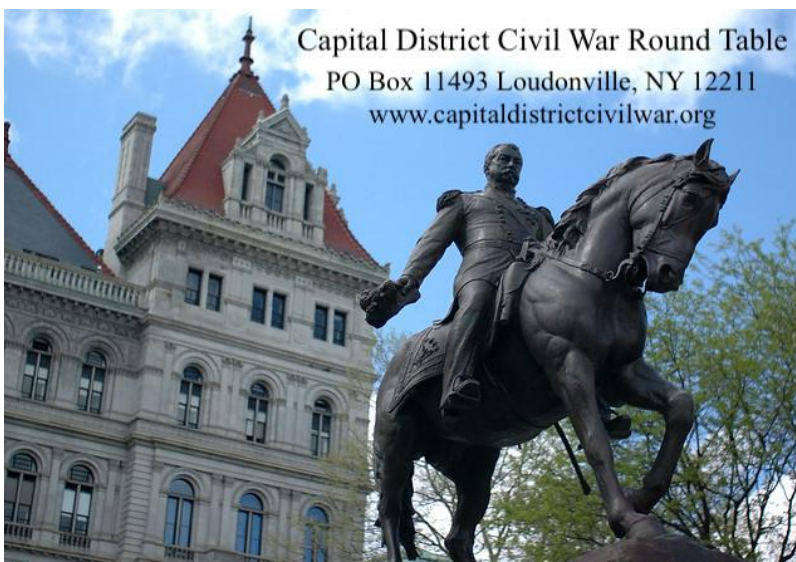


The Dispatch

Volume 39, Number 8

October 2022



“Last Promise”

Brigadier General John Fulton Reynolds and Catherine Mary Hewitt enter into a secret engagement before he reports to the Army of the Potomac.

Original oil painting by Dale Gallon.

www.gallon.com/shop/originals/last-promise-original-painting/



OCTOBER MEETING

Friday, October 14, 2022

IN-PERSON MEETING AT THE WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

Ken Aslakson

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.

Kenneth Aslakson is an Associate Professor of History and the American Studies Program Director at Union College. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Southwestern University, and a Ph.D. and J.D. from the University of Texas at Austin.

Ken is a social and cultural historian with a focus on African-American and early-American history. He teaches African-American history, Southern history, Constitutional history (with a focus on issues of race), the United States and the Caribbean in the age of revolution, the Atlantic world, and the history of slavery.

His interest in the intersection of law and culture, especially as it impacts the life of African-Americans in the United States and shapes our understandings and perceptions of race and gender. His specific focus so far has been on the use of the New Orleans court system by the city's free people of color in the two decades straddling the

Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

MASKS ARE RECOMMENDED

We will not have refreshments available.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

October 16: Grant Cottage is hosting a Bicentennial Birthday Gala. Go to <https://www.grantcottage.org/2022gala> for details.

October 22: Kate Hewitt program. See Rosemary Nichol's article for details.

November 11: Author Brad Gottfried

December 9: Living Historian Carolyn Ivanoff

THANK YOU, MEMBERS

The Round Table wishes to thank Matt George for his continued donations to the Round Table and for his tireless work arranging speakers for our monthly meetings.

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met on September 19, 2022 via Zoom.

The Operating Account balance was \$4,233.12, which represents money from a total of forty-four paid members.

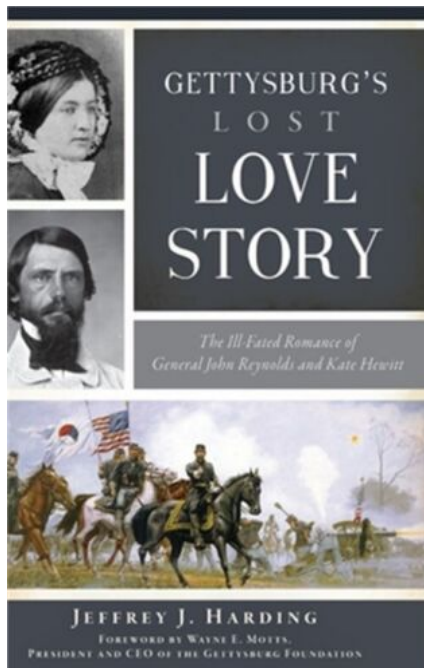
The Preservation Account balance is \$3914.61. This account balance grew by nearly five hundred dollars, thanks largely from Matt George's efforts selling RT books and shirts at the Jay Street Market in Schenectady.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF KATE HEWITT

by Rosemary Nichols

Almost all of us love a mystery, especially a Civil War related puzzle. Wayne Motts, President and CEO of the Gettysburg Foundation, a friend to many of us, calls the mystery of the post-war life of Catherine 'Kate' Mary Hewitt "far more interesting than anyone could have possibly envisioned".

Once known, who could forget the pathos of sweethearts lost to each other by battlefield death: Major General John Reynolds, the only Union general to lose his life in the epic three day contest, and his fiancée, Kate Hewitt. It turns out, like so many in the Civil War, there is a Capital District connection as Jeffrey J. Harding details in *Gettysburg's Lost Love Story: The Ill-Fated Romance of General John Reynolds and Kate Hewitt*.



Many members of our Round Table, especially in the days we routinely went to Gettysburg to raise money for battlefield preservation at Fourth of July and Remembrance Day events, became familiar with one of the most romantic of myriad tragic Gettysburg battle tales. Quoting Motts again, "Catherine Hewitt went 'missing' in 1868 and now, 154 years later, her true story is finally revealed."

Kate Hewitt was apparently orphaned young, in the village of Owego in Tioga County, on the Susquehanna River just north of the Pennsylvania border. She was born on April 1, 1836. The historic record for this modest family is sparse. Kate's only recorded sibling is Benjamin, who was born on December 8, 1832 and died on December 18, 1878. Though Benjamin was married, there is no evidence of children. When Kate was young, Owego (not Oswego as some researchers have concluded) was a prosperous county seat. Today it is part of the Binghamton metropolitan area.

The record is bare of where Kate received her education, though she was acknowledged to be "highly educated" and "refined". There is speculation but no certainty how and why Kate joined the many people headed west to California as part of the 1850s gold rush.

What is known is that in July 1860, chance put Kate and then Brevet Major John Reynolds on the same voyage from San Francisco to New York. The trip was in three segments. Kate and John traveled on the SS Golden Age from San Francisco to Panama, then by train across the Isthmus. The final leg of the three to four week trip was on

the SS North Star. That vessel arrived in New York Harbor on August 13, 1860. The voyage Kate and John shared took 23 days. That was ample time for a soldier of 40 and a woman of 24 to meet and spend enough time together to realize, if fate allowed, they wished to spend the rest of their lives together.

There are a limited surviving number of lovely tokens of affection exchanged between John and Kate in the months that followed. John gave Kate his West Point class ring. Kate gave John a ring engraved 'dear Kate', which he wore on his smallest finger. She also gave him a 'heart and a cross' which John wore on a silk ribbon. These three items were found on John's person when he fell fatally wounded at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863.

There is a lot more to the story of the tragic love affair between Major General John Reynolds and Kate Hewitt, which Jeff Harding will share with us at a special program on Saturday, October 22, 2022. Please join us to learn about Kate's life in Albany, her entrepreneurial activities, her brief marriage to Joseph Pfordt, and her sad death from consumption (which we today would call tuberculosis).

We will also learn from Tony Opalka, City of Albany historian, about the city during the middle of the 19th century. Peg Germano, founding trustee of the Watervliet Historical Society Museum and Church Historian for the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, will share thoughts about Kate's life as a Catholic religious woman who never fully joined her community but

remained a devout lay Catholic for the short remaining years of her life.

Plan to join us in the Watervliet Senior Center. The program will be from 10 am to noon. Weather permitting, we will then adjourn to Kate's graveside in St. Agnes Cemetery in Menands where one of the parish priests will give a blessing.

Attendees, including descendants of the Reynolds family, plan to be present and will be invited to share their thoughts about the relationship of Kate and their beloved brother.

You are invited to come dressed in 19th century attire. If the state Health Department regulations permit, there will be coffee and snacks in the Senior Center before and during the program. Books from the presenters as well as sponsoring organizations will be available for purchase.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

Except for a harrowing AMTRAK adventure both to and back from Springfield, Illinois, I had an excellent two and a half day experience at the Lincoln Museum, the Lincoln home and the Lincoln tomb. When I left it took me four hours just get out the Albany/Rensselaer Station. First, one of two locomotives "died." Then they couldn't coordinate the new engine's computer. Then the old engine's computer wouldn't match up. Finally, they gave up and had to call in "experts" to get the computers

straightened out. Four hours later we left Albany. It appeared I was going to miss my connection in Chicago to Springfield. But they figured out a way to gain an hour and I arrived in Chicago with ten minutes to spare, only find the train to Springfield was an hour late.

The AMTRAK trip home did not fare much better. When I left I was immediately informed at the station that the Springfield train to Chicago (started in Texas) was already three hours late. I would miss my connection to Albany by over an hour. However, they thought AMTRAK would put me in a hotel for the night if that was the case. The train conductor wasn't so sure. Upon arriving in Chicago, we were still three hours late and the last Albany train was long gone. The Chicago railroad station was closing, and the ticket booth was closed. There was no one to talk to about getting a hotel voucher.

Mercifully an AMTRAK policeman took me under his wing and after some searching, we found one AMTRAK employee still in her office. She was convinced to write me a hotel voucher for \$198.00 for the Swissotel. I'm sure their normal rate for one night is higher than that. It was a multi-story big expensive hotel "on the Loop" downtown. The policeman also got me a cab and I stayed one night in luxury in a gorgeous room on the nineteenth floor. If it wasn't for that policeman, I'm not sure what I would have done. Sleep in the street? I got a cab the next day to the station. I boarded the 9:30 PM train on time and arrived in Albany on 2:30

PM as scheduled the next day. The state of transportation in this country is in such wonderful shape.

However, my time in Springfield was thoroughly enjoyable and educational. The Lincoln Museum is an attraction everyone one should visit. Its opening holographic presentation and the many very life-like, life size "mannequins" for a lack of a better word, are amazing. The Springfield Visitors' Center is in the former Lincoln/Herndon Law office and is next door to a wonderful soup and sandwich shop called the Feed Store.

The Lincoln home has been restored and is run by the National Park Service. There is no cost for the guided tour. The Lincoln Tomb is located in the city cemetery that also includes relatively new WWI, WWII, Korean and Viet Nam war memorials. There is a moving self-guided tour inside Lincoln's tomb which also includes various Lincoln statuary and the vaults of Mary and three of Lincoln's boys who tragically passed away as children. Everybody I met touring Springfield was friendly, outgoing and helpful. I couldn't go to the African American Museum or the Grand Army of the Republic Museum and Memorial because they were closed on the days of the week I was there. Finally, there was a beautiful memorial to the 1908 Springfield Race "riot" that I had never heard of until now.

No room for trivia this month. It will return next month.

**CDCWRT
P.O. BOX 11493
LOUDONVILLE, NY 12211**

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

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THE NONCOMS

Program	Matt George	518-355-2131	Jbuford63@aol.com
Membership	Erin Baillargeon and Steve Muller		
Refreshments	Dean Long and Luanne Whitbeck		
Webmaster			
Education	Matt George		
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