

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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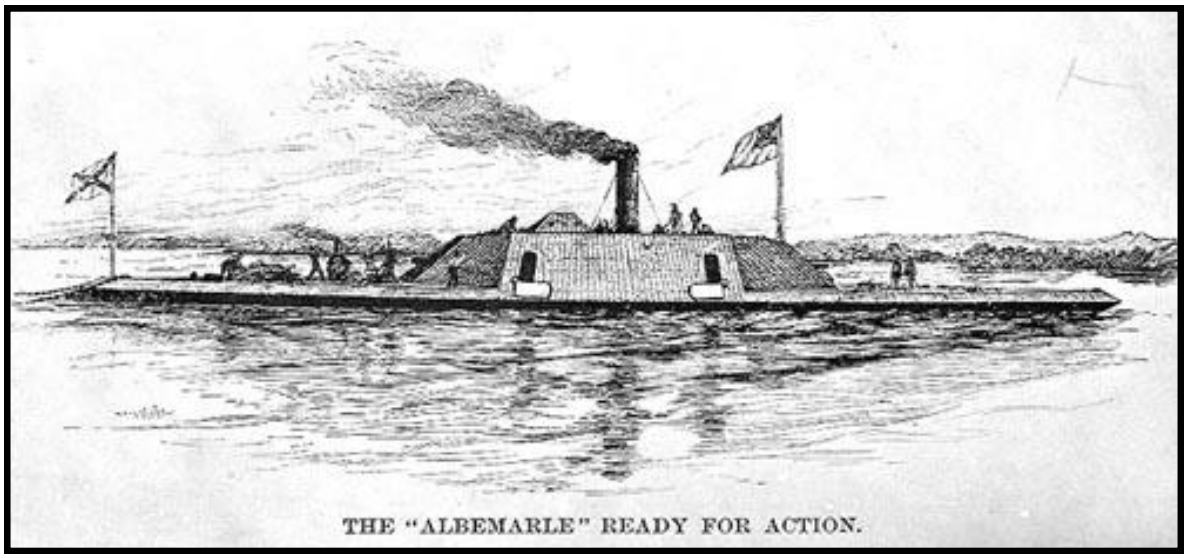
CCC ABLEMARLE ATTACKS FLEET



THE "ALBEMARLE" READY FOR ACTION.

The 376 ton steam-powered ironclad, the *CSS Ablemarle,* sailed down the Roanoke River and engaged a Union fleet on May 5, 1864. The vessel was 158 feet in length and 35 feet wide with a draught of only 9 feet. The *Ablemarle* mounted two 6.4-inch Brooke double-banded rifled cannon mounted on pivots which allowed them to fire from three different fixed positions. These 12,000 pound rifles fired a solid wrought iron bolts designed for use against armored ships.

Broadsides of the 9-inch 100 pound cannon balls from the Union vessels bounced harmlessly off the sloped sides of the *Ablemarle.* The ironclad then fired point blank at the *USS Sassacus* puncturing her boilers. Last month the *Ablemarle* had badly damaged the two paddle steamers *USS Miami* and *USS Southfield*. The Southfield was sunk and shots from the *Miami* rebounded off *Ablemarle* sloped sides and exploded on the *Miami*, killer her captain.

The Union military is concerned the *Ablemarle* will threaten the entire Union position on the North Carolina river system.

APRIL MEETING
FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2016

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

COMMANDER WILL CUSHING: DAREDEVIL HERO OF THE CIVIL WAR

James Malanowski

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:15 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:15 – 7:45 p.m.**
Discussion	**7:45 - 8:15 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The April meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, April 8, 2016. Our special guest speaker is historian and author, James Malanowski, and the title of his presentation is, **"Commander Will Cushing: Daredevil Hero of the Civil War."**

In October of 1864, the Confederate ironclad **Albemarle** ***had sunk two federal warships and battered seven others, taking control of the Roanoke River and threatening the Union blockade. Twenty-one-year-old Navy lieutenant Will Cushing hatched a daring plan: to attack the fearsome warship with a few dozen men in two small wooden boats.***

The close-range torpedoing of the **Albemarle** ***and Cushing's harrowing two-day escape from rebel posses, is one of the most dramatic individual exploits in American military history.***

This thrilling narrative biography, steeped in Civil War and naval history, brings to life a compelling and un-heralded figure. Theodore Roosevelt said "(Cushing) comes next to Farragut on the hero role of American naval history," but few have ever heard of him today. Tossed out of the Naval Academy for "buffoonery," he proved himself a prodigy in behind-the-lines warfare.

Jamie Malanowski is a writer and editor. A member of the original staff of **Spy**, ***where he worked seven years, Jamie has also been an editor at*** **Time**, **Esquire** ***and*** **Playboy**, ***where he was Managing Editor. Jamie has also written for*** **The New Yorker**, **Vanity Fair**, **The Washington Monthly**, ***and*** **The New York Times**, ***where he was the lead writer for Disunion, the award-winning series about the Civil War. His most recent work, the biography,*** **Commander Will Cushing, Daredevil Hero of the Civil War**, ***was published by W.W. Norton in October 2014. Jamie is also the author of the novels*** **Mr. Stupid Goes to Washington** ***(Birch Lane, 1992) and*** **The Coup** ***(Doubleday, 2007); and the author of*** **And the War Came**, ***a history of the six months that preceded the start of the Civil War (Byliner, 2011). He lives in Westchester County with his wife, Virginia.***

CDCWRT'S NEW WEBSITE

After several months of problems with the old website, our webmaster has set up a new website. It is:
www.Capitaldistrictcivilwar.org
The new website is also listed in the letterhead of the newsletter.

UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS

On Saturday, April 9, 2016, the Siena College Day of Living History will take place from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. This year there will be even more participants than in years past. A sampling of the reenactors includes: The 2nd Albany County Militia, British 24th Foot, reenactors from Ft. Ticonderoga, Johnson Hall, Alexander's Battery Army of Northern Virginia, Historical Cricket, rope-making, children's toys and games and much more. This is free and open to the public.

On Friday, May 13, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Mike Reetz, who will talk about Brigadier General Horace Porter.

On Saturday and Sunday, June 4-5, 2016, the CDCWRT will participate in the King Solomon Masonic Lodge Civil War Days in Troy, NY. Details to follow.

On Saturday and Sunday, June 11-12, 2016 the CDCWRT will participate in the Peterboro Civil War Weekend in Peterboro, NY. This village is an historic center for the Underground Railroad. Saturday 10am-5pm. Sunday 10am to 4 pm. Adults $8 Children 6-12 $3. Go to: www.civilwarweekend.sca-peterboro.org

On Friday, June 10, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor David Hochfelder, who will talk about the Freedman's Savings Bank.

On July 1-3, 2016, the 153rd Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg will take place in Gettysburg, PA. The CDCWRT will be sponsoring a postal cancellation at two locations. A cancel stamp has been designed for the 3 day event. A cottage has been rented for attendees from the round table and volunteers are encouraged to talk to Matt George. More details will follow.

On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 19-21, 2016 at Schuyler Flatts on the Hudson River, the annual historic military weekend will occur. The CDCWRT has scheduled its annual picnic on Friday of this weekend. Save this date.

UCALL SPRING COURSE AT UNION COLLEGE

Five lectures will be held at Union College as part of the spring program. All lectures are scheduled for Wednesday afternoons beginning at 12:30 pm.

April 13, 2016: Union College Prof. Andrea Foroughi's talk will focus on the home front during the war where its direct consequences literally came home not only as battles were waged on their land, but also through guerrilla warfare, urban riots and frontier fighting.

April 20, 2016: Maxine Getty, retired Senior Master Sargent, US Air Force, will portray Mary A.R. Livermore, abolitionist, teacher, nurse and suffragette through her trials and tribulations during this turbulent time in our history.

April 27, 2016: Matt George, Civil War re-enactor, will portray a private from the 134th New York regiment on detached duty to educate the public about his war experiences and the motivations that prompted him and others to join the fight.

May 4, 2016: Michael Barrett, Executive Director of the Burden Iron Works Museum, will present a true story of the people and events, including the 1863 draft riots, which had a significant impact on the Civil War and made Troy a great city.

FROM THE SOUTH

The Rufus Barringer CWRT of Southern Pines, NC is presenting its 6th April exhibit in the library of the Sandhills Community College. For the past 5 year, there has been an exhibit of events that occurred that year in the sesquicentennial cycle – 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864 and 1865.

This year's exhibit deals with events up to the 50th reunion at Gettysburg in 1863. It is an overview of the period which is often ignored in public school education.

The main theme is:

Reconstruction & Remembrance: Binding Old Wounds & Inflicting New Ones

In his second inaugural address, Lincoln spoke of binding the wounds of the nation. His vision of Reconstruction was to bring the southern states in rebellion back into the Union as quickly and as painlessly as possible, without vindictiveness. One of the big "what ifs" of the Civil War is "What would Reconstruction have looked like if Lincoln had not been assassinated?" It certainly would not have been worse than what we know did occur.

Some historians believe that Reconstruction would have been not much different. Others believe Lincoln would have diffused the anger of the Radical Republicans. Still others feel that Lincoln would have made good on his promise to bind the wounds of the nation. One thing is certain, John Wilkes Booth forever denied the South its future under Lincoln's plan.

Part of the healing process for veterans involved reminiscing about the ordeal they had survived. In the North and the South numerous fraternal and social organizations sprang up around the veterans' war experiences. Northern veterans and southern veterans initially did not interact. Bitter feuds between North Carolina and Virginia vets as to who charged the furthest at Gettysburg, consumed Confederates. Unionists began to monument their towns and battlefields such as Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Antietam. Eventually, the veterans began to reminisce with each other as they began to realize that their numbers were dying. This would culminate in the huge reunion for the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

The war had economically devastated the South and had forever altered its social structure with the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments. Reconstruction brought northerners to educate and help the new freedmen transition from slavery to freedom. However to many southerners, Reconstruction brought profiteers who plundered the corpse of the Confederacy which remained tied to an agricultural economy with cotton and tobacco.

The rest of the country was moving ahead, moving westward to its perceived manifest destiny. The Second Industrial Revolution was taking place as the country prepared to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1876. This transitioned into the Gilded Age (1870-1900) with rapid economic growth that overtook Great Britain.

The end of Reconstruction was due to decreasing interest and political dealings. With its demise, Jim Crow laws were enacted, and civil rights for blacks regressed and segregation in the South as well as the North would take 80 more years to reach a critical point. And we still are a work in progress forty years later.

DESTRUCTION AND DISRUPTION IN THE SOUTH

Eleven of the Confederacy's 297 cities and towns were destroyed or severely damaged by the War, including Charleston, Richmond, Columbia, Atlanta and Charleston. Union forces occupied 55% of the cities by war's end. The number of people who lived in the destroyed towns represented just over 1% (116,000) of the Confederacy's populations of 9 million.

Farms were indirectly damaged. Much of the South's horses, mules and cattle were destroyed, as was 40% of the livestock. Remaining railroads to move crops and animals to market were located mostly in

rural areas, and 70% of the South's rails, bridges, rail yards, repair shops and rolling stock were destroyed. The enormous cost of the Confederate war effort took a high toll on the South's economic infrastructure. The direct costs to the Confederacy in human capital, government expenditures, and physical destruction totaled $3.3 billion.

With the emancipation of slaves, the entire economy of the South had to be rebuilt. Having lost their enormous investment in slaves, white planters had minimal capital to pay freedmen workers to bring in crops. As a result, a system of sharecropping was developed where landowners broke up plantations and rented small lots to the freedmen and their families. The South was transformed from an elite minority of landed-gentry slaveholders into a tenant farming agricultural system.

The end of the War was accompanied by a large migration of newly freed people to the cities where men were relegated to the lowest paying jobs such as unskilled and service labor. Black women were largely confined to domestic work. Over a quarter of Southern white men of military age died during the war, leaving countless families destitute. By the end of the 19th century and well into the 20th century, the South was locked into a system of poverty.

Reconstruction: The Plan

As Confederate states came back under control of the US Army, Army, Abraham Lincoln set up reconstructed governments in the states of Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana during the war. Reconstruction addressed how the eleven seceding states would regain the following: a constitutional republican form of government; reseating in Congress; the civil status of the former leaders of the Confederacy; and the Constitutional and legal status of freedmen.

Preliminary events included an April 1862 bill that outlawed slavery in Washington D.C. and June 1862 legislation outlawed slavery in all U.S. territories. In July 1862 under the authority of the Confiscation Acts, Lincoln authorized the recruitment of freed slaves into the Union army and seizure of any Confederate property for military purposes. On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. It freed the slaves in the ten states that were in rebellion. Now most historians agree that Reconstruction began with the issuing of this document.

Lincoln wanted to effect a speedy restoration of the Confederate states to the Union after the War. In 1863, he proposed a plan for the Reconstruction of the captured states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee. The plan granted amnesty to Rebels who took an oath of loyalty to the Union. Only 10% of the states' electorates had to take the loyalty oath in order for the states to be readmitted into U.S. Congress. The states were required to abolish slavery in their new constitutions. Radical Republicans argued that slavery and the Slave Power had to be permanently destroyed, and that all forms of Confederate nationalism had to be suppressed.

By December 1864, the Lincoln plan of Reconstruction had been enacted and these states sent Senators and Representatives to Washington. However, Congress refused to accept them, in essence rejecting Lincoln's moderate plan. Radicals in Congress, proposed a majority of the states' electorate take the oath of loyalty. Lincoln vetoed the bill and the rift widened between the moderates, who wanted to save the Union and win the war, and the Radicals, who wanted to effect a more complete change within Southern society.

Reconstruction and Andrew Johnson

Upon Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, Vice-President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, became president. He had previously spoken of hanging Confederate rebels, but as the 17th

President, he took a more lenient approach and pardoned many Confederates. There were no treason trials. Lincoln had wanted a speedy restoration of the Confederate states to the Union, and Johnson's approach, with support of moderate Republicans, was probably similar to what Lincoln would have done.

The Radical Republicans, supported by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, wanted much more stringent treatment of the Confederate states. Johnson rejected the Radical program of Reconstruction and tried to finish reconstruction by the end of 1865. His conservative view of Reconstruction did not include blacks or former slave involvement in government. Johnson broke decisively with the Republicans in Congress when he vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Bill in early 1866. This was a disastrous miscalculation on his part. While Democrats cheered for Johnson, the Republicans pulled together, passed the Civil Rights bill over Johnson's veto, a first in American history for a major bill. Later, Congress overrode his veto of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill.

The Fourteenth Amendment was designed to put the key provisions of the Civil Rights Act into the Constitution, but it went much further. It extended citizenship to everyone born in the United States, penalized states that did not give the vote to freedmen, and most importantly, created new federal civil rights that could be protected by federal courts. Johnson campaigned against its ratification by the states. Full-scale political warfare now existed between Johnson (now allied with the Democrats) and the Radical Republicans led by Thaddeus Stevens in the House of Representatives and Charles Sumner in the Senate.

The election of 1866 decisively changed the balance of power, giving the Republicans two-thirds majorities in both houses of Congress, and enough votes to overcome Johnson's vetoes. Congress abolished the governors appointed by Johnson and instead formed 5 military districts under martial law, and took control of Reconstruction from the President. Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act in 1867 over Johnson's veto. This prevented Johnson from removing Secretary of War Stanton without approval by the Senate. When the President attempted to fire Stanton, he violated the Tenure Act.

In February 1868, the House of Representatives voted 126 to 47 to impeach the President. The trial in the Senate began in March. Thirty-six "guilty" votes were required to remove Johnson from office. On three occasions, 35 Senators voted "guilty" and 19 "non-guilty". As the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority for conviction in impeachment trials, Johnson was acquitted.

In subsequent inquiries, there was increasing evidence that some acquittal votes were acquired by promises of patronage jobs and cash cards. In 1887, the Tenure of Office Act was repealed by Congress, and subsequent rulings by the United States Supreme Court seemed to support Johnson's position that he was entitled to fire Stanton without Congressional approval.

The impeachment and subsequent trial gained a historical reputation as an act of political expedience, rather than necessity, based on Johnson's defiance of an unconstitutional piece of legislation and with little regard for the will of the public (which, despite the unpopularity of Johnson, opposed the impeachment).

Reconstruction and the Freedman's Bureau

On March 3, 1865 the Freedmen's Bureau Bill became law, sponsored by the Republicans to aid freedmen and white refugees. A federal Bureau was created to provide food, clothing, fuel, and advice on negotiating labor contracts. It attempted to

oversee new relations between freedmen and their former masters in a free labor market. The Act authorized the Bureau to lease confiscated land for a period of three years and to sell it in portions of up to 40 acres per buyer. The Bureau was to expire one year after the termination of the War. A popular myth was that the Act offered 40 acres and a mule, or that slaves had been promised this.

With the help of the Bureau, the freed slaves began voting, forming political parties, and assuming the control of labor in many areas. In the election between Grant and Seymour, almost 700,000 black voters voted and swayed the election 300,000 votes in Grant's favor.

Even with its benefits, the Bureau failed to protect former slaves in certain areas. Medical attention for the former slaves was severely lacking. Furthermore, neither the Bureau nor other government institutions were able to protect the slaves from groups like the KKK. The Bureau seemed to be unable to address the issue of white groups who held unreconstructed views on race which permeated the South.

The freedmen, with the backing of the Freedmen's Bureau, forced planters to bargain for their labor. Such bargaining soon led to the establishment of the system of sharecropping, which gave the freedmen greater economic independence and social autonomy than gang labor. However, because they lacked capital and the planters continued to own the means of production (tools, draft animals and land), the freedmen were forced into producing cash crops (mainly cotton) for the land-owners and merchants. This agricultural economy was too dependent on cotton and its falling price. This led to the routine indebtedness and poverty of the majority of the freedmen.

Civil War Gen. Oliver Otis Howard served at head of the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1867 he founded Howard University in Washington and became its first president from 1867- 1873.

Reconstruction: 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments

Three Constitutional amendments, known as the Reconstruction Amendments, were adopted. The 13th Amendment abolishing slavery was ratified in 1865. The 14th Amendment was proposed in 1866 and ratified in 1868, guaranteeing United States citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States and granting them federal civil rights.

The 15th Amendment, proposed in late February 1869 and passed in early February 1870, decreed that the right to vote could not be denied because of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude". The amendment did not declare the vote an unconditional right; it prohibited these types of discrimination. States would still determine voter registration and electoral laws. The amendments were directed at ending slavery and providing full citizenship to freedmen. Northern Congressmen believed that providing black men with the right to vote would be the most rapid means of political education and training.

Many blacks took an active part in voting and political life, and rapidly continued to build churches and community organizations. Following Reconstruction, white Democrats and insurgent groups used force to regain power in the state legislatures, and pass laws that effectively disfranchised most blacks and many poor whites in the South. From 1890 to 1910, southern states passed new constitutions that completed disfranchisement of blacks.

U.S. Supreme Court rulings on these provisions upheld many of these new southern constitutions and laws, and most blacks were prevented from voting in the South until the 1960s. Full federal enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments did not occur until after passage of legislation in the mid-1960s as a result of the African-American Civil Rights Movement.