The Dispatch

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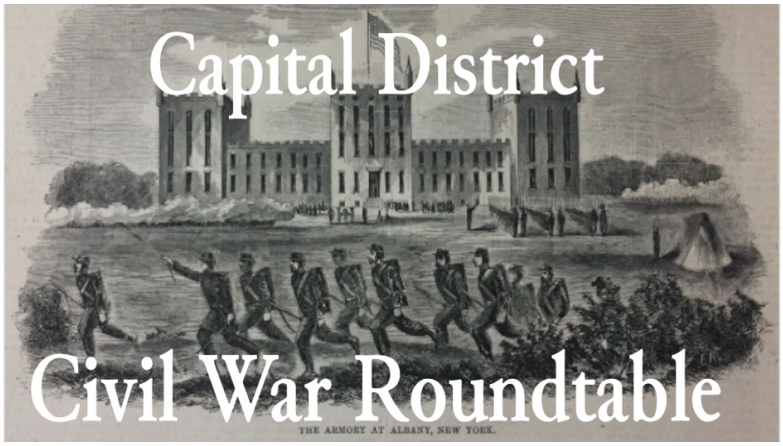

MAY MEETING

Friday, May 9, 2025

Watervliet Senior Center
1501 Broadway Watervliet, New York

Saratoga:
The Glorious Successes of Our Arms in the North
by
Garrett Cloer
National Park Service Ranger

Social Hour	6:00pm
Business Mtg	7:00pm
Presentation	7:00-8:00PM

National Park Service (NPS) Ranger Garrett Cloer will be the Roundtable's guest speaker at the Watervliet Senior Center on May 9. His topic will be "Saratoga: The glorious successes of our Arms in the North."

NPS Park Ranger Garrett Cloer

He will discuss the history of the pivotal 1777 Saratoga Campaign when American defenders captured, for the first time in history, an entire British Army. Garrett will share stories from the battles and the people who participated and information about how you can visit the battlefield. Garrett Cloer is the Program Manager for Interpretation and Visitor Experience at the park and has been part of the NPS for 16 years.

Saratoga National Historical Park
Saratoga, New York

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Friday, June 13
Big Jim & The White Boy

Eisner Award winning artist Marcus Kwame Anderson will discuss his collaboration on the graphic novel *Big Jim & the White Boy by David Walker.*

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

The Membership Committee Report was discussed at the April 11 meeting. Attendees learned that the committee's effort to contact recently lapsed members did not yield meaningful responses. The goal of having 40 paid members and at least 20 members attend meetings has not been achieved. The report outlined options the executive committee of board members should discuss:

1) **Terminating the Roundtable in June 2025 or 2026**
2) **Plea by president or membership committee members to recruit new members at other local history organizations and get the word out about the RT**
3) **Review the CWRT Congress recommendations for membership recruitment (on website)**
4) **Discuss membership survey responses**
5) **Distribute rack cards at venues like libraries**

Before Chris Carola's April talk, the president led a discussion about the RT's current health. At the last board meeting, members voted against shutting down in June 2025. This nuclear option will be reviewed again next April.

The open discussion of how to grow membership led to the following ideas:

1) **Move the meeting day of the week from Friday nights to Saturday daytime. This change would be helpful during winter months when driving at night is undesirable by many members.**
2) **Keep vigorously advertising RT in local media. Posting meeting dates on Eventbrite website**
3) **Have the live in-person monthly meetings on a Zoom conference level, too.**
4) **Hold conferences as a money-making enterprise.**
5) **Go to an online version of the monthly meetings during the winter months.**
6) **Book out-of-state speakers who will present through Zoom only. Technology will allow us to broadcast the speaker's PowerPoint and audio in the senior center.**

Changing the day of the week and time of monthly meetings, the most frequently asked option, will be vigorously investigated in the next 30 days. The conclusions will be reported on by the June meeting.

OUTREACH & NETWORKING

RECRUITMENT

We challenge each member to talk about the CDCWRT with friends, colleagues, neighbors, and other social organizations of which you are a member. If we discuss the RT's mission and goals and the enjoyment of learning more about the Civil War, then we are bound to find new members.

ROUNDTABLE PRESIDENT SPEAKS AT LOCAL SONS OF UNION VETERANS MEETING

Roundtable President Mark Koziol attended the George L. Willard Camp #154 Sons of Union Veterans (SUV) monthly meeting at the Watervliet Senior Center on Saturday, April 12. Invited by SUV member (and RT member) Leo McGuire to attend, Mark discussed the history and mission of the RT, their strong media

presence on the Internet, and encouraged SUV members to drop by and participate in a meeting and hopefully join. The SUV members were very welcoming and responsive.

Initiation of Brother Douglas Huntley (l) with Mark Isaacs and Cmdr. Swartwout.

Initially, membership in the SUV, a fraternal order, was only available to people who could prove direct family lineage to a Civil War ancestor. Recently, it created associate memberships for Civil War enthusiasts. Col. George L Willard Camp #154 performs civic functions such as restoring Union veteran graves and monuments, monitoring cemeteries' condition of veteran's graves, and other patriotic works, including annual Memorial Day ceremonies and observances. Check their thorough website for more details.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Preservation account income exceeded expenditures by $1,000.00. Generous membership donations and merchandise sales have given us a balance of $4,060.53. Upcoming expenditures will be RT insurance (500.00).

Operating income exceeded expenditures by $1,715.68. This surplus has been fueled by membership renewals and generous donations, making a balance of $4,156.65. Upcoming expenses include renewing the Godaddy website and post office box.

NEW YORK STATE REENACTMENTS

There are five statewide reenactments listed so far. Closest to the Capital District is Grant Cottage Community Day on Saturday, June 14, from 9:30 to 4:30. The RT has been invited to participate, so we are looking for volunteers to work the tables, meet the public, sell books and t-shirts, and help recruit new members. If you like to participate, then email the RT at cdcwrt@hotmail.com

SPRING BOOK SALE – FRIDAY JUNE 13TH

The Roundtable will hold its annual spring sale on Friday, June 13. Doors open at 6 pm.

There will be book titles you have not seen before covering various Civil War topics, and commemorative chinaware for sale. Special feature: Nearly 20 bound volumes of the Civil War Times Illustrated from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Buy the complete set for $50.00 or individual volumes for $5.00 each.

A REMINDER OF THE SARATOGA BATTLEFIELD

by Rosemary Nichols

When you have a world class treasure in your backyard that has been present and celebrated for longer than any of us have been alive, sometimes it is easy to forget about it. That is the case for many in the Capital District with the Saratoga Battlefield. This month's featured presentation allows us to sit back and be reminded of the many things that are special about this unique Revolutionary War resource.

It was early in the Revolutionary War. British general John Burgoyne devised a daring plan to effectively end the rebellion. Burgoyne proposed a three-pronged attack in 1777 to divide New England from the rest of the colonies. This plan aimed to control the Hudson River, isolating New England by cutting off communication and supply lines with the other colonies.

The plan involved three British armies converging near Albany, NY. General Barry St. Leger was to move down Lake Ontario from Canada, taking Fort Stanwix near Rome in passing. General William Howe was to move north up the Hudson River from his headquarters in New York City toward Albany. Finally, General Burgoyne was to lead an army south from Canada through Lake Champlain and the Hudson River Valley.

There have been many fine scholarly studies explaining why and how this plan, so handsome on paper, was doomed on the ground. St. Leger relied heavily upon his Native American allies. An attack at Oriskany just to the east of Fort Stanwix effectively destroyed the fighting capacity of the Tryon County Militia under General Nicholas Herkimer on August 6, 1777. The failed capture of Fort Stanwix combined with the timely destruction of the lightly guarded camps of the Native Americans irregulars meant that St. Leger lost the invaluable assistance of his indigenous allies. He had no choice but to retreat to Canada.

General William Howe's attack up the Hudson River from New York City never got started.

For a variety of reasons, the only British force that got close to the rendezvous point was General John Burgoyne's force of 7,500 men, including German Hessians, moving south from Canada. By mid-September, Burgoyne's force reached the northern outskirts of the small village of Saratoga. A brisk battle at a place now in western Vermont known as Hubbardton dealt a sharp loss to the German mercenaries.

General Horatio Gates commanded the Northern Department of the Continental Army. He was supported by General Benedict Arnold and by Col. Daniel Morgan, leader of 500 Virginia riflemen. Gates' army numbered 8,500 strong.

To disrupt the British advance south, Gates ordered his men to erect defenses on the crest of Bemis Heights, which was part of a series of bluffs from which both the Hudson River and the paralleling road could be seen. From there, American artillery had the range to hit both the river and the road. To attack, the British would have to use the road, as the forest and vegetation were too dense to permit effective troop movements.

The Americans also erected a fortified wall a little less than a mile from Bemis Heights. The wall extended about three-quarters of a mile, creating a line shaped like a large "L". Twenty-two cannons were emplaced behind the wall, providing the Americans with ample artillery cover. It would be a difficult position for the British to crack.

On September 19, 1777, Burgoyne divided his army into three columns. He wanted to use each column to probe American defenses.

Col. Daniel Morgan's light infantry engaged with the center column on September 19 near the farm of John Freeman. It was a hotly contested fight, very fierce at times, with the field changing hands several times. By evening, the British (reinforced by 500 German

Hessians) held the field, but the action had blunted their forward motion. Hoping to be reinforced by Clinton from New York City, Burgoyne chose to dig in.
As food dwindled, the army was reduced to half-rations and was literally stuck in the middle of the New York wilderness. The British began looking for ways to escape.

While the British remained stuck, the American army grew to 13,000 strong. Receiving intelligence that Burgoyne's men were on the move, they attacked the British position, forcing them back. In the ensuing fight, popular British General Simon Fraser was mortally wounded, picked off by one of Morgan's riflemen.

The British had erected their own defensive redoubt behind their forward position, the Balcarres Redoubt. It was formidable and well-defended, and the British retreated inside of it and held off the pursuing Americans.

Another redoubt, the Breymann Redoubt, was erected several hundred yards away. It was not nearly as impressive as the Balcarres Redoubt, and was lightly manned by only 200 German soldiers, giving the attacking Americans overwhelming numbers and superior firepower.

American General Benedict Arnold galloped into the fray at a key moment and rallied the Americans in the attack on the Breymann Redoubt. A fellow officer in the Continental Line said Arnold "behaved more like a madman than a cool and discreet officer." During this engagement he sustained a serious wound to his left leg which required its amputation below the knee.

There is a monument in the form of this amputated leg at the place where Arnold's wound was received. His name is not on the monument since by the time there were decisions about monumentation on the battlefield, Arnold had committed treason in conjunction with his command at West Point. One of the more curious Revolutionary War battlefield monuments, the people making the decision wanted to honor Arnold for his courage during the battle but could not bring themselves to include his name on the monument.

By early evening, the Americans secured possession of the Breymann Redoubt and gained a tactical advantage, as it was the far-right flank of the British lines. From here the Americans could easily get behind British lines. Realizing their plight, the British pulled back into their Great Redoubt near the river and held out for several weeks.

On the morning of October 8, Burgoyne's army attempted to escape north, but a cold, hard rain forced them to stop and encamp near the town of Saratoga (as distinguished from the village). Cold, hungry, and weary, the British army dug in and prepared to defend themselves. Within two days the Americans had them surrounded. After a week's negotiation, Burgoyne's army surrendered on October 17, 1777. The British had been humiliated. The Americans had proved their worth on the battlefield against the greatest army in the world. This victory lifted flagging American morale, inspired the cause of independence further, and convinced the French and later other European nations to back the new United States. A formal Treaty of Alliance was signed with the French and the balance of the war tipped in favor of the Americans.

The Surrender of Burgoyne by John Trumball

A valiant group of Saratoga County historical advocates, including longtime members of our Round Table, joined together with other local organizations and the American Battlefield Trust to purchase and provide signage for the previously not recognized location on the Hudson River (the 'Surrender Site') where the famous surrender took place.

CDCWRT
P.O. BOX 11493
LOUDONVILLE, NY 12211

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**

THE OFFICERS

President	Mark Koziol	Vice-President	Bruce Reed
Treasurer	Steve Muller	Secretary	Shawn Connery
At-Large	Rosemary Nichols	At-Large	Matt George

THE NONCOMS

Program	Matt George	518-355-2131	Jbuford63@aol.com
Membership	Steve Muller		
Refreshments	Dean Long and Luanne Whitbeck		
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Education	Matt George		
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