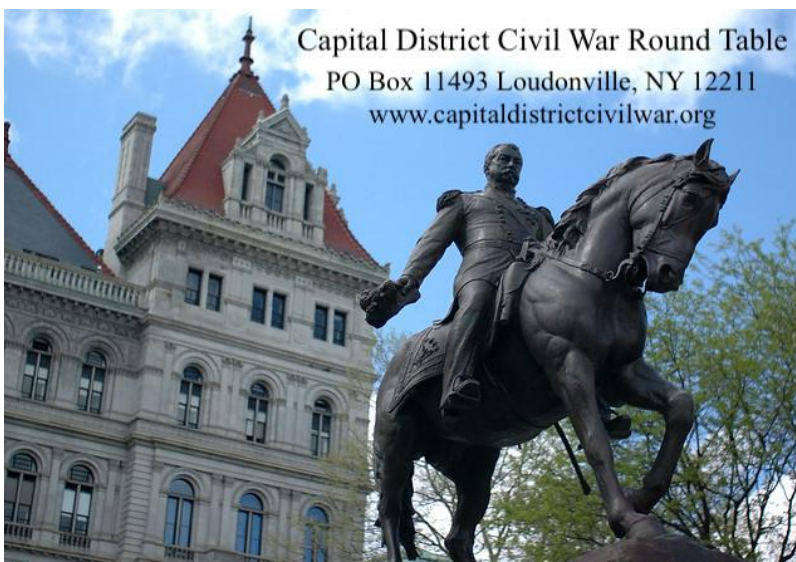


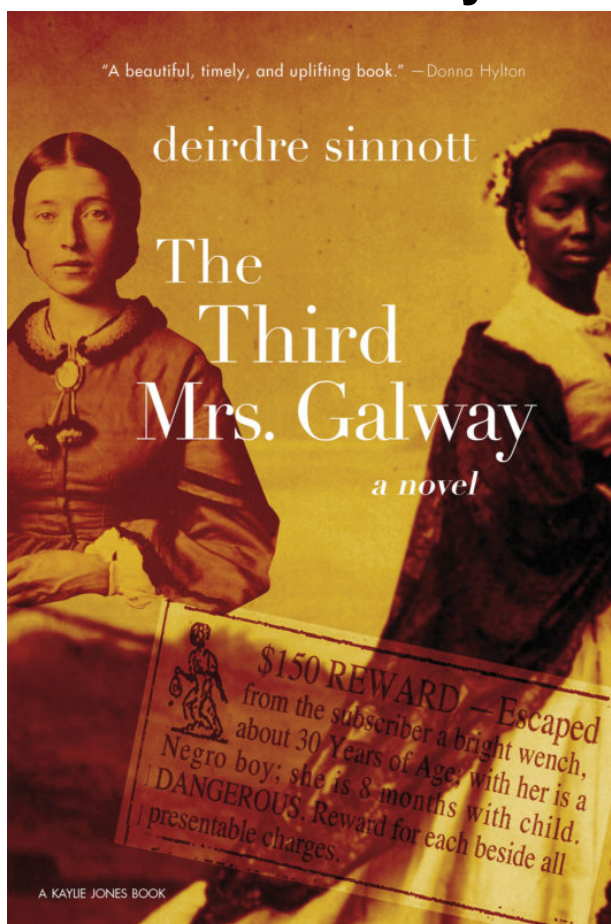
The Dispatch

Volume 40, Number 2

February 2023



The Dramatic Events of the 1835 Utica Meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society



FEBRUARY MEETING

Friday, February 10, 2023

**AT THE WATERVLIET
SENIOR CENTER**

**DEIRDRE SINNOTT:
1835 Utica meeting of the
NY Anti-Slavery Society**

Social Hour with light refreshments	6:00 p.m.
Business Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Presentation	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Deirdre Sinnott is an independent scholar, filmmaker, author, and social change activist. Currently, she is a historical consultant and researcher for the Ft. Stanwix Underground Railroad History Project, funded by the National Parks Service. And she is working on a non-fiction book about the American abolition movement and Underground Railroad centered in her native Utica, New York. She also speaks about the lingering effects of racial injustice on society.

Sinnott has given talks at historical societies, national and regional history conferences, the National Abolition Hall of Fame & Museum's program Resisting the New Jim Crow, colleges and universities, and Utica's Abolition History Day Celebration. Additionally, she has spoken at Otisville Correctional Facility as part of the African American Organization's Black History Month series.

Her writing has appeared in numerous

places including *The New York History Blog*, the *Utica Observer Dispatch*, *ForeWord Magazine*, *Hippocampus Magazine* and the *Catskill Review of Books*. Her essay "Right-sized Rats" was nominated for a Pushcart Award by *Hippocampus Magazine* and appeared in the publication's anthology titled *Selected Memories*.

Sinnott, who has a background in theatre, has directed two award-winning documentaries on social justice and mass incarceration issues, *23 Reasons Why 23 Years is Enough: Clemency for Pascual Carpenter and Multiple Injuries*.

Sinnott attended Syracuse University where she earned a BFA in Acting/Directing from the school's prestigious theatre program. She lives in New York City's East Village and loves the Catskill Mountains.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 10: Bob Connor presents on James Montgomery - Abolitionist Warrior

April 14: Codie Eash will speak about General Buford's signalman: Aaron Jerome at the Seminary and Beyond

May 12: Vic Vignola will present on New York regiments at Fair Oaks

DUES

Just a reminder that the membership year began on January 1. You can pay the dues of \$35 at a meeting, through the mail, or through our website using PayPal. Please include your relevant information if it has changed.

ELECTION RESULTS

The proposed slate of Executive Board members were elected at the January meeting. Erin Baillargeon, Mark Koziol Steve Muller will continue to serve as President, Vice President, and Treasurer, respectively. Rik Scarce is an At-Large member. There are still three open positions. The Round Table cannot function without the service of Board and Non-Com members (whose names are listed on the back of the newsletter). Please contact the Round Table if you are willing to serve.

THANK YOU, MEMBERS

The Round Table wishes to thank the following members for their donations to the Round Table (recieved between 12/24 and 1/16).

John Assini, Erin Baillargeon, Bart Cohen, Mary Ellen Johnson, Mark Koziol, Norman Kuchar, Dean Long, Benjamin Mastaitis, Francia McCashion, Byron Moak, Steve Muller, Bob and Connie Mulligan, Robert Mungara, Rosemary Nichols, Joseph Prezio, Bruce Reed, Galen Ritchie, Rik Scarce, Sharon and Eric Schriefels, Paul VanWagenen, Luann Whitbeck, and James Yuchniewicz.

THE LIVING HISTORIAN'S CREED

Our friend JJ Jennings sends all of us greetings in the New Year and invites us to remember why we do what we do as living historians. He calls to our attention "The Living Historian's Creed" by Bruce Catton, compliments

of Curt Fields, who reenacts General U.S. Grant.

"We are the people to whom the past is forever speaking.

We listen to it because we cannot help ourselves, for the past speaks to us with many voices.

Far out of that dark nowhere which is the time before we were born, men who were flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone went through fire and storm to break a path to the future.

We are part of the future they died for; they are part of the past that brought the future.

What they did – the lives they lived, the sacrifices they made, the stories they told and the songs they sang and, finally, the deaths they died – make up a part of our own experience.

We cannot cut ourselves off from it.

It is as real as something that happened last week.

It is a basic part of our heritage as Americans."

JJ is now well enough to entertain visitors. He invites his friends to come to his home. Please call before you come to visit JJ and Bernadette (518-459-7571). Plan to give yourself a quick COVID test, or they will have one to share with you.

BOARD UPDATES and a CORRECTION

The Executive Board met via Zoom on January 16. Treasurer Steve Muller shared a summary of our finances for 2022. The Preservation Account had

\$3,644.64 in income over the year from book raffles, donations, and merchandise sales. The expenses in account were \$3,137.29, which came from donations to the American Battlefield Trust and Gettysburg Foundation, insurance, and the storage unit rental (which houses the books and merchandise that we raffle and sell). We ended the year with a net gain of \$507.35 in this account. The account balance as of the Board meeting is \$4,870.86.

At the January Board meeting we approved a donation to the American Battlefield Trust (ABT) of \$500 for their Chancellorsville campaign (a \$10.50 to \$1 match). This puts us halfway to our goal of maintaining our Regimental Color Bearer status in the ABT. We were recently included in the ABT's list of top 300 donors. We are one of two Round Tables to be included (the other is the CWRT of Eastern Pennsylvania).

The Operating Account took in \$2,731.87 from membership dues, donations, and the sale of specially-purchased books on Kate Hewitt. The expenses in this account totaled \$1,770.43. These included printing the newsletters, program expenses, website maintenance, the postal box rental, and the purchase of the Kate Hewitt books. There was a net gain in this account, as well; it totaled \$961.44. The balance as of the Board meeting is \$4,620.87. From this account we purchased an additional five hundred stamps for the continued mailing of newsletters.

Matt George, our Program Chair, has speakers scheduled through the fall of 2023. We hope to continue in-person meetings as long as possible. We will

email members in the event we need to switch to virtual meetings.

CORRECTION: There was a typo on the cover of the last newsletter regarding the total amount of actual and matching funds donated. The correct amount is \$2,261,547.74

FRANK JOHNSON: UNCOVERING THE LIFE OF A ENSLAVED YOUNG MAN FROM UTICA, NEW YORK

By Deirdre Sinnott.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Deirdre will be speaking at our February meeting. I thought people might enjoy reading some of her other research before you meet her. Deirdre wrote this article for inclusion in most recent quarterly newsletter, The Freedom Seeker, of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital District. It is with the gracious permission of that organization and the author that we present this discussion. R. Nichols]

Around 1797, Frank Johnson, a baby boy of African descent was born in Oneida County. His birthdate preceded the passage of the 1799 Gradual Emancipation Act, thereby making him a "slave for life," as he was called by Alexander Bryan Johnson, the man who owned him. Johnson was born in England in 1786 and arrived in Utica in 1801. There he became an important man, involved with business, banking, and writing.

"My father had owned him [Frank] from the boy's infancy and we had always treated him kindly as if he had been white, and the boy was docile and kind.

He was a full negro in colour, according to the custom of slaves he called himself Frank Johnson.” When Frank was ten or eleven, he was given Johnson as a birthday gift.

In the fall of 1811, Johnson took the young man to New York City where he rented rooms in a fashionable house that had an engaging view of The Battery and New York’s busy harbor.

Frank, who would have been thirteen or fourteen, bunked in the servants’ quarters. There he must have met other domestics, some free and others enslaved. A young man might learn much from his fellows.

After retreating to Utica to avoid the War of 1812, Johnson and Frank returned to New York in 1813. According to Johnson, Frank’s tasks of polishing his “boots in the evening, attending to the fire in my room and in waiting on me at dinner,” meant that Frank had much free time. Johnson explains, “he made use of it by going into bad company, remaining out late at night and occasionally all night.”

When Johnson found out about the youth’s behavior, he became angry and “struck him on the back with a small rattan cane. ... It was the first and only time I ever struck him, and I have no belief that I could have hurt him; but I have ever since regretted the occurrence. ... His being my slave probably induced me to strike him, though it ought to have restrained me by reason of his helplessness.”

At some point later, Frank became so ill that he “kept to his bed.” Johnson took him one mile north to New-York Hospital which was on the west side of

Broadway between Duane and Anthony (now Worth) Streets. Frank was most likely admitted to a ward that served only people of color. Johnson requested that the lad receive “special attention” and assured Dr. James S. Stringham that all the expenses would be paid.

Frank was diagnosed with consumption, now called tuberculosis. In the mid-nineteenth century the death rate for Black sufferers ranged from 7% to 300% higher than Whites. It’s not known precisely what medical protocol would have been used or if Frank received any care at all. The standard treatments for Whites included: daily bleedings, attempts to raise the patient’s temperature to burn out the disease, and laxatives or mercury to induce purges.

One morning, Frank was crying. He had been “told that he must die, and that he had been very wicked.” Frank said, “he should soon get well if he were once more at home.” Johnson lodged a complaint. That night, Frank died.

After learning of his death, Johnson hurried down to the dead-house. Medical schools and students had a particular interest in dead bodies. According to Harriet A. Washington, author of *Medical Apartheid*, the use of the bodies of people of African descent in was the norm rather than the exception.

Johnson found Frank’s body in an open black coffin. Someone had put some wood “shavings under [Frank’s] head for a pillow.”

Just across Broadway there was an African Burial Grounds that held the

remains of both enslaved and free people. In 1991 it was rediscovered. Investigators found "...widespread evidence of grave robbing, including bodies and skulls that displayed anatomists' marks."

Johnson "reproached" himself for "bringing him to New York." Years later, he admits that the fact that the boy was black "prevented me from seeing that he was much unwell."

For Frank, those nights, strolling anonymously around the streets in the glorious and dangerous jumble of New York City was probably the most freedom he ever experienced. By law, Frank was powerless. He might have run, but it was six years after he died that Upper Canada freed all Black people living there. And life with the free Black community in the City was difficult.

His story, though short, is a testament to the fact that slavery and oppression is never benign, no matter how kindly an owner believes himself to be.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

I'll be attending two Civil War Conferences this spring, one in March and one in April. On March 4 I'll be traveling to Gettysburg for the second year in a row to attend the Seminary Ridge Museum annual Symposium entitled "Five Critical Days to Gettysburg." The speakers include some familiar names to our Round Table: Jim Hessler, Stu Dempsey and Eric Linblade. The fourth speaker is the Seminary's own Codie Eash (our speaker in April). I heard Codie speak

last year at this Conference on "General Buford's Signaller: Aaron Jerome." As a result, I invited him to be a speaker for our Round Table. Maybe I'll be able to entice one of these speakers to visit us in the fall of 2023.

On April 15 Shenandoah University in Winchester, Va. will be hosting the McCormick Civil War Institute spring conference. The title this year is "So Tired and Exhausted" - In Battle's Aftermath. Speakers this year include: Jonathan Noyalas, Melissa Winn, Brian Jordan and Jonathan Jones. The registration fee is only \$30.00. Our speaker this past December, Carolyn Ivanoff (Clara Barton) made me aware of this conference and I told her I would see her there.

I was able to contact our life time member John Hennessey and he agreed to be our speaker next November 10. The topic isn't definite but John promised it would be related to the second Battle of Bull Run. Finally, historian Chris Bryan has agreed to speak to our group, but not until June 14 of 2024, one and a half years from now. Chris has written about the XII Corps from Cedar Mountain to Antietam.

One of several books I've been reading off and on is called "To Address You As My Friend - African American Letters to Abraham Lincoln" edited by Jonathan White. Many of these letters are not only enlightening but heart breaking. One was from Thomas Augusta, an African American surgeon in Canada who offered his services to the Union Army. His offer was ignored for a while but was finally accepted. In September of 1863 he was appointed surgeon of the 7th U.S.C.T. He

eventually rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel making him the highest ranking African American officer in the Civil War.

Locally, one sad letter came from Mary Ann Vinson, the wife of an African American farmer from Ballston Spa who enlisted in the 20th U.S.C.T. With two young daughters she was totally destitute with her husband not receiving any pay since he enlisted. She wrote Lincoln *"when I was able to work I don't well enough I am willing to work for my self so that my husband can work for his country I am proud to be the wife of a union soldier. I could live on most any thing so that I could live at all but I cannot earn a single cent I am sick in bed as I write and my little ones are crying for bread and I have none to give them."* Sadly, Amos Vinson died of dysentery on Nov. 19, 1864 in Louisiana. One of Amos's comrades wrote her she would soon

receive her husband's pay. It is not known if she did.

Another soldier who served in the 20th U.S.C.T. was Jared Jackson who died in Schenectady. At the end of the war they guarded Confederate prisoners at Elmira. Jackson was born in Bethlehem, New York.

TRIVIA: Email answers to this month's trivia questions to jbuford63@aol.com

1) Who was the militant abolitionist minister who helped recruit soldiers to the well known 26 U.S.C.T.? (He also lived for a while in Troy, New York. Later in life he was the ambassador to Liberia.)

2) Which black abolitionist and his wife were conductors on the Underground Railroad and lived on Lumber Ave. (now Livingston Ave.) in Albany?

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

___ If marked, your membership was not renewed as of Jan. 14.

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

President	Erin Baillargeon	Vice-President	Mark Koziol
Treasurer	Steve Muller	Secretary	(open)
At-Large	Rik Scarce	At-Large	(open)
At-Large	(open)		

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		
Newsletter	Rosemary Nichols and Erin Baillargeon		