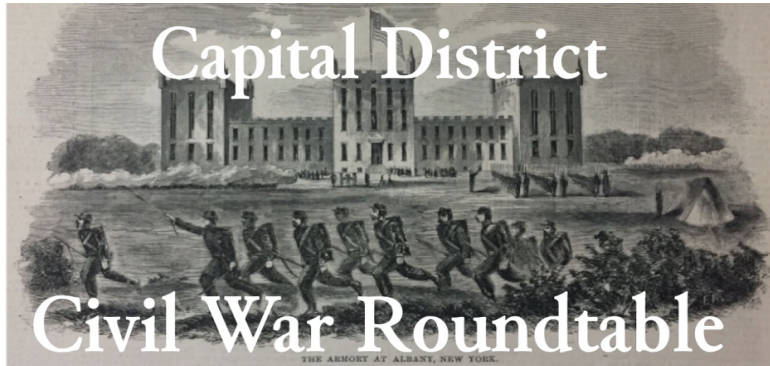


THE DISPATCH

VOLUME 43, NUMBER 03

MARCH 2026



P.O. Box 11493 Loudonville, New York 12211

www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.com



MARCH MEETING
SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1501 BROADWAY WATERVLIET, NEW YORK

SOCIAL HOUR @ 10:30AM
PRESENTATION @ 11:00AM
BRIEF BUSINESS MEETING PRIOR TO PRESENTER

THE VIRGINIA CAMPAIGNS OF 1862

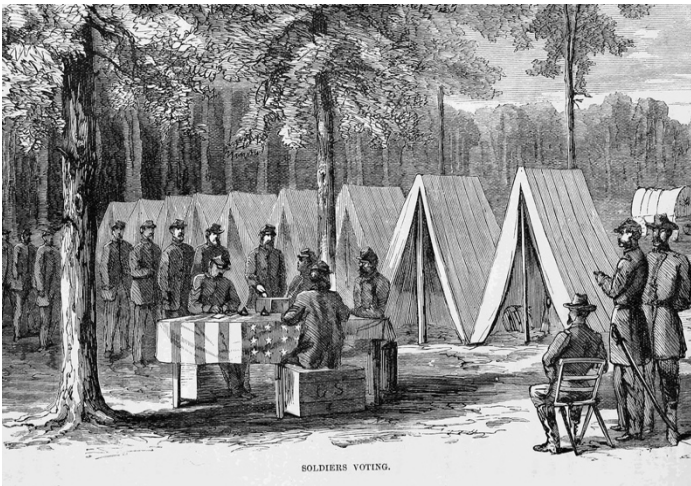
ZOOM presentation by Chris Kolakowski

The 1862 Virginia Campaigns (Valley, Peninsula/Seven Days, Second Manassas) represented large and dramatic battles unlike any others yet seen in American military history. They were a watershed from several standpoints and set the course of the war well into the future. This talk will analyze these campaigns, highlighting lesser-appreciated aspects.





Christopher L. Kolakowski is the Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, an educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs. As the Director he is responsible for the award-winning museum and research center that acknowledges, commemorates, and affirms the role of Wisconsin veterans in the United States of America's military past and present. Chris has his BA in History and Mass Communications from Emory & Henry College and his MA in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany. He is a proud descendent of Wisconsin Veterans from the Civil War through the Cold War. Chris is also a longtime member and former board member with the CDCWRT.



CDCWRT ELECTIONS 2026

The roundtable held their annual officer elections on February 14. The slate of six (6), incumbent officers were nominated for re-election and the membership voted unanimously to re-elect each officer. We still welcome members to join the two (2) open at-large seats. Meetings are once a month via zoom.

Re-elected officers:

President: Mark Koziol

Vice-President: Bruce Reed

Treasurer: Steve Muller

Secretary: Shawn Connery

At-Large: Rosemary Nichols

At-Large: Leo McGuire



NEWS AND NOTES

Matt Farina's informative Feb 14 Zoom talk about Civil War Medicine's Myths and Facts held the attention of the membership. Some of the more interesting facts' Dr. Farina discussed included: the use of anesthesia was more widespread than most people knew; amputation was swift and

necessary to save the lives of many wounded soldiers; doctor's use of stethoscopes and syringes, plus thermometers became important tools during the war; the use of field medical kits, proposed by Dr. Jonathan Letterman, grew in acceptance; the war saw the birth of a trained ambulances corps, triage systems, and field hospitals; creation of an organized nursing corps led to saving of countless patients' lives.



Lemmon Case Confirms New York's Opposition to Slavery.

by Rosemary Nichols

The case is little known today, but it stands as a shining legal marker against the ugliness of the US Supreme Court's *Dred Scott v. Sanford* of 1857. For those who have not read it, retired New York Court of Appeals judge Albert M. Rosenblatt's *The Eight: The Lemmon Slave Case and the Fight for Freedom* discusses the events surrounding the 1860

freeing of two enslaved families brought into New York State in 1852. It is an engaging, easy read.



Juliet & Jonathan Lemmon

Jonathan Lemmon and his wife Juliet were residents of Virginia who had decided to migrate to Texas. In November 1852 the Lemmons travelled by steamship *City of Richmond* from Norfolk, Virginia to New York City, where they were to embark on another steamship for the trip by sea to Texas. The Lemmons had brought with them eight enslaved persons in title to Mrs. Lemmon. They made-up two-family groups, each headed by a young woman. The first was Emiline (age 23), Edward (age 13), brother of Emiline; and Amanda (age 2), daughter of Emiline. The second was Nancy (age 20); Lewis (age 16), brother of Nancy; Lewis and Edward (age 7), sons of Nancy; and Ann (age 5), daughter of Nancy. The older members of the groups served the Lemmons as domestic slaves. While the Lemmons awaited the ship

to Texas, they placed their slaves in a boarding house at No. 3 Carlisle Street and booked another hotel for themselves.

Banking, shipping, and other major commercial interests in New York City had ties to the South, to slavery, and to cotton, textiles, and other industries dependent on slavery. Southern planters and businessmen traveled there regularly and had their own favorite hotels.

In 1799, New York passed a gradual abolition statute and in 1817, New York passed a law freeing all slaves in the state on July 4, 1827. The 1817 law stated: *No person held as a slave shall be imported, introduced, or brought into this State on any pretense whatever Every such person shall be free.* However, under the 1799 law, New York allowed masters to visit the state with their slaves for up to nine months.

Abolitionists in the city included activists who maintained informal escape routes, part of the Underground Railroad. John Jay (1817-1894) was prominent among them and the city's leading lawyer for the defense in fugitive slave cases. The 1850 federal law required even the law enforcement of free states to support the capture and return of fugitive slaves.



John Jay

Louis Napoleon, an illiterate former slave who became a furniture polisher and porter, was active in aiding the efforts of freedom seekers to gain freedom via the Underground Railroad. He also directed cases of slaves brought to the state to John Jay for litigation as freedom suits. Napoleon signed the petition for writ of habeas corpus in the Lemmon case.

The Legal Proceedings

On November 13, 1852, Judge Paine, a lower trial court judge, held that the Lemmons were not required to travel to Texas via New York. They had chosen to bring their slaves to New York, knowing it was a free state. Thus, the slaves were free according to New York state law forbidding bringing slaves "in transit" into the state.

The Fate of the Formerly Enslaved

After his decision, Judge Paine organized a group of business leaders to pay Lemmon \$5,000. Lemmon agreed if a higher court reversed the

ruling and awarded him the slaves, he would manumit them. When the case reached the New York Court of Appeals, John Jay II submitted an *amicus curiae* brief arguing that, inasmuch as Lemmon suffered no loss, he had no justiciable controversy.



North Buxton Historical Site and Museum

The slaves now having been freed, Louis Napoleon organized a meeting with local Underground Railroad leaders. They agreed to have fugitive slave Richard Johnson act as a guide and take the newly freed men and women to North Buxton, a freedmen's neighborhood in Canada. One of the Lemmon freedmen quickly left Canada and moved to Michigan, where his descendants live as of 2023. The State of Virginia assisted Lemmon in his appeal to New York's Supreme Court which granted certiorari. The court affirmed Justice Paine in December 1857 with one dissent. Lemmon appealed again to the New York Court of Appeals (the

state's highest appellate court). The appeals court affirmed by a vote of 5-2 in March 1860, holding that the formerly enslaved were free.

The Lemmons assigned their rights to the State of Virginia, which had planned to appeal to the US Supreme Court. By then the Civil War had begun and the case was never heard.

The Reaction was Intense

Shortly after reporting the decision of the Court of Appeals, The New York Times published an article criticizing the opinions of the two dissenting judges in the Lemmon case. First it addressed judicial decisions in general, including in the South, saying that the country's polarization on slavery was resulting in biased decisions by judges. It noted that cases were being decided against free blacks and against the ability of owners to free slaves by will, because opinions were overriding precedent. It said, "judges are gradually giving way to the pressure of one side or other, and ceasing even to pretend to administer the law as they find it, or to stand by the old rules of interpretation in any case in which the interests of slaveholders are involved." Although the piece noted that in the North, "the evil has been less apparent," preferring errors that favored freedom rather than slavery, decisions based on the Fugitive Slave

Law "have at least rarely been illustrations of judicial wisdom, moderation, and impartiality."

Lincoln's House Divided speech in 1858 outlined the threat if the Supreme Court followed thinking related to the Dred Scott case when ruling on the right of states to regulate slavery:

"The nearest approach to the point of declaring the power of a state over slavery is made by Judge Nelson. He approaches it more than once, using the precise idea, and *almost* the language too, of the Nebraska Act. On one occasion, his exact language is 'except in cases where the power is restrained by the Constitution of the United States, the law of the State is supreme over the subject of slavery within its jurisdiction.' In what cases the power of the *states* is so restrained by the U.S. Constitution, is left an *open* question, precisely as the question as to the power of the *territories* was left open in the Nebraska Act. Put *that* and *that* together, and we have a nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a *state* to exclude slavery from its limits."

The outbreak of war meant that the US Supreme Court never heard Virginia's appeal of the Lemmon case. Historian Paul Finkelman noted in his book on the history of transit of enslaved persons in the North that "Lemmon was the culmination of a long and intense conflict over the place of slavery within the legal framework of the Union." Finkelman also found Lemmon was "part of the larger social and political movements that ultimately led to the Republican party, the Civil War, and Constitutional amendments ending slavery and making blacks full-fledged citizens."

The importance of Lemmon was clear to the South. In explaining why it was leaving the Union, the South Carolina Secession Convention noted: "In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied by her tribunals."

Years later Chester A. Arthur took credit for promoting the rights of the enslaved (and the state) in this case. Historian Thomas C. Reeves said that Arthur did not contribute work that was any more important than that of John Jay (who sponsored the case and designed the strategy), or William M. Evarts, who argued it in the Court of Appeals. But those two lawyers were not political candidates.



The Dispatch
Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 11493 Loudonville, NY 12211
www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org



Membership Form, 2026 Calendar Year

Name: _____

Membership Dues All dues go into the Regular Account (circle appropriate level)

Regular memberships can choose between emailed or mailed newsletters.

Regular: \$35

Student memberships come with only emailed newsletters.

Student: \$10

Additional Donation for the Operating Account

Pay for newsletters, program expenses, and the use of the meeting space.

Donation for the Preservation Account

(Preservation money pays for donations to preserve historic sites/lands, rental of the storage shed, and the Round Table's insurance)

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CDCWRT
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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
our website: www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org
or email: cdcwrt@hotmail.com

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