



The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 14871, Albany, NY 12212-4871

CDCWRT's web site: timesunion.com/communities/cdcwrt

Volume 19 Number 10

June, 2002



In St. Cloud, Florida is small cemetery with approximately four hundred graves of Civil War soldiers who retired to this community in central Florida in the 1880's. It is the largest burial site of Civil War veterans in the state. The stones are well marked, and the graves are well cared for. There is a Medal of Honor recipient buried here, Amzi D. Harmon, 211th Pennsylvania infantry. The smallest cemetery in the National Cemetery system is at Balls Bluff, and contains about a dozen graves. On this Memorial Day, we should remember all American soldiers who are buried in marked and unmarked graves. If you have a free afternoon, visit the Civil War section of an old cemetery and contemplate the deeds such men accomplished, and the price it may have cost them.

June Meeting Friday 06/14/02

**Guilderland Public Library
2228 Western Ave.
Guilderland, NY**

SOCIAL HOUR	6:30 PM
BUSINESS MEETING	7:00 PM
PROGRAM	7:30 PM

This topic is a first for the round table in its 15-year history, and should be very educational for all of the membership.

MAY MEETING

A full house occupied the smaller conference room of the library to hear Bob Mulligan's first person account of Sgt. Rice C. Bull, 123rd NYVI. As expected, Bob's portrayal was presented in period clothes and regalia. The audience greatly appreciated the account of Bull's wounding at Chancellorsville.

CDCWRT MEETING

The June meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, June 14th, at the Guilderland Public Library. Our speaker will be another one of our own, Ray Wemple. Ray's presentation is entitled, Le Secret De La Guerre (The Secret of War).

The Civil War saw the first use of a field-telegraph system, and was the first war in which the electrical telegraph was used extensively. Ray will discuss Albert James Myer, a New Yorker who established the U.S. Signal Corps in 1860, the first corps of officer and men in the army whose sole mission was communications. He was also the developer of the "wigwag" signal system.

Ray served in the Army Signal Corps, and his interest in the evolution of the corps was really sparked last year while on the CDCWRT field trip to Gettysburg. The bus stopped at the Carlisle Barracks, and while there, Ray spent 45 minutes at the U.S. Army Military Institute Archive Library researching his favorite Civil War subject. Since then Ray has done extensive research on General Myer and the methodologies that he developed for various forms of signaling.

The meeting occurred in the smaller room because of a piano and voice recital in the main lecture room (the piano cannot be moved from that room). Our next meeting should be back in the larger and cooler room. After the recital and Bob's presentation, members were able to see the George Washington exhibit and the video introducing the exhibit. In addition, there is a new exhibit in the museum display cases in the hallway, which features an extensive Revolutionary War collection of local artifacts. This collection belongs to RT member Jay Mihok. The Board and Library thank him for sharing his collection with the public as part of the Washington exhibit..

BOARD MEETING

The May Board Meeting was held on Thursday, the 16th. The treasurer's reported \$2853.98 in the general fund account, and \$3261.59 in the Hennessy Preservation account after the donations to CWPT and the NYS Military Heritage Institute were deducted. The Program Chair reviewed the schedule for up-coming events, including fund-raisers. Some of these are listed in this month's up-coming events. There was a discussion in regards to the Antietam trip.

Several Board members were concerned about the 'disappearance' of some familiar

faces from RT activities and membership. Sometimes this occurs because renewal of dues is forgotten, and before long, the newsletter stops. A re-enlistment letter will be sent to inactive members, and a trial of a new method to advise expiring membership will be put in place.

UP-COMING EVENTS

On June 8-9, Saturday and Sunday, Civil War Days will be held in Petersboro, NY. This small town on route 20 between Utica and Syracuse was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Each year re-enactors, historians and vendors gather to celebrate the region's Civil War heritage. This has been a cancellation event for the CDCWRT for several years now. Volunteers are request to contact Program Chair, Sue Knost or Joe Stracuzzi. **Anyone with a tent (sides not necessary) they would like to donate for this event, please contact Joe Stracuzzi at 229-1551.**

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The 139th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg will be celebrated at Gettysburg from June 29th to July 7th. There will be re-enactments on July 5th-7th and special NPS battle walks by park guides on July 1st-3rd. The CDCWRT will be selling postal cachets in the cyclorama from June 29th. This will be the last time to see the cyclorama painting before the painting is removed for restoration, the building razed, and the site restored as the original Ziegler Woods. The RT has a block of rooms reserved (singles and doubles) for about \$100/night at the Quality Inn next to the battlefield for anytime between 6/27 and 7/8/02. Some of these are available to the membership on a first come basis. Sue Knost **must have confirmation of request three weeks in advance of the dates**

requested. Rooms often are hard to find this late in the year, so this is a golden opportunity. Volunteers to also work at our tables are needed.

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If you are staying in town for July 4th weekend, there will be a Civil War Days event on Saturday and Sunday, July 6th and 7th, at the Troy Masonic Hall on Brunswick Road. More details will follow in the July newsletter.

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Our 6th Annual Picnic will be on Sunday, July 14th, at historic Peebles Island from noon to 6:00 p.m. The CDCWRT will furnish hamburgers, hot dogs, rolls, soda, plates and condiments. Members are asked to provide a favorite picnic dish, chips and dips, salads, etc. to share with others. **Please bring a serving utensil with your dish.** Please contact picnic coordinator, **Noreen Underhill, at 371-4312**, to let her know how many will be attending, and what you are bringing.

Entertainment will consist of Mike Sperenza and his rope-making machine (a hit at the Potpourri meeting), Ray Wemple and a semaphore flag demonstration, and Civil War foraging on Peebles Island. Rev War gun emplacements and battlements can be seen on the island. The park can be reached heading north on I-787, turning right onto Ontario St. (route 470), and then left on Delaware Ave. just before crossing the Hudson. From Troy, take Second Ave. north to the 112th Street Bridge, crossing the Hudson, and taking the first right onto Delaware Ave. Brown NYS signs are posted from both directions. The park is about one mile after turning onto Delaware. **We have the park shelter in case of rain. There will be a small collection of RT**

items for sale including T-shirts, postal cachets, books, etc.

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The American Battlefield Protection Program will hold its 6th National Conference on Battlefield Preservation in Albany on August 16-18, 2002 at the Crowne Plaza. This is the only national conference that brings together all professions involved in the many facets of battlefield protection to discuss, exchange, and present ideas that lead to the long-term protection of our nation's historic battlefields. This conference will attract 200-250 nationally known historians and preservationists, among others. A bus tour of Saratoga National Historic Park and other sites led by **Edwin C. Bearss, NPS Historian Emeritus**, will be offered on August 16th. The CDCWRT has been asked to participate in this event. More details will follow as they become available.

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The 140th Anniversary of the Battle of Antietam will be celebrated on September 13th-15th near Hagerstown, MD. This is expected to be the largest reenactment event in 2002 with over 15,000 re-enactors expected. CDCWRT will be at this event and volunteers are needed. The RT is holding a block of rooms at the Four Points Sheraton for \$71.00 a night from Wednesday, 9/11/02 through Monday 9/16/02. Some rooms will be available after meeting the needs of volunteers. If you are interested in reserving a room, check with Sue Knost soon. These will be on a first come basis and commitment will be necessary on a first come basis.

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After the August break, the September meeting of the CDCWRT will take place on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2002. This change in day is being made to accommodate our speaker, Mark Vinet, who will talk on "Canada and the American Civil War: Prelude to War." The meeting is scheduled for the Guilderland Library.

ODDS AND ENDS

The Board is debating whether or not to have a fall trip on Columbus Day weekend. There are important local activities with the 225th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga that many may want to attend. We are considering a trip to Fredericksburg, flying down and back via Baltimore or Regan Airport to save travel time. A straw poll will be taken at the next two meeting to see how much interest there is in such a trip.

The CDCWRT had a successful day at the Peebles Island open house. Information about our group was disseminated and postal cachet and T-shirt sales netted \$435.

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We received the note below:

On behalf of the South Mountain Heritage Society, I would like to thank you for the "pass the hat" donation and the match made by the CDCWRT. We have been working hard to fix up the church, and I was glad that Dana Shoaf was able to show you the interior of the building on Saturday, April 6.

Though we have accomplished a lot with the structure, we still have much to do, and your donation will help us realize our goals. Perhaps you will be able to visit us again in a few years, when the work is completed. We would welcome you to do so.

Thanks again for helping "Hospital D."

Phil Stanley
President, South Mountain Heritage Society

The church in Burkittsville, MD was used as a hospital after the battles of South Mountain and Antietam.

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In 1867 a group of New York City firemen who had been in the Union Army, raised money to buy a new fire wagon for Columbia, S.C., which had suffered a devastating fire after the War. Since the fire fighting equipment had been lost in the War, the city was in a worse situation than during the War. The Yankee firemen raised enough money to purchase the wagon, and shipped it south. However it was lost in a shipwreck. Undaunted, the firemen raised funds for a *second* fire wagon, which did make it safely to Columbia.

After the events of 9/11/2002, a group of students in the Columbia School System began a fund raising campaign to buy a new fire-truck for New York City. In 57 days, they managed to raise more than \$446,265, which exceeded the cost of a new truck, which was listed at \$352,000. The story of the 1867 incident was not widely known when the fund raising began, but it was brought to the attention of the school principal by a local firefighter who was a history buff.

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You may remember a few months ago an editorial in our NL which was prompted by the proposed dissolution of the CWRT of Alexandria, VA. After several months of "near death," I am happy to report that the

patient is recovering, and that the RT is meeting regularly and is sponsoring programs. This again serves to remind us that the health of our CDCWRT depends on volunteers. Have you considered volunteering, even just stuffing envelopes or folding newsletters? Why not speak to a Board member.

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Recently I attended the Mendelssohn Club Concert at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady. This is a very talented local men's choral group that performs throughout the region throughout the year. The spring concert featured Americana music, a sampling of times and styles. The group opened with a slave spiritual. I did not have a program, so I was not certain. Several songs later, they sang "Dixie," to unreserved applause. They did not sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," or "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again," or any "Union" song for that matter. The audience enthusiastically joined in singing "God Bless America."

I was almost stunned when I heard the first few unmistakable bars of "Dixie," but there were no catcalls or boos or hisses. How refreshing, to enjoy a song because it is part of our musical heritage, and to not have to worry about political correctness.

I seem to remember reading about the spontaneous celebrations in Washington, DC, when word of Lee's surrender at Appomattox arrived. President Lincoln came out of the White House to cheers, and a regimental band asked what song he wanted them to play. He responded something to the effect, "Play 'Dixie' for me, for I have always liked that song." If this is true, then Lincoln also did not worry about being politically correct. Perhaps he

just truly enjoyed the song, or he shrewdly was already beginning the healing process he knew the nation needed.

SUMMER THINGS TO DO

Grant's Cottage at Mt. McGregor in Saratoga County, exit 16 off the Northway, is open again for the season. This is the summer cottage in which ex-President Grant finished writing his memoirs while dying of throat cancer. The cottage remains as it was on Grant's last day. The cottage is open Wednesdays to Sundays, 10:00am to 4:00pm, May 25th until Columbus Day weekend. Tours are available for a small admission fee, and it's a great place for a picnic overlooking the Hudson Valley. There will be an encampment on the grounds August 3rd, and a re-enactment of the Mt. McGregor funeral service on August 4th. Call 587-8277 for more details.

The Burden Iron Works Museum in Troy provides a look into the rich 19th and 20th century industries that made the Hudson-Mohawk region a likely contender for the title, "Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America." **Tours require reservations**, so call 274-5267 for details. Among the many programs, is a jointly sponsored Oakwood Cemetery tour with Michael Barrett on August 13th at 9:30am for \$12. On that same day at 3:30pm is a presentation by Bob Rawls on the origin of the modern horseshoe. There is a demonstration of several model horseshoe-making machines at the Ironworks. Cost is also \$12.

This is the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Saratoga, the turning point in the Revolutionary War. The battlefield is open daily, but there will be special events later this fall. **Remembrance of Saratoga** will be a three-day encampment on the battlefield September 27th through the 29th.

On October 12th and 13th, there will be a re-enactment of the **Second Battle of Saratoga** on private land just north of the battlefield. Richard M. Ketchum's book, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War*, published in 1997 is an excellent book to read beforehand. On October 19th there will be a re-enactment of Burgoyne's surrender march. There will be fireworks on the Hudson Rive that evening.

The Saratoga Monument in Schuylerville has reopened after 15 years. It was originally built from 1877-1887 to commemorate the surrender of Burgoyne's British Army to American forces under the leadership of Horatio Gates after the battles at Saratoga. The NPS completed a \$2.4 million restoration last year with re-pointing of the masonry, and replacing part of the old cast iron staircase with steel, installing windows, and cleaning of relief bronze plaques and wall trimmings. You can climb the 154-foot tower (188 steps) for a magnificent view of 3 states. The tower is open Wednesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 4:30pm.

On June 15th, Troy's Flag Day Parade with Uncle Sam will be held. Details of many other local events are listed on our website. There is a wealth of information listed there.

GUEST EDITORIAL

BY ROBERT E. MULLIGAN, JR.

Memorial Day is something of a hobby of mine. As a native New Yorker, of course I support the claim of Waterloo, NY to be the birthplace of the first Decoration Day in 1866. But in the spring of 1867, the women of Columbia, MS decorated the graves of those fallen in the late war: Blue as well as their own Grey. Francis Miles Finch, a kindly, well-educated and literate judge in

Ithaca, NY, heard of this incident. He wrote a poem of which a contemporary wrote: "that all the orations and sermons and appeals for the restoration of kindly feeling between the two sections have been exceeded in real effect upon the national heart, by this simple poem."

"Garlands," "robbing of glory," "laurel," "lovingly laden with flowers," ... the words and images were those Victorians cherished. And the subject: reconciliation, appealed "to the better angels of our nature" to use Lincoln's deathless phrase. For the next generation, this poem was heard every spring, across the entire land wherever a small girl in a white dress stood to recite the poetry part of the ceremonies.

So a judge, sitting in his study, "high above Cayuga's waters" wrote a poem in 1867. The year before, a mob in New Orleans, had rioted against the Yankee-led police, and were sternly repressed by a general from Albany. Another general from Memphis, was forming the Ku Klux Klan. In 1867, the President of the United States was impeached, in part because he was too soft in "punishing" the South.

Four incidents. Three were vindictive, violent and rejected the verdict of history. Attempted to overturn what four years of war had made manifest. One incident sought to reconcile, to accept, to forgive what had already happened. To restate in poetic meter, what Lincoln had said in his first Inaugural Address: "Suppose you go to war. You cannot fight always."

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

By Francis Miles Finch

By the flow of the inland river,

Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:
 Under the sod and the dew,
 Waiting the judgment-day;
 Under the one, the Blue,
 Under the other, the Gray.

These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet:
 Under the sod and the dew,
 Waiting the judgement-day;
 Under the laurel, the Blue,
 Under the willow, the Gray.

From the silence of sorrowful hours,
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers
Alike for the friend and the foe:
 Under the sod and the dew,
 Waiting the judgement-day;
 Under the roses, the Blue,
 Under the lilies, the Gray.

Sadly but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done,
In the storm of the years that are fading,
No braver battle was won:
 Under the sod and the dew,
 Waiting the judgement-day;
 Under the blossoms, the Blue,
 Under the garlands, the Gray.

No more shall the war cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red;
They banish our anger forever,
When they laurel the graves of our dead!
 Under the sod and the dew,
 Waiting the judgement-day;
 Love and tears for the Blue,
 Tears and love for the Gray.

