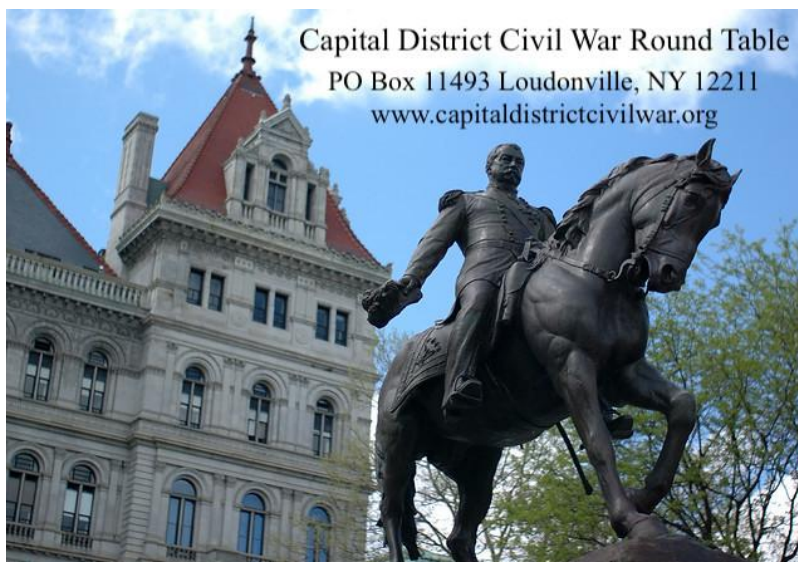


# The Dispatch

Volume 40, Number 4

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## Looking Out Over Gettysburg



Alan Fearnley's "The Vantage Point" depicts the calm of a Pennsylvania landscape about to be shattered by the reality of Civil War. Generals Lee and Longstreet meet on the morning of July 2nd at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, located just west of Gettysburg. The seat of Adams county appears just before them and includes such local landmarks as the local courthouse located on the town square. In the distance are Culp's Hill, Cemetery hill and the Round Tops. Image and text from <https://www.gettysburgframeandgallery.com/limited-edition-prints/vantage-point>

## APRIL MEETING

Friday, April 14, 2023

AT THE WATERVLIET  
SENIOR CENTER

### Codie Eash: Buford's Signalman: Aaron Jerome at the Seminary and Beyond

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

Many Civil War enthusiasts are aware of John Buford's use of the Seminary Cupola at Gettysburg, an incident since popularized in literature and film, but few are familiar with First Lieutenant Aaron Brainard Jerome. As the person who likely spent the most time in that structure among any of the battle's participants, Jerome served as an underrecognized member of the United States Signal Corps, an influencer in shaping perceptions of Buford's legacy, and an officer who Buford praised as having been "ever on the alert." This presentation will focus on Jerome's life, writings, and role in shaping the Gettysburg story.

Codie Eash serves as Director of Education and Museum Operations at Seminary Ridge Museum and Education Center in Gettysburg, and is a 2014 graduate of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, where he

earned a bachelor degree in communication/journalism and held a minor in history. In addition to museum tours and interpretation, he lectures for National Park Service sites, historical societies, Civil War roundtables, educational groups, and other organizations. He has published articles and essays in local newspapers, regional magazines, and national history journals. Codie is a founding contributor to *Pennsylvania in the Civil War*, writes book reviews for *Civil War Monitor*, and serves as a member on the *Gettysburg Magazine* editorial board.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

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

June 9: Tom McMillian's presentation will be on Armistead and Hancock: beyond the legend.

## THANK YOU, MEMBERS

The Round Table wishes to thank Matt George for his continuing donations to the Round Table.

## BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met via Zoom on March 20. At-Large member Rik Scarce agreed to be the *Secretary Pro Tem*.

The Preservation Account balance at this time is \$4,533.92, up thirty dollars from the raffle held at the March meeting. The Board approved a \$200 donation to the American Battlefield

Trust for their \$25:\$1 match for lands at Cedar Mountain and Brandy Station. The Operating Account balance is \$4,390.90. There are upcoming expenses that will come out of this account, including fees for the website and post office box.

## **HOW BRIG. GEN. JOHN BUFORD WON THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG**

**By Rosemary Nichols**

Eric J. Wittenberg, the distinguished and prolific scholar of Union cavalry during the Civil War, is unabashed in his conclusion that Cavalry Brigadier General John Buford was uniquely responsible for positioning his troops on July 1, 1863 to create the combat environment that would allow Meade's infantry and artillery to win a significant victory over Lee's invading forces.

According to Wittenberg, West Point still teaches Buford's strategy on staff rides to Gettysburg. Though Army cavalry has long changed from four legged mounts to motorized transportation, it can be instructive to be reminded what it was about the Kentucky general's early troop arrangements that allowed for Union success on the morning of the first of those long, hot summer days in 1863 in a small community in Pennsylvania.

In a closely written, copiously footnoted appendix to his book, *The Devil's to Pay: John Buford at Gettysburg* (Savas Beatie, 2014), Wittenberg discusses how Buford used his forces so successfully that less

than four thousand cavalry, fighting dismounted, and two artillery battalions, were able to delay Heth's Third Corps of twenty-one thousand veteran Confederate troops arrayed in twenty-eight regiments with eighty-four guns to give John Reynolds' Union First Corps time to come up and deploy.

There are two classic defenses that Buford's positioning of his troops as dragoons might have been. One was a defense in depth similar to that used in January, 1781 by Daniel Morgan at Cowpens, South Carolina in the Revolutionary War. The second is a covering force action. While Buford's deployment of his troops can be seen to resemble either of these strategies, Wittenberg believes the Buford alignment more closely resembles the covering force action.

A recent U.S. Army manual describes the covering force action as follows. The covering force operates independently from the main body. The purpose of covering force operation is to develop the situation early to deceive, disorganize and destroy enemy forcing. However, unlike screening and guard forces, a covering force is self-contained and often seeks to become decisively engaged with the enemy.

The idea of a covering force action is to trade space for time, thereby allowing a detached forward unit (in the Civil War usually cavalry) to delay the advance of the enemy long enough for the main body of troops to come up and engage. The covering force operates independently of the main body and frequently continues to fight after the

main body of supporting troops has taken the field.

Buford's purpose was to trade three ridgelines of space for enough time to permit John Reynolds and the Union First Corps to come up and engage. Wittenberg says Buford's brilliantly designed and implemented tactic delayed the Confederate advance for nearly five hours on the first day at Gettysburg. Buford's cavalry used Wisler's (Knoxlyn) Ridge, where Lieutenant Marcellus Jones fired the first shot of the battle of Gettysburg, then Herr's Ridge, and finally McPherson's Ridge to good effect. Many of the Confederate soldiers commenting on the initial battle were convinced they were fighting infantry, not the cavalry they were accustomed to brushing aside.

A further analysis of Buford's plan reveals its classic nature. His deployments were intended to deceive the enemy as to force type, size, disposition and intent, and force the Confederates to buy every foot of ground they occupied at the highest cost possible. Buford also intended to trade time for ground by forcing the enemy to deploy his forces, thereby identifying the type, size, disposition, location and intent of Heth's division. All of this, in turn, completely disrupted the Virginian's operating plans for the morning of July 1, 1863.

Almost all of us are familiar with the iconic scene in *The Killer Angels* where John Reynolds, having ridden ahead of his marching infantry in response to a messenger from Buford, reviews the shaping battle with his friend. Knowing the limitations of his tired soldiers to

quickly finish their grueling march to Gettysburg, Reynolds' question to Buford is, "Can you hold them, John?" To which Buford replied in his customary laconic fashion, "I reckon."

Hold them the Union First Cavalry does – for five long hours until the First Corps is able to arrive and deploy for battle. Buford chose the ground for this important contest and assured that the Union troops were able to deploy in the most favorable location for the decisive engagement, what we now think of as Cemetery Ridge. Not incidentally, Buford thereby became the favorite Union cavalry officer of almost every Northern student of the Civil War.

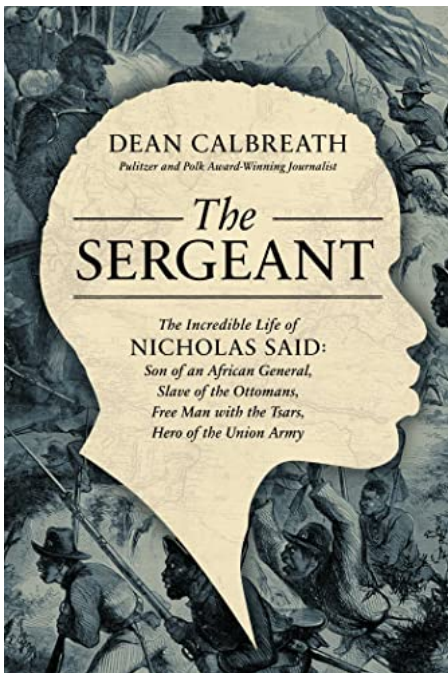
## **BUFORD'S VIEW**

by Matt George

I'm sorry I was AWOL from the last meeting and writing my column. I've spent the last 5-6 weeks in Ellis Hospital and Sunnyview undergoing triple by-pass heart surgery and rehabilitation. I'm home now, and can return to my neglected responsibilities including writing this column. I can drive locally and my surgeon has assured me I should be able to drive to a Civil War Conference April 14-17 in Winchester, Va.. Unfortunately that means I'll miss the April meeting, as well. I heard Codie Eash speak at the Seminary Museum in Gettysburg over a year ago and invited him to speak to us this April on John Buford's signalman Aaron Jerome. I've fallen behind in acquiring speakers so its vital that I recruit speakers at the Conference in Winchester.

Like many members of the Round Table

I have more books waiting to be read than I could read in my lifetime. I often claim that when I enter any bookstore they "talk" to me. "Look at me I'm interesting. Buy me!" Today in Barnes & Noble I bought a newly released book entitled *"The Sergeant: The Incredible Life of Nicholas Said - Son of an African General, Slave of the Ottomans, Free man Under the Tsars, Hero of the Union Army."* Henry Lewis Gates says: "essential reading." The author is Dean Calbreath.



It turns out that my surgeon, whose name is Choumarov was born in Hungary but has a big interest in the American Civil War. The main topic of conversation at a follow-up appointment on March 7 was, would you believe, the battle of Gettysburg. He told me me it is a place all Americans should visit.

Since I'm hoping to be at that April Conference I'm looking forward to seeing everybody at our May meeting.

TRIVIA (Two tough ones): Email answers to this month's trivia questions to [jbuford63@aol.com](mailto:jbuford63@aol.com)

1) What Division commander under Buford at Gettysburg had no previous cavalry experience before the war? He was a painter in N.Y.C. and Buford said he was his best cavalry officer.

2) What 2nd Lt. in the 8th Illinois Cavalry is credited with firing the first shot at Gettysburg (maybe)?

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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](mailto:cdcwrt@hotmail.com)

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