW WALLACE



Historical "Jug" Bridge over the Monocacy River near Frederick, Maryland.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Friday, November 12, 2021

IN-PERSON MEETING AT THE WATERVLIIET SENIOR CENTER

CHUCK VIET

“Verge of the Great War”

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

Chuck Viet is the author of a growing number of original research books, including A Dog Before a Soldier: Almost-lost Episodes in the Navy’s Civil War; Sea Miner: Major E. B. Hunt’s Rocket Torpedo; and two books focusing on the salvage exploits of Massachusetts native John E. Gowen: Raising Missouri and The Yankee Expedition to Sebastopol. Sea Miner claimed the 2017 award for Narrative Non-fiction from the Independent Publishers of New England.

He is a frequent speaker on 19th-century naval topics at area historical societies and Civil War roundtables, as well as at the Naval War College in Newport, RI. Other venues have included the NOAA Maritime Heritage Education Conference, Mariners’ Museum Civil War Navy Conference, the Naval Order of the United States in St. Petersburg, FL, the 10th Maritime Heritage Conference, and the Portsmouth Navy Yard’s 238th

Anniversary Ball. Chuck has also had numerous articles in Naval History magazine, American Historical Print Collector Society’s newsletter, Historical Diving Times, Civil War Navy, and the Company of Military Historians’ Journal.

Chuck is President of the Navy & Marine Living History Association, an organization dedicated to sharing America’s naval history with the modern public through the medium of in-the-field events, where he speaks with several thousand visitors annually. Despite his intense focus on Navy history, he remains happily married after 36 years to his best friend and editor, Lori.

He spoke to us previously on Farragut’s passage of the forts and Major Hunt’s Rocket Torpedo.

MASKS ARE REQUIRED, REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS.

We will not have refreshments available.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

December 10: Pat Schroeder will present “Don’t Touch That: the Appomattox Collection.”

January 14: Potpourri night of “amateur” speakers, arranged by Matt George.

February 11: Matt Watros will present “Gabriel: a novel of the Civil War.”

THANK YOU, MEMBERS

The Round Table wishes to thank Matt George for his continued donations to the Preservation Fund.

LEW WALLACE: UNION GENERAL TO BEST SELLING AUTHOR

by Rosemary Nichols

Lew Wallace had an interesting life. Born in April 1827 to a lawyer and his wife in Indiana, Wallace was a restless child. Bored with traditional education, he went out to work at sixteen. He fought in the Mexican War and all through the Civil War. He was a successful postwar diplomat and politician. Wallace was appointed the military governor of New Mexico Territory and became a best-selling novelist when he finally left the military. He passed away at the age of seventy-seven in Crawfordsville, Indiana, where portions of his self-designed final home are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Like many nineteenth century military men, Wallace paid more attention to his “non-successes” than he did his triumphs. The performance of Wallace and his troops at the Battle of Shiloh dogged his career for decades until General Grant finally decided, based upon independent evidence, he had possibly been wrong and issued corrections of previous critical statements.

Against the stain of Shiloh should be set Wallace’s successful participation in the Fort Henry/Fort Donaldson campaign in February 1862 before

Shiloh; defense of Cincinnati against Braxton Bragg, also in 1862; defense of Indiana railroad infrastructure against the raid of John Hunt Morgan in July 1863; and, most importantly, successfully delaying Jubal Early’s attack for six hours at Monocacy in July 1864 to protect the nation’s capital until reinforcing Union troops could arrive.

Grant’s comment after Monocacy should have gone a considerable distance to smooth Wallace’s ruffled military feathers. Grant said,

“If Early had been but one day earlier, he might have entered the capital before the arrival of the reinforcements I had sent. ... General Wallace contributed on this occasion by the defeat of the troops under him, a greater benefit to the cause than often falls to the lot of a commander of an equal force to render by means of a victory.”



Battle at Pittsburgh Landing

Men of the 1st Ohio Infantry Regiment recapture artillery at Shiloh Church, near Pittsburgh Landing, on April 7, 1862, during the Shiloh Campaign. (Photo by © CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)

Wallace may be the Union Army’s leading exemplar of why you don’t want to be a lawyer and a major general. You get to do all manner of unpleasant things that don’t win you

any friends. In November 1862 Wallace headed a military commission to investigate if General Don Carlos Buell was a traitor because of his performance in the Kentucky campaign. Wallace served at the end of the war on the military commission that tried, and ultimately convicted, the Lincoln assassination conspirators. He then headed a military commission that tried and convicted Henry Wirz, the Confederate commandant of the notorious Andersonville prisoner of war camp.

Wallace was a member of a number of political parties. Before 1847 he was a Whig. He spent the year of 1847 as a member of the Free Soil Party. He became a Democrat from 1848 until 1864. Wallace finally settled into the Republican Party in 1864, where he remained until his death in 1905.

Wallace held a variety of political positions, appointive and elective. In 1851 he was elected prosecuting attorney of Indiana's 1st congressional district. He was elected as a Democrat to a two-year term in the Indiana Senate in 1856. In January 22, 1865, Grant ordered Wallace to the Rio Grande in southern Texas to investigate Confederate military operations in the area. He negotiated with Mexico after the war in an effort to expel Maximilian's French forces. Wallace served as U.S. Minister to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) from 1881 to 1885.

In 1852, after initially being rejected by her father for unsteady behavior and dubious financial prospects, and a three year engagement, Wallace married Susan Arnold Elston, born on December 25, 1830. Susan's mother's

family were Quakers from upstate New York. She had part of her education at Dr. Gibbons' Friends' Boarding School in Poughkeepsie.

They had one son, Henry Lane Wallace. Susan was quoted as regularly saying that her husband was "my first, last, and only love." Susan was an author and poet. She wrote travel articles for several American magazines and newspapers and published six books, five of which documented her travels with her husband. Lew acknowledged Susan's role as his editor, reader, and critic, and attributed much of his success in writing and successfully publishing a variety of novels to her literary criticism.

Wallace confessed in his autobiography that he took up writing as a diversion from studying law. Although he wrote several books, he is best known for his historical adventure story, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880), which established his fame as an author and assured financial success for his family. In 1900, *Ben-Hur* became the best-selling American novel of the nineteenth century, surpassing Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Writers have the annoying habit of passing away with their books not finished. Wallace was no exception. In a true labor of love, Susan completed the manuscript of Wallace's two-volume autobiography following his death in 1905 before she too passed away in 1907.

An interesting and varied life indeed had Lew Wallace.

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met via Zoom on October 18. Treasurer Steve Muller reported that the Operating Account has \$3,077.35. The Preservation Account has \$3,152.54.

Program Chair Matt George has speakers arranged through the spring, and he has several more as possible fall speakers.

Board members discussed our intention to continue in-person meetings through next fall, if possible, while also live streaming or posting them on the CDCWRT Facebook page.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

It was good to see everyone again at our first in person meeting in many months. We had about twenty attendees which was better than what I expected. Phil Vitiello gave an excellent talk on Joshua Chamberlain. After the meeting Mary Ellen Johnson, Phil and his wife, and I enjoyed each other's company at the 76 Diner in Latham. Both Phil and I attended the Chamberlain Days Conferences in Brunswick, Maine during the 1990s.

We gave away some free books at the meeting to those trivia contest winners who attended the meeting. This included Mary Ellen and Sharon Schriefels (who won four books!). We still have several members who are due free books. They can pick them up at any in-person meeting. This month's trivia questions will appear at the end of this column.

On Nov. 5th I will again assist Mike Diana of the Schenectady County Historical Society with a tour of Civil War Schenectady. This time it will be for a group of homeschooled students.

On Nov. 15th I will leave for Gettysburg for the Lincoln Forum and the Remembrance Day events on the 19th. The featured speaker at the Cemetery Ceremony will be historian Gary Gallagher.

As usual I'm reading several books at the same time (different genres). They are: *An Unerring Fire – The Massacre at Fort Pillow* by Richard Fuchs (2002), *The Second – Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America* by Carol Anderson (2021), and *The Book of Hope – A Survival Guide for Trying Times* by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams (2021). There are a number of others patiently waiting their turn; so many books and so little time.

Now here are the long awaited trivia questions. All responders who submit all three correct answers by the 21st of the month will each receive a book. My email address is JBuford63@aol.com Winners can collect their book prize at our next meeting.

1) At Gettysburg what were the Corps Insignia of the XI Corps, the II Corps, and the VI Corps?

2) Which Union General at Gettysburg when told "not to risk your life this way" replied, "there are times when a Corps Commander's life does not count."

3) Which U.S. President dedicated the Eternal Light Peace Memorial at Gettysburg?

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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
our website: www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org
or email: cdcwrt@hotmail.com

THE OFFICERS

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Treasurer	Steve Muller	Secretary	Rosemary Nichols
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THE NONCOMS

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Refreshments	Dean Long and Luanne Whitbeck		
Webmaster			
Education	Matt George		
Newsletter	Rosemary Nichols and Erin Baillargeon		