



The Dispatch



Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

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

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June 1995

JUNE PROGRAM FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 1995

Bethlehem Public Library
Delaware Avenue, Delmar NY

Doors Open: 7:00 PM
Program Begins: 7:30 PM

Our June meeting features our own **Ray Smith**, whose topic will be "Dress Rehearsal: The American Military Experience in Winfield Scott's Mexican Campaign of 1847." A maxim repeated throughout the literature on the Civil War is that service in the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 had a significant effect on the officers who later served in the armies of the Union and the Confederacy. Many of the junior grade officers who served under Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott in Mexico were destined to command brigades, divisions and corps fifteen years later, often against their brothers in arms from the Mexican campaigns. Ray's program will examine Scott's extraordinary campaign of 1847 that resulted in the capture of Mexico City and concluded the War with Mexico. Many well known Civil War personalities received their baptism of fire during this overland fight from Vera Cruz to Chapultepec

Castle. How did their experiences effect their performance during the Civil War? Was service in Mexico a pre-requisite for higher command? What lessons were learned, and what lessons forgotten?

Ray Smith is a ten year member of CDCWRT, having joined soon after it was formed in 1985. He has served in a number of positions during his five years on the Board, including two as Chairman. He is presently the Historian for the organization. Ray received a B.A. in History from Gettysburg College, and an M.A. in the History of Technology from the University of Delaware. He is employed as a Program Analyst for the NYS Historic Preservation Office.

[Ed. note: Ray tells me that the only reason he is limiting the topic to Scott's southern Mexico campaign, rather than include Taylor's northern invasion, is so that he can avoid having to open a can of worms by discussing General John Ellis Wool of Troy, NY, who we all know is the real victor and hero of the battle of Buena Vista. But, Taylor got to go home first and grab all the glory, and the rest is, as they say, history.]

CDCWRT CALENDAR

JUNE 15 "SAVE THE COLORS" RALLY: Sponsored by Assemblyman Paul Tonko and Senator Hugh Farley. Legislative Office Bldg., Hearing Room 'C', Albany. 11:00 - Noon. Further details inside.

JUNE 24 & 25 Re-enactment: Members of the Fifth Alabama Battalion and the 2nd Vermont Light Artillery will stage a period encampment on the front lawn of the Camelot Village, Route 9 West, Bennington, VT. Daily military life will be displayed, along with weaponry drills, including a full gun crew working a James 12-pounder artillery piece. Further information can be had by dialing 802-447-0039.

JUNE 29 & 30 Colonie Center Postal Cancellation: Special "first day of cancellation" event for the national issuance of the US Postal Service's new series of Civil War stamps. From 11:00 A.M. to 9:30 P.M. Sales of stamps and cachets on envelopes, as well as CW music and demonstrations. Further details inside.

JULY 4 West Capital Park Cancellation: Holiday celebration themed as "CW Day in Albany." From 2:00 P.M. to dusk.

JULY 30 Cooperstown Postal Cancellation: Timed to coincide with the Hall of Fame ceremonies.

AUG. 12 Cherry Valley Postal Cancellation: Sales, and another opportunity to copy photographs.

AUG. 28-30 Fonda Fair Postal Cancellation

SEPT. 8 MEETING: At the first meeting following our summer break, Earl McElfresh, of the map company of the same name, will speak on the process and problems encountered in Civil War map making.

OCT. 13; NOV. 11 (BANQUET); AND DEC. 8, 1995: Meeting dates for the remainder of the calendar year. Details will follow. Mark your calendars now!

CDCWRT NEWS

DUES! DUES! DUES ARE DUE!

Those of you who have received this issue of the Dispatch with a pink circle around the expiration date on the mailing label are in arrears on your dues. In the past we have always been rather lax about cutting people off of the mailing list when this happens, because experience shows that we frequently get the renewals within a month or two after the expiration. However, a recent review of this policy shows that we are now carrying a far greater number of people than ever before, including some who are as much as six months in arrears. Therefore, over this summer the list will be trimmed down to those who are current in their payment. We regret that this is necessary, but the postal increase affects us just as much as it does everyone else. It is also important to remember that the flow of dues money is the lifeblood of this organization, and all that we do. So, while you're thinking about it, take pen in hand and write that check. It's still only \$15.00 per year, and could be considered cheap at twice the price. [Ed. note: Besides, wouldn't it just break your heart to miss all of the Troy history and culture that you just know is coming up in future issues? Of course it does!]

MAY MEETING

A crowd of approximately 60 members watched as our own **Nancy Shour** held forth on the life and times of the citizen-soldier **Henry Lee Higginson**. Rising to the level of major in the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry before a severe wounding at Aldie Gap in 1863, Higginson also later served on Barlow's staff until he ended his military career by resigning due to the continued effects of his wounding. Thereafter, he returned to his life as a prominent citizen and businessman in Boston. He subsequently also made a career of memorializing the contributions of the famed 20th Massachusetts "Harvard Regiment" Infantry, which had seen hard service and a great number of casualties, including a number of his friends and associates. The most prominent of these memorials was the founding of the Boston Symphony, with which Higginson had a lifelong association. Thanks, Nancy for a job well done!

USED MAGAZINE SALE

As hard to believe as this may be, there are still a few used magazines left over from the sales of the last two meetings. [Ed.: I told you there was a heart-warmingly large response to the appeal for contributions.] This, even after selling approximately 50 more at the last lecture. So, we will once again be selling these at the June meeting for the absolutely, positively last time this year. Remember, they leave our possession for the price of only 50 cents each, and all profits raised from this sale goes directly to battlefield preservation. If there should be any left over by the beginning of the regular meeting, they will be bundled up and given as supplemental prizes in the book raffle.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Matt Farina reports that our current balance, as of May 31, 1995 is \$3,540.80,

which includes \$76.50 from the magazine sales. However, there is also an outstanding check to the Friends of Grant's Cottage in the sum of \$500.00 which has not yet been cashed.

BOARD MEETING

At the June meeting of the Executive Committee, held on May 31, **Chairman Dan Lorello** advised that the two Gettysburg maps donated to us by the McElfresh Map Company will be framed and available for viewing at the June meeting. CDCWRT will begin selling raffle tickets on these maps, and continue throughout the summer and fall at the various events that we will be participating in, and the drawing will be at the November Banquet. There will be an alternate prize of a \$200.00 savings bond.

We also heard from a special guest, **Steve Smeltzer**, who has been actively involved with Senator Hugh Farley and Assemblyman Paul Tonko in an attempt to persuade NYS to begin caring for our collection of battle flags. It is estimated that there are 2000 flags in the NYS collection, with the lion's share being the regimental, state and national colors from the CW. There are also approximately 40 Confederate flags which were never returned during the "reconciliation period" of the 1890's, apparently because they were in state, rather than Federal possession. Bills have now been introduced into both chambers which would establish a NYS Advisory Committee on Military Battle Flags within the Division of Military and Naval Affairs. This Committee would have the responsibility of developing a comprehensive plan for the protection and preservation of the flag collection, as well as the soliciting of money for deposit into a trust fund (matched dollar for dollar by NYS up to one half million dollars per year). All donations would be tax deductible, and all sums would be spent solely on "restoration and display" of the collection. [Ed. note: This is a very brief synopsis of the bill. Full copies will be available at the June

meeting.] Tonko's Assembly bill # 7415 currently has 43 co-sponsors and has made it through the Veterans's Committee, and is now before the Ways and Means Committee. Farley's Senate bill # 4932, also well co-sponsored, is now before the Rules Committee. Mr. Smeltzer has asked that we as an organization assist in this effort by contacting our state representatives to request their support for this important project. We can also assist by attending a "Save the Colors" rally on June 15 at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. (Details may be found in the Calendar.) As the budget mess may necessitate the postponement of this rally, it is suggested that potential attendees call Paul Tonko's office at 455-5197 to confirm before driving to Albany.

The Board, in keeping with our long standing desire to see something done about the disgraceful condition of this irreplaceable asset, has expressed strong support for this bill, and hopes that every member will do whatever is possible to ensure that it is successful.

Sue Knost brought us up to date on her cancellation project relating to the up-coming CW series of postage stamps to be issued by the US Postal Service starting on June 29. As previously noted, Albany has been chosen to one of the sites for a very limited simultaneous release of these postage stamps. This limited release will ensure that the collector value of a "first day" cancellation is suitably enhanced. This event will take place at the Colonie Center Mall on both June 29 and 30, with the 29th being the "big day" of the two. Plans call for period music, reenactors, demonstrations, lectures, and a photo-stand for the copying of military photographs for the US Army Historical Institute at Carlyle Barracks. Events on the 30th will be more or less limited to sales.

Additional local events now planned are listed under the Calendar section of the Dispatch. Other events will hopefully take place at the State Museum, Watervliet Arsenal,

State Archives, etc. Sue's hope is to put together a list of 20-30 events and locations between now and the end of the year. This plan raises the distinct possibility that CDCWRT could raise a substantial sum of money as the sponsor of these activities, all of which can be plowed back into our educational and preservation work.

While Sue has done, and will continue to do a large amount of work on this project, the one important issue that needs to be addressed now is one of manpower. If this project is to work, *we need warm bodies to assist in these events*. We cannot continue to rely on the same eight or ten people to do all of the work, especially on a project of this size. *We need you to volunteer some time*. Pick up the phone and call Sue or Dan (their numbers are on the back page of this and every issue) and offer up three hours of your time. I promise, you'll have fun, you'll meet some really nice people, and you'll even get your name in this newsletter. [That may not sound like much until you stop to think that the more real news I have to write about, the less room I'll have to talk about Troy. From some of the comments I've received, that may be the best "big stick" that I have to use, since speaking softly doesn't seem to work so well.]

One last issue from the Board meeting was the response to the request from the Twin Rivers Council of the Boy Scouts of America for assistance with a program relating to Civil War history, to be given this summer at their Camp Boyhaven. This is a camp for Cub Scout level boys, aged between 8-10 years.

One of the themes for the summer session is American History, and one week will be devoted to our Civil War. The first of two requested dates would be Saturday, July 15, 1995, which would be a day of Scouts, parents and family and assorted staffers. It is possible that this date will largely be taken up by C.W. reenactors, although other activities are desired and encouraged. The next date is

Wednesday, July 19, which will be a day devoted solely to Scouts and staff.

The director would like for five different people to lecture/ demonstrate/ show-off/ play with "toys" for about 40 minutes for each of five groups that will be rotating among the areas. Hours would run from 11:00 A.M. until approximately 5:00 P.M. Participants on both days would be fed meals, and could also take part in evening retreat activities if desired.

Camp Boyhaven is located on Route 29, just outside of Rock City Falls, in Saratoga County. Further information may be had by contacting Sharon Bugbee, Camp Director, at the Council phone 518-869-6436, or 1-800-734-2721.

CORRESPONDENCE

[Envelope] Mrs Hannah Sanders
Pompton Plains
Morris County
New Jersey

May 17 1865

Dear Hannah I take the present oportunity to rite youe a fue lines to let youe noe that I am well at present and I hope those fue lines may find youe and the childern injoying the same blessing. I am laying in camp in about fore mildes of Washington at a plase cold balley cros rode and I etspect to lay thar 30 days. the hole army will be revued on the 22nd of this minth and then I think we will be discharged and musterd out of the army and be sent home. I dont noe the reason youe dont rite oftener I have sent youe thre letters sence I reseved the letter youe rote me on the last of Aprel. I wod like to hear from youe and the childern at last once a weake. youe must not feal uneasy about danel youre bruther I saw him last weake on the march be twean richmon

and fredrickburg he was well and looked good and he will be discharged as quick as i will. I etspect I dont thinke we will git home before the midel of June if we due the. I dont noe wat is the matter with the fokes home tha dont rite oftener if tha hant got enney paper and ink I will try and send them sum. I am gitting along good only I am gitting tird of hard tack and salt hors. my muneey is playd out and it gose hard with me sum times for grub. the wore is ober and tha dont car war the men git wot the gubermet allous them or nott. I hant had enney letters my fokes in tue munce. we have marched nearly thre hunderd miles in 13 days and all the men was nearley marched to deth. I had it a litte better than sum of the rest of the men I had a hors to ride part of the time or uther wayes never kood studit. a goo menney of over me was taking sick and sent to the hospittel. the sun was verry hot and verry bad worter to drink. I dont think we will git payd untill wear dis charged and I hope that will be sune discharged so I can return to my home once more becaus I am tird of living in a willderness. Verginey is nothing a willderness. Dear hanah pleas send me 5 five dolers for I am tired of sterving pleas. Send it rite a way oblige me. youre husband

Dominick Sanders

[Ed. Note: This is from my collection. There are no corrections other than the addition of periods, of which Dominick had apparently never learned.

I have never had an opportunity to research Dominick, so I have no idea where, or with who he served. But I have always felt that this letter epitomizes the tension and longing that must have been rampant in the army by this date, and thought you might enjoy it during this 130th anniversary of the end of the war.]

