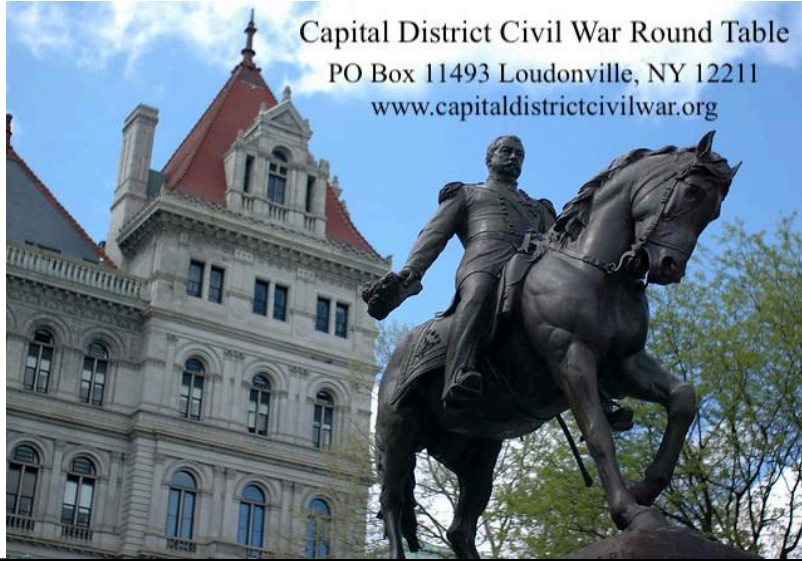


The Dispatch

Volume 41, Number 4

April 2024



Burnside: Fact v. Fiction



Maj. Gen. A.E. Burnside sits between two staff members near Richmond, Va., in this Civil War photo by Alexander Gardner.

APRIL MEETING

Friday, April 12, 2024

**AT THE WATERVLIET
SENIOR CENTER**

Robert Grandchamp
**“Burnside: Fact vs.
Fiction”**

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

Ambrose Burnside is widely lampooned as the worst Union general of the war. He is thought of as an incompetent moron who failed time and again in everything he did.

This could not be farther from the truth. Burnside was a brilliant inventor, a general who won more battles than he lost, and one who fully supported the Union cause.

Join award winning Civil War historian Robert Grandchamp for a riveting look at this misunderstood man.

Robert Grandchamp is widely regarded as the nation's foremost authority on Rhode Island Military History. He is the award winning author of fifteen books and earned his MA in History from Rhode Island College. He is a former National Park Ranger with service at Harpers Ferry, Shenandoah, and Blackstone Valley. Robert is currently a Senior Analyst with the Federal government working on immigration issues. He resides in Jericho Center,

Vermont with his wife Elizabeth and their three children, Addison, Mackenzie, and Sawyer.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 10: Derek Maxfield will speak about Sherman.

June 14: Chris Bryan's topic is still to be determined

September 13: TBA

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met via Zoom on March 11. Mark Koziol reported that popular social media posts included those related to the Civil War weekend held in Olustee, Florida, and photos of monuments in Gettysburg. If you do not do so already, consider liking and following the Round Table's Facebook page: Capital District Civil War RoundTable.

The Board decided to survey the membership to get feedback on our meeting logistics, speakers, and dues. The survey does not collect email addresses, and it consists of 14 questions. If you get a digital copy of the newsletter, your email contains the link to the Google Form. If you get a paper copy, you can type the web address below into your Internet browser to reach the survey (the letters are case specific, so capital letters need to be capitalized). We will also have a handful of paper copies at the next meeting.

<https://forms.gle/eNSQxCXU2gBtzsc4A>

CELEBRATING THE APPOMATTOX SURRENDER: A 2015 REMEMBRANCE: PART TWO

by Rosemary Nichols

Last month Part One of this two-part article covered the final days of the 1865 Appomattox Campaign. I described the travel of our Round Table fundraisers from the siege lines at Petersburg to the disastrous rout of Confederate forces at what is now Sailor's Creek Battlefield State Park. Now we turn our attention to the journey from Sailor's Creek to the final surrender of the Confederate forces at Appomattox.



marker at Sailor's Creek Battlefield State Park

Farmville is most famous for its High Bridge. The High Bridge Trail State Park is 31 miles long and bisects the community of Farmville. High Bridge itself is more than 2400 feet long and is 125 feet above the Appomattox River. Confederate forces crossed the High Bridge on April 7, 1865. They then tried to burn the bridge, but only partially succeeded. Union forces used the

lower wagon bridge to continue their pursuit of Lee's men into Farmville.

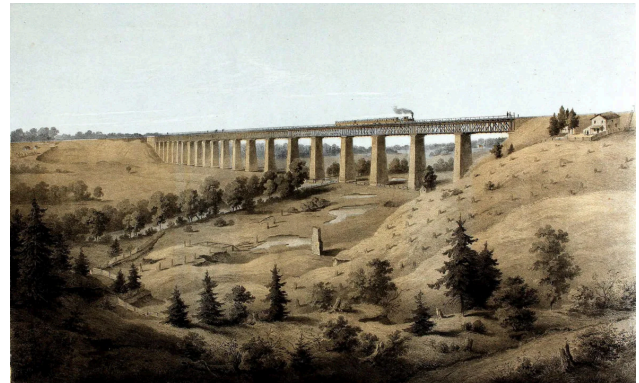


Image of the High Bridge from <https://visitfarmville.com/high-bridge/>

High Bridge is located five miles east of the trail's downtown intersection with Main Street. We did not have time to take the trail. We settled for viewing the very high bridge from the Camp Paradise parking lot. Not only does it provide a good view of the famous bridge, but this parking lot is situated to provide trail access to the Appomattox River below.

Lee's forces left Farmville with Union troops on their heels. Both Lee and Grant passed through Farmville on April 7, 1865. Lee and his army were moving westward toward Lynchburg in search of their desperately needed rations. Grant's forces were just hours behind, in determined pursuit of the Confederates.

Farmville is only 28 miles from Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Modern vehicles on two good local roads can cover that distance in about half an hour. It was a much slower and more fraught trip for the weary Confederates. They must have known their war was over, unless they resorted to guerilla warfare. Many

of them still grabbed their rifles and carried on, bare feet and empty stomachs notwithstanding.

Union infantry and cavalry forces under General Philip Sheridan pursued and cut off the Confederates' retreat. On April 9 outside the village of Appomattox Court House, Lee launched a last-ditch attack to break through the Union units to his front, assuming the federal force consisted entirely of lightly armed cavalry. When he realized the cavalry was now backed by two corps of Union infantry, Lee had no choice but to surrender. Any further avenue of retreat and escape was now cut off.

At Appomattox Court House National Historical Park Civil War reenactors retraced the steps of Grant, Lee and their aides as they entered the McLean House. An estimated 31,000 visitors waited patiently in a somber day to see the two men exit 90 minutes later with terms of surrender for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

I grew up on a working cattle ranch in Arizona. One of the funniest things I saw on that overcast day was the obvious discomfort of the reenactor playing General Lee as he mounted a handsome gray horse that was a good stand-in for the famous Traveler. An uncertain rider creates a nervous horse. Fortunately, the horse was too well trained to forcibly remove his rider in what would have been a disaster for reenactment that day.

A bell sounded for four minutes outside the McLean House after the April 10, 1865 surrender. That was a minute for each year of a war that left



Reenactors representing Ely Parker, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House in 2015.

more than 620,000 dead. Descendants of Grant and Lee attended the signature event at the National Historical Park.

Our friend Pat Schroeder, the historian at Appomattox Court House, had arranged a good location from which Round Table members could sell our items. One of my favorite images from the day was of JJ Jennings, who was front and center at the table selling cancellations. There was so much action that JJ was enthusiastically tossing money over his shoulder. Fortunately, Al McLeod was there to catch the bounty. It was a very successful day of raising money for battlefield protection.

One of the saddest but most moving parts of the day was watching the Confederate men surrender their weapons. The reenactors had gone very far out of their way in the name of accuracy. Many of the men were barefoot on a cold, blustery day. Their uniforms were shabby but their guns were gleaming from regular care. They

all appeared downcast and reluctant, especially to surrender their flags.



Confederate reenactors preparing to stack their arms in Appomattox Court House, 2015.

The men reenacting the federal soldiers were equally dedicated to their chosen roles. There was no cheering. The only sounds were muffled drums and the whisper of bare feet moving along the main street in Appomattox. The men in uniform and the large crowd gathered on the edge of the secondary road where the Confederate units surrendered their weapons were silent.

We made lots of money on the three days we were selling cachets and other items at Appomattox. I don't know about everyone else, but I was glad I had gone to commemorate, even at one remove, the tasteful depiction of a major event ending the four ugly years of civil war.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

On Saturday March 23 I'll be traveling to the New England Civil War Museum (Hartford, Connecticut) to hear our replacement speaker Rob Grandchamp discuss his re-evaluation of Ambrose Burnside. Hopefully, I'll be able to discover more speaker possibilities while I'm there. Our May (Derek Maxfield) and June (M. Chris Bryan) speakers have both confirmed their visits to our Round Table.

The Civil War Roundtable Congress is holding another Workshop Conference on Saturday, July 27 at Shenandoah University, I hope to be able to attend. There are also two big conferences that are possibilities in the future. One is the Civil War Institute Summer Conference at Gettysburg College on June 7-12. The second is the Lincoln Forum in November, also in Gettysburg. Both are top level Conferences. However, the costs may or may not be prohibitive. Anyone interested in sharing a room for either one of these Conferences let me know.

I wish I had more time to spend in Hartford, Connecticut this coming weekend. There are several historical sites to visit. I believe the Mark Twain House and the Harriet Beecher Stowe house are there. Also, Hartford is where Morgan Buckley lived. He is the only Civil war veteran to be enshrined in the Baseball Hall of fame in Cooperstown.

**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**

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		