

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

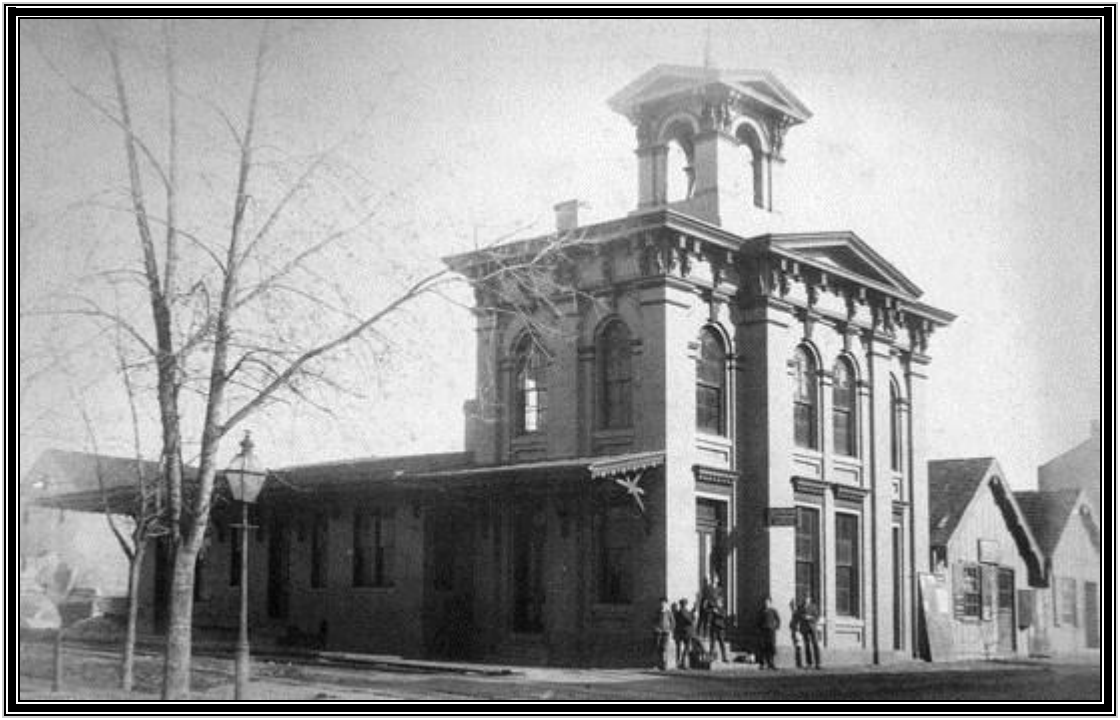
CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.net



Volume 29, Number 6 March 2012

PRESIDENT LINCOLN COMES TO GETTYSBURG TODAY



[November 18, 1863] President Abraham Lincoln is due to arrive at the railroad station in Gettysburg this afternoon on a special train from Washington. A large crowd is expected to welcome the presidential party. The President will spend the night at the David Wills home before attending the dedication ceremony for the new Soldier's Cemetery. Other dignitaries are expected including Governor Curtain and keynote speaker, Edward Everett. Large crowds are expected tomorrow. Mrs. Lincoln and his youngest son will not be accompanying the President.

MARCH MEETING
FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

"…Never forget what they did here…"

John McTague

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:30 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:30 – 8:30 p.m.**
Questions & Answers	**8:30 – 9:00 p.m.**
More Socializing	**9:00 – 10:00 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The March meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be on Friday, March 9, 2012. This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. Our very special guest speaker will be John McTague, and his presentation is entitled **"….Never Forget What They Did Here….: Abraham Lincoln's Visit to Gettysburg, November 18-19, 1863."**

This is a talk with a slide presentation that deals with Lincoln's invitation to the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg some four and one-half months after the battle. Lincoln arrived by train at Gettysburg, and stayed at the home of David Wells, a lawyer, on the square at Gettysburg. There he may have put the finishing touches on the Gettysburg Address. The next afternoon he rode a horse to the site of the dedication.

The Committee for the Consecration of the National Cemetery had invited Lincoln. "It is the desire, that after the Oration, you, as Chief Executive of the nation, formally set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks." Those ten sentences, delivered in less than two minutes, have become one of the most well-known speeches in United States history.

A little known fact is that Lincoln was ill when he left Washington on the train. He felt weak, and on the morning of the 19th he was dizzy and appeared pale and haggard. On the train back to Washington he was feverish and had a severe headache. Lincoln later had a protracted illness with a vesicular rash that may have been a mild case of smallpox. The Address was then delivered during the prodromal stage of the illness.

John is a Gettysburg Licensed Town Guide, and for the past seven years he has worked for the Borough of Gettysburg and the National Park Service. He has studied the American Civil War and the Battle of Gettysburg for 18 years. John has also completed numerous seminar courses at Gettysburg over the past ten years that were sponsored by the National Park Service, Harrisburg Area Community College, the Gettysburg Foundation, the Licensed Battlefield Guide Association and the Licensed Town Guide Association. In addition he completed the Gettysburg Battlefield Studies Program at Harrisburg Area Community College.

In addition to his tour guide duties, he has presented at numerous events sponsored by the Civil War Trust, the Adams County Historical Society, the Ulster County Historical Society, the American Civil War Museum, the David Wills House and Civil War Round Tables.

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site: www.nycivilwar150.org.

Friday, April 13, 2012 will be the regular scheduled meeting of the CDCWRT. Our special presenter will be Joseph W. Zarzynski, underwater archeologist and documentary film maker. His presentation is entitled *"The Search for the Jefferson Davis: Trader, Slaver, Raider."*

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 13-15, 2012 are the dates for the annual Underground Railroad Conference which will be held at Russell Sage College in Troy. Details will follow in future newsletters.

Saturday, April 28th marks Siena College's Living History Day. The CDCWRT will be represented. Hopefully the weather will be better this year than last year's event.

Sunday, May 6, 2012 marks the Ten Broeck Mansion's Annual Living History Day. The mansion will be open from noon to 4:00 p.m. Various organizations will have exhibits on the grounds. The event is free to the public and members are encouraged to attend. The CDCWRT will be represented.

Friday, May 11, 2012 will be the regular scheduled meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Joe Collea and he will be speaking about the 5th New York Cavalry.

Saturday and Sunday, June 2-3, 2012 is the Troy Civil War Weekend at the Masonic Temple in Troy. This is an encampment and skirmish with artillery. There are a variety of exhibits and organizations represented. The CDCWRT participates. Volunteers are needed to help man our tent the two days. Contact Matt George.

Friday, June 8, 2012 will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our speaker will be Dennis Gaffney and he will talk about his book, *Civil War Week by Week.*

Saturday, June 9, 2012 the CDCWRT will get culture! Albany Pro Musica, a highly respected choral group, will present a special Civil War music program. They have asked the CDCWRT to help promote this event. More details will follow, but mark it on your calendar now and tell your friends about it.

Friday, August 17th is the CDCWRT picnic. Saturday and Sunday August 18-19,2012 is the Schuyler Flatts Civil War Weekend. Join us for the picnic and activities on the weekend.

Friday, September 14th will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Laurence Hauptman. The topic of his presentation will be *"General Wool and the New York City Draft Riots."*

Friday, October 12th will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Vicki Weiss, and her topic will be *"Civil War Monuments in New York State."*

Friday – Sunday, November 2-4, 2012 will be the second Sue Knost Memorial Conference entitled "*1862: And the War Came."* Most of our speakers have all confirmed and include Chris Kolakowski, Bruce Eelman, John Hennessy, Frank

O'Reilly, Steve Muller and John Quarstein. The conference will occur at the facilities at Siena College.

Friday, December 14th will be the regular holiday meeting of the CDCWRT.

STILL WANTED

The Round Table is **still** looking for someone or several members to serve as Refreshment Chair. The Round Table provides a budget for soda, water and snacks for meetings, but we need some volunteers to bring the items, set up for the meeting, and clean up afterwards. We generally have 10 meetings a year so if the task is divided by several volunteers, it would amount to 3-5 times per year. Anyone interested should talk to Fran McCashion or Mary Ellen Johnson.

FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

The February Board Meeting was held on February 20, 2012. The treasurer reported $2618.79 in the regular checking account and $4815.14 in the preservation account. The membership committee reported that we have 214 members and send complimentary newsletters to 58 organizations or individuals.

The RT will participate in the 149th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg on July 1-3. However, the re-enactment will occur on the following weekend, July 6-8. The RT will set up in the Authors' Tent for the weekend. Volunteers are needed to man our tables. The RT has two rooms reserved at the Quality Inn for July 4-8. If these rooms are NOT used this year, we will NOT be able to reserved them for the huge 150th event next year. The rooms will be available even if you just want to attend the re-enactment. Please contact Matt George for more info.

A $100 donation was made to CPT for Cedar Creek (4.4:1 match) in the memory of Sara Bearss, daughter of historian Ed Bearss.

The President wishes to thank Erin Baillargeon, Steve Muller, Matt George, Art Henningson, Fran McCashion and Mary Ellen Johnson for moving the round table supplies to a smaller storage shed, thus saving the round table $19 a month.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Dr. Harry Bradshaw Mathews' power point presentation ***Up-lifting the Race: The United States Colored Troops' Link to the Freedom Journey and the Civil War*** led us through the actions initiated by African-Americans themselves during the antebellum period which helped to win their freedom and inspired many thousand black men to join the Union Army. We tend to think of abolition in white terms, but African-Americans were greatly influenced in many ways by their fellows who shared three priorities: winning freedom, obtaining citizenship and having their families legally recognized. To reach these goals meant a long, difficult journey.

White abolitionists were not alone in preaching sermons, giving lectures and publishing books as methods of influencing the public to oppose slavery and work for its abolition. Blacks worked in similar ways within their own culture to achieve the same goals. Churches were a major force in the abolition movement. Independent African-American churches had been established with many of their ministers and members aiding their fellow African-Americans to escape slavery and offering support, and allowing freedom seekers to survive once they reached the North.

Legally it was originally forbidden to teach slaves to read and write, according to laws which existed in the southern states until the end of the Civil War. In 1827

Boudoin College allowed a black man to become not only literate, but well educated. He established a newspaper that continued to be published throughout the Civil War. Other black publications followed as additional African-Americans received educations. As years went by, a number of free blacks in the North received classical educations, making them able to intellectually demolish any of the theories or justifications of slavery that slave owners or sympathizers fell back upon.

The Masonic brotherhood was another important factor in their growing resistance to slavery and their ability to assist those fleeing slavery on the Underground Railroad. Especially important were the Prince Hall Masons.

Many more slave revolts than have ever been documented occurred in the South. The successful slave revolt against the French in Haiti led by Toussaint L'Overture was an inspiration to African-Americans.

Over the early decades of the 19th century, a parallel infrastructure, which to a large degree still exists, gradually de-veloped. Newspapers, schools and colleges, fraternal organizations such as the Masons and churches such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church were established to serve the black community. In the 1840s a Colored Man's Convention sought to define their identity. Abolition of slavery was the primary concern of all of these groups. By 1840 about 70 per cent of slaves had been born in the United States, not Africa, and colonization had little appeal for either freedmen or those enslaved.

At the time of the Civil War, Lincoln on his part had little inclination to interfere with slavery in the rebelling states, still toying with the idea of colonization. The preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was a military document designed to bring black men into the Union ranks. Eventually 200,000 African-Americans fought on the Union side taking part in 39 major battles with 36,000 of those volunteers dying. Almost 80 per cent of them had once been slaves. Medals of Honor were awarded to nineteen black soldiers and eight sailors. A huge number of these soldiers learned to read during their service with the Union army.

The journey to freedom was long and difficult, finally reaching the first destination in 1865 when slavery was abolished. Unfortunately there was still a long journey ahead to reach full equality and civil rights.

This excellent summary was submitted by Mary Ellen Johnson, secretary for the CDCWRT.

CORRECTIONS

Last month's newsletter was probably confusing for you. Pages 4 and 5 were reversed. One paragraph concerning JJ's presentation was sliced up and spliced together in the transfer from a download to the newsletter document. Here is the corrected version for you.

Readers of the novel ***The Killer Angels,*** or viewers of the movie, ***Gettysburg,*** who were moved by the close friendship between Lewis Armistead and Winfield Scott Hancock depicted with its dramatic and emotional climax at Gettysburg should have heard the irrepressible J.J. Jennings separate fact from fiction. His lively presentation had everyone's attention.

Were Armistead and Hancock friends? Over the decades between West Point and the Civil War they certainly crossed paths many times and had many opportunities to form a friendship. They were both assigned to Ft. Towson in Oklahoma in 1844 and then later served together in the Mexican War. Along with Harry Heth, the three moved into a local hacienda while on garrison duty and had good times there. In 1850 Hancock married wealthy Almina Russell, while by then Armistead had

buried two wives and three children in four years leaving him a sad, embittered man. Along with Heth, Hancock and Armistead continued to serve in the Sixth Infantry in various parts of the Indian Territory during the next several years.

By 1861 Armistead and Hancock were in California and at the outbreak of war were forced to choose sides. Southerners including Armistead who opted to fight for the Confederacy resigned their commissions. Before returning east to fight for the Confederacy, a sad, final farewell party was held attended by both Hancock and Armistead. There Armistead gave Almina his prayer book and Hancock his major's uniform as parting gifts.

With war underway Hancock's promotion to Brigadier General eventually came and not long after he became commander of the Second Corps while Armistead never rose above brigade level and Heth division level. Fate brought the three men to Gettysburg in July 1863. The third day's battle found Armistead leading his men as part of Pickett's Charge to face Hancock's regiments. Both Hancock and Armistead were seriously wounded and as Armistead was carried off the field Captain Bingham, one of Hancock's staff, comforted him. Armistead gave Bingham his wallet, watch and stirrups to send to his family if he didn't survive. Moved to the Eleventh Corps Hospital at Spangler's Farm, Armistead died the next day. Unlike the fictional version, Armistead and Hancock had no personal contact at Gettysburg.

In the years after the war Abner Doubleday's claim that as he lay wounded, Armistead expressed regrets and sorrow that he had joined the Confederacy, something that seems highly unlikely and is generally discounted by historians today. Another book was written by Almina Hancock, who was left a widow in 1886 with only a military pension. In an attempt to earn some much needed cash by writing a book about her late husband, it is the source of some of the stories of the close friendship between Armistead and Hancock. The Winfield Scott Hancock Society feels much about their close friendship is overblown, but as J.J. pointed out, there is a kernel of truth in much writing that is based on historical research though it is often exaggerated. However, the novelist Shaara's tale of their encounter at Gettysburg is pure fiction.

Mary Ellen Johnson, the secretary for the CDCWRT, provided this excellent summary of the meeting.

DUES ARE STILL DUE!

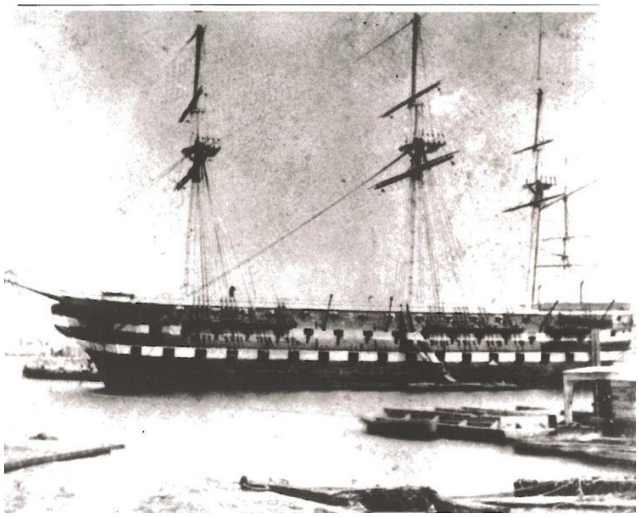
Annual dues of $25 for individuals or $25 for families are due in the month of January. Treasurer, Fran McCashion, will be available at meetings, or dues can be mailed in to the Round Tables address as listed on the letterhead on page one of the newsletter. Please don't risk being dropped from the mailing list.

THOSE OLD SHIPS OF THE LINE

On the eve of the war, the Navy retained several ships-of-the-line on the vessel list. Most sat on the stocks out of commission. In 1860 the Navy counted eight 74-gun and two 120-gun ships-of-the-line. Tactics of the day were based on slow speed handling in tight formations in which doctrine called for the battle divisions to fight. Many naval officers considered Nelson's battle line in disposition.

The USS *Pennsylvania* laid down in 1822 and commissioned in 1837, was the largest sailing warship ever built in the U.S. She could mount an impressive mix of 8-inch shell guns and 32-pdr cannon. Rated as a 120-gun ship, by 1860 she was laid up in Norfolk as a receiving ship. She was not ready for war as the secession crisis loomed.

Also laid up at Norfolk were the 74-gun ships USS *Columbus* and USS *Delaware*. The *Columbus* was commissioned in 1828. The USS *New York* was a sister ship of the *Delaware*, and according to some sources was laid up incomplete at Norfolk. Other records indicate the incomplete vessel was laid up in the New York shipyard. Regardless, the *New York* was never actually commissioned.



U.S.S. North Carolina

The USS *North Carolina* served as a store-ship at the New York Navy Yard. Another 74-gun ship, the USS *Ohio*, dated to 1820 and was laid up in Boston as a receiving ship. Other ships of the rate—the *Alabama, Vermont* and *Virginia*—lay incomplete on the stocks and thus not commissioned. And at Sacketts Harbor, NY, the *New Orleans,* a 120-gun rated ship, remained incomplete as the sole Great Lakes ship-of-the-line.

The *Columbus, Ohio, North Carolina* and *Delaware* saw substantial service before the Civil War. The *Columbus* and the *Ohio* were active during the Mexican War. Like the American frigates, the American 74s often carried guns in excess of gtheir rate. The *North Carolina* reportedly carried over 100 guns during some Mediterranean cruises.

At the time of South Carolina's secession in December 1860, none of these vessels were ready for service. Faced with other operational concerns, the Navy let the ships remain on the stocks or in yard support capacities right up to the start of the Civil War. The Navy burned the *Pennsylvania, Ohio* and *Delaware* when Virginia state troops took over Norfolk in April 1861, somewhat symbolically marking the end of the ship-of-the-line era.

However, a few of the big old sailing ships continued to serve as store ships or receiving ships until the end of the Civil War. The *Alabama* became the USS *New Hampshire*, and was commissioned as a store ship. The *New Hampshire* and the *Vermont* served on station at Port Royal SC, reportedly receiving heavy caliber Parrott rifles.

When the Anaconda Plan was put into effect, the Navy had only 42 mostly obsolete ships to blockade over 3500 miles on Confederacy coastline. The Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, bought tugboat, ferryboats and other harbor craft to create the "soapbox navy." These shallow draught vessels were surprisingly effective in the shallow coastal waters.

However steam-powered ironclads were about to burst onto the scene and after the historic Battle of Hampton Roads between the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Virginia* on March 9, 1862, the sailing navy was doomed.

Most of this article was based on Craig Swain's article in the Camp Chase Gazette, Volume XXXIX, No.2, 2011.