



The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

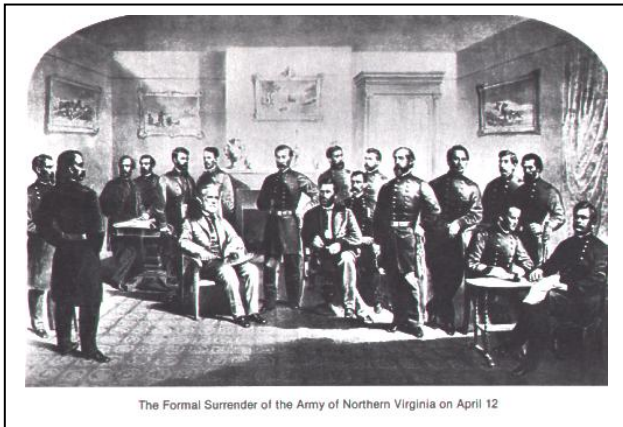
Capital District Civil War Round Table

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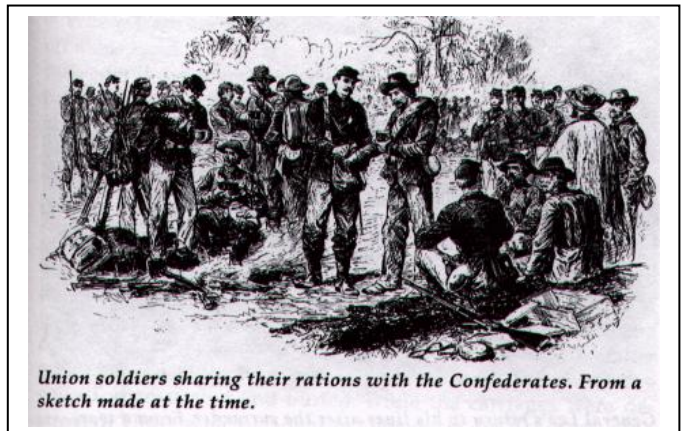
April 2005



The Formal Surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on April 12



APPOMATTOX THE 140TH ANNIVERSARY APRIL 12, 1865



Union soldiers sharing their rations with the Confederates. From a sketch made at the time.

	Appomattox Court House, Va., <i>April 10th, 1865.</i>
	THE BEARER, of Co. Regt.
	of a Paroled Prisoner of the Army of Northern Virginia, has permission to go to his home, and there remain undisturbed.

**APRIL
MEETING
FULL DUTY BANQUET
MONTPELIER, VT
SATURDAY
APRIL 23RD**

**THERE WILL BE NO
MEETING AT
GUILDERLAND**

CDCWRT MEETING

THERE WILL BE NO APRIL 8TH MEETING OF THE CDCWRT. Instead, we invite members to attend the Full Duty Banquet of the Vermont roundtable in Montpelier on Saturday & Sunday, April 23rd & 24th. The guest speaker will be the acclaimed Civil War artist, Don Troiani. Mr. Troiani is America's most collected military artist. Additionally, he served as the Civil War uniform and equipment consultant for the movie, *Cold Mountain*, and has been military advisor on the A & E History Channel's *Civil War Journal*, and the miniseries, *The American Revolution*.

The banquet will be held at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, and will feature living historians in period dress, a color guard, and a live performance of Civil War period music. A fund raising raffle will have three major prizes: a reproduction 50 caliber percussion Pennsylvania rifle, a four-day, three-night getaway at the Jerico B&B in Marlinton, West Virginia, and a Troiani print, *Put the Boys In*, depicting the VMI Cadets at the Battle of New Market. Raffle tickets are \$5.

The Round Table can do the whole trip for \$139 double occupancy, or \$179 for single occupancy. This includes bus trip, room at the Capitol Hotel, banquet ticket, and some

touring Sunday. Drinks and snacks will be provided on the bus, but plan on bringing your own brown bag lunch for Saturday. Those who wish to drive themselves, may still purchase tickets from the Round Table for \$25.00 a piece. Contact Sue Knost, Matt George or Joe Stracuzzi by Saturday, April 16th for details.

MARCH MEETING

The weather has been very uncooperative this winter, and there was no exception for the March meeting. A storm was accurately predicted in Pennsylvania for the day of the meeting. The NMP at Gettysburg actually closed down and the Latschers had to cancel their trip to Albany. Their presentation has been rescheduled for the fall.

Thankfully we had enough warning to put together a back-up program in case of cancellation. Donna Gould, is on the boards of the CDCWRT and the Friends of Grant's Cottage. Donna spoke about the Friends' plans for the grand opening of the Museum at Grant's Cottage this September. NYS donated a stone multi-stall garage next to the cottage to the groups. Funds were raised to remodel the structure and develop it as a site in which to display some of the many artifacts associated with the cottage. There will be more details about activities at the cottage this summer in the May newsletter. Donna's presentation was followed by a showing of the CD of the Harold Holzer and Richard Dreyfus presentation of *An Evening with Ulysses S. Grant*, which was seen at the Egg last fall. This excellent performance was a fund raiser for the NYS Archives.

UP-COMING EVENTS

The movie on Wednesday, April 13th, at the Guilderland Library will be *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*. This movie stars Lance Henriksen as President Lincoln and Rob

Morrow as John Wilkes Booth. The movie follows a team of conspirators led by Booth as they planned to kidnap Lincoln. When the plot is foiled, the conspirators develop the assassination plot. They are defending what they believe to be the basis of Southern civilization: the right to secede from the Union and uphold the legal institution of slavery.

On Friday, April 15th at 7:30pm & Saturday, April 16th at 1:00pm, the NYS Museum will present a one-man play about the life and times of our 16th President entitled, *ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN TWO MILES A PENNY*. The play is written and performed by Ed Trotta. Tickets are \$5.00 at the door at the museum. Call 474-5877 for more details.

The May Meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday the 13th at the Guilderland Library. The speaker will be our own J.J. JENNINGS. The topic is entitled: CSI: GETTYSBURG --- THE WOUNDING AND DEATH OF MAJ-GEN. WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK.

Monday, May 23rd, is Game Day at Cooperstown. The RT usually participates in the day's activities, and raises monies for preservation by selling our special cachets and T-shirts. Volunteers are being sought.

The June Meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, June 10th at the Guilderland Library. The topic will be announced at a later date.

Peterboro Civil War Days will be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 11th and 12th. This small village on route 20 near Syracuse was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Each year the village sponsors a Civil War weekend with encampments, presentations, entertainment and period foods. A number

of Civil War groups participate, including the RT with a commemorative postal cancellation. This is always a pleasant weekend in the spring with a nice drive to the village.

On Saturday & Sunday, June 18-19th, the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga will have a Civil War Weekend and Encampment. Save these dates on your calendar; more details will appear in next month's newsletter.

Gettysburg – 142nd Anniversary – Friday, July 1st to Monday, July 4th. This is always an exciting event with many tours provided by the Park Service, free lectures by authors at the Greystone Bookstore tent, and the daily re-enactments. This is also a major event for the RT to raise money for preservation activities. The RT will have a block of rooms in the nearby motel. Rates will be higher this year however. Budget cuts for the Park Service may also impact upon the number of guided tour available to the public. More details will follow.

Civil War Days in Troy will be held on Saturday, July 9th and Sunday July 10th. The site will be in Troy's Prospect Park. This has been held at the King Solomon Masonic Temple the past several years, but it had become popular and has outgrown that site. Prospect Park allows for a larger venue. Activities include an encampment and a re-enactment of a Civil War battle. There will be other types of entertainment. The RT will need volunteers for our information tables.

On Monday, July 11th, there will be a History Teachers' Summer Institute at Union College. We are looking for volunteers to present a program for the teachers such as the life of the common

soldiers. Interested members should contact president, Matt George for details.

On Sunday, July 17th, the Round Table will have its annual picnic at Thatcher State Park, south of Albany. The picnic will be at the Horseshoe 2 area, which is near the swimming pool. Reserve this date now.

Sunday, July 31st, is Induction Day at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The RT will have a booth for sales of cachets and T-shirts. Volunteers are being sought.

Chamberlain Days in Maine will be held on Wednesday, August 10th through Saturday, August 13th. President, Matt George has attended this activity several times. He states it is a great experience for Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans, and will give anyone more details about the event.

EDITORIAL

The following editorial by Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton appeared in a recent issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. It is too long to reproduce in total, so I have abstracted it. It is controversial, and since I read it, I have given it considerable thought. Neither I, nor the Board, put forth our impressions as an endorsement by the Round Table. I present it simply for you to read and think about.

American Wars for Liberty and Power **(part three)**

Great Britain and the United States ceased to compete militarily after 1815, leaving Mexico, which declared its independence from Spain in 1821, as the last remaining obstacle to the dominion of the United States in North America. The Mexican leaders' fears of revolution and racial war, along with the rich geographical diversity of their nation, created a fertile field for caudillos,

violence, and local rebellions. One of the last, on the remote northeastern fringe of Mexico, created the Republic of Texas in 1836. A decade later, the United States annexed Texas, provoking a war with Mexico in 1846. Within two years, the Treaty of Hidalgo deprived Mexico of fully half its territory. The accession of vast amounts of territory created a furious debate that shredded the political fabric of the victor. Adding this territory to what Americans thought of as the empire of liberty, made the question of slavery's expansion into the conquests inescapable. In 1861 Southerners and Northerners went to war to make the American empire safe for their own, mutually exclusive, notions of liberty, convinced that no alternative remained but an appeal to the god of battles.

In short, revolution had once again emerged as an unanticipated consequence of an imperial war, and once again it created a new political synthesis. The last act of the Age of Empires and Revolutions was the subjugation of American Indian resistance west of the Mississippi. The industrial transformation of the American economy, produced an America that had less interest in territorial acquisition than in the expansion of economic dominion.

The Spanish-American War in 1898 was an imperial war with a decisive victory that resulted not in a third American revolution, but rather in an alteration of long-established patterns of conquest and incorporation. When Filipino insurgents, resisting American liberation between 1899 and 1902, killed or wounded over 4000 U.S. soldiers and demonstrated what the true costs of an overseas empire could be, American leaders embraced an alternative imperial policy --- interventionism --- that allowed them to exercise power beyond the borders of the United States but that did not

require yet another revolutionary reconstruction of American political culture. This Age of Intervention has lasted down to the present. Americans continued to fight wars according to the just-war ideology first worked out in the War of 1812. The United States remained dedicated to using force not only to impose stability on disorderly peripheral regions, but to create the conditions for liberty as Americans understood them --- free markets, the protection of property rights, and the rule of law.

World War I laid bare the terrible costs of modern war. Most Americans found them bearable for the comparatively short time needed to subdue the German imperialists in Europe. The emergence of the Soviet Union as the revolutionary and imperial successor to czarist Russia, put the U.S. on the ideological defensive for the first time in its history. A republic that had regarded itself as the very embodiment of liberal revolutionary principles in the 19th century, became a leading proponent of the status quo. In the 1920s and 1930s, Americans turned to celebrating their history as a series of sacrifices made in the defense of liberty. Americans were prepared when confronted with the crisis of Pearl Harbor to revive the commitment of the U.S. to the military liberation of peoples beyond the seas. World War II, construed as a struggle against various tyrannies, catapulted the U.S. to a position of global leadership from which, this time, it did not retreat. American opposition to communist regimes during the cold war was a continuation of the defense of freedom. The limits of that commitment were made evident in Vietnam. The palpable disconnection between the public justification of that war (the defense of freedom in South Vietnam), and its prosecution, finally convinced a majority of the American people that the war was no

longer worth the sacrifice of lives and treasure.

In sum, our version of American history suggests that war and imperialism have powerfully influenced American development from the 17th century through the present day, and recasts familiar triumphs as tragedies. It identifies imperialism and republicanism as inseparable twin influences in the creation and growth of political culture in the United States. It implies that the great American military interventions of the 20th and early 21st centuries have been as much efforts to establish and preserve hemispheric --- and ultimately, global --- hegemony as they were efforts to defend ideals of freedom against the designs of would-be tyrants. Finally, it argues that the defining moments of American political culture and nationhood, the Revolution and the Civil War, can be understood as the unintended consequences of vaunting imperial ambitions. Wars --- not only as fought but also as contemplated, criticized, defended, and remembered --- have furnished crucial occasions for Americans to debate who they are and to express what they hope their nation represents. The quest for liberty and the pursuit of power together have created an American historical dialectic catalyzed and made dynamic by war. The tale we may too easily assume we know, with a significance we may too readily believe we understand, is a chronicle that begins in war and ends with us.

ABOUT LAST MONTH'S COVER

By accident, I deleted part of the article about the Lincoln letter. I have reprinted the first part of the quote which was deleted. Quoting from the recently surfaced Lincoln letter, the candidate warns:

“Drop that issue, and they (voters) have no motive to remain, and will not remain,

with us. It is idiotic to think otherwise. Do you understand me as saying Illinois must have an extreme antislavery candidate? I do not so mean. We must have, though, a man who recognizes that Slavery issue as being the living issue of the day; who does not hesitate to declare slavery a wrong, nor to deal with it as such; who believes in the power and duty of Congress to prevent the spread of it."

Harold Holtzer noted that one can search high and low in the Lincoln corpus for another use of the word *idiotic* --- or more electric proof that on the cusp of his nomination to the Presidency, he was as strongly committed as ever to keeping slavery at the center of American political discourse until it could be eradicated. Lincoln was unwilling to focus on safer subjects such as *"tariff, extravagances, live oak contracts, and the like."* He reiterates that there is only one subject worth discussing: *"that Slavery issue."* Thus, Corwin was powerfully rebuked by Lincoln.

LINCOLN MEN AND SONS OF DIXIE - A New Feature of *The Dispatch*.

Continuing with this issue of our newsletter, we feature a biography of relatives who served in the Civil War. If you have a brief bio and a picture, send it to the editor of the newsletter.

NAME: James Breen

DATES: 1839-1908

ALLEGIANCE: Union

RANK: Corporal

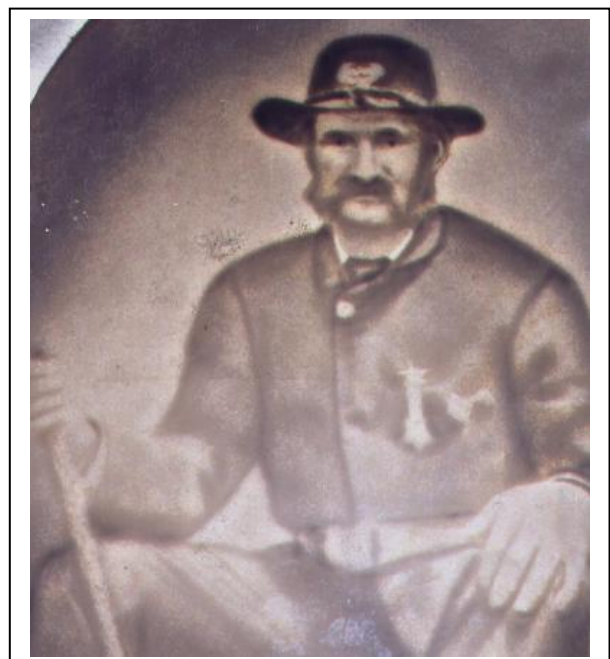
UNIT: 16th Massachusetts, Co. D

SERVICE RECORD: July 12, 1861 to July 26, 1864; wounded June 16, 1864 at Battle of Petersburg

Fleeing the Irish potato famine, James Breen and his parents settled in Lowell, MA in the

mid 1840s. By 1861 he was a six-foot, 22-year old iron molder, described as having dark hair and grey eyes. Shortly after Lincoln's call for troops, Breen enlisted as one of a group of Irish laborers from Lowell, who called themselves the "Hill Cadets." The Cadets became Company D of the 16th Rgt. MVI, a regiment raised in Middlesex County. Enlistment was for three years with a \$100 bounty to be paid at the end of service. The men were mustered in on July 12, 1861, reporting to Camp Cameron in Cambridge. Shipping out in August to become part of the Army of the Potomac, they spent the time until May 1862 in Fortress Monroe. They were assigned to the Third Corps.

Since most of the regiments volunteers were native New England Yankees from a state where anti-Catholic, anti-immigration feelings had run high in preceding years, there must have been prejudice and adjustment on both sides. Their Protestant chaplain helped bring them together by initiating tutoring sessions in his chapel tent, having the better-educated Yankees giving elementary instruction to the foreign-born (Irish) members of the regiment.



The 16th first saw action in the Peninsula Campaign where they were heavily involved in fighting at Glendale. They went on to fight at 2nd Manassas, and then were sent to help guard Washington, thus missing the Battle of Antietam. The regiment returned to the main army in November. They were held in reserve at Fredericksburg, and saw no real combat except for some skirmishing.

Up to this time, Breen was listed 'present' on the company muster roll. However during December 1862, he was in the regimental hospital with bronchitis. He returned to the regiment in time to participate in the Mud March, only to be readmitted to the regimental hospital with 'debilitas' shortly afterwards. Back with his regiment, he was promoted to the rank of sergeant in March 1863.

The regiment was heavily engaged at Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg, Sickles placed them at the Klinge House on the Emmitsburg Road where they fought on July 2nd. In October 1863 at the regiment's encampment at Union Mills, VA, James Breen's axe slipped "trying to split a fence rail while cutting wood for the colonel's quarters." The severity of the injury resulted in the amputation of the second and third toes of his right foot. To recuperate, he was sent to Douglass USA General Hospital in Washington, where he remained until his return to duty on February 6, 1864.

On the Company D muster roll for March and April 1864 under remarks, it states that Breen was "reduced from Sgt. To Corpl, absent on detached service Brig. Hdqrs." It is unknown if he was guilty of breaking some regulations, or whether an active, physically fit sergeant was needed during the time of his disability and lengthy absence. At any rate, he was not with his

regiment when it experienced heavy fighting at the Wilderness and at the Angle at Spotsylvania. A few days later, Breen "returned from being absent on detached service," and marched with his regiment to Cold Harbor and then to Petersburg. On June 16th he received a gunshot wound to the forehead, listed at the time as 'severe.' He was first removed to the USA Hospital Steamer Western Metropolis, and then transferred to Depot Field Hospital, City Point.

In 1880 in a pension application, Breen stated he "was wounded in the forehead, just in the center of the head, between the eyes. The ball struck a tree, glanced off and just impinged on his forehead." Sufficiently recovered from his wound, he mustered out with his regiment on July 26, 1864, and was paid his \$100 bounty.

As a veteran, he became a member of the Edward Pye Post of the GAR in Haverstraw, NY. The only existing photograph of James Breen shows him dressed in GAR garb.

He eventually received a pension. In 1907 he made an attempt to get the amount increased, "not upon the matter of his age, but upon the fact of his being totally disabled from wounds and other physical ailments due to his service in the army." At the time of his death in 1908, he was receiving \$15 monthly. He was buried in St. Peter's Cemetery, Haverstraw, where the number of his regiment was carved into his headstone, enabling his great-granddaughter, CDCWRT member, Mary Ellen Johnson, to research his service.