

The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

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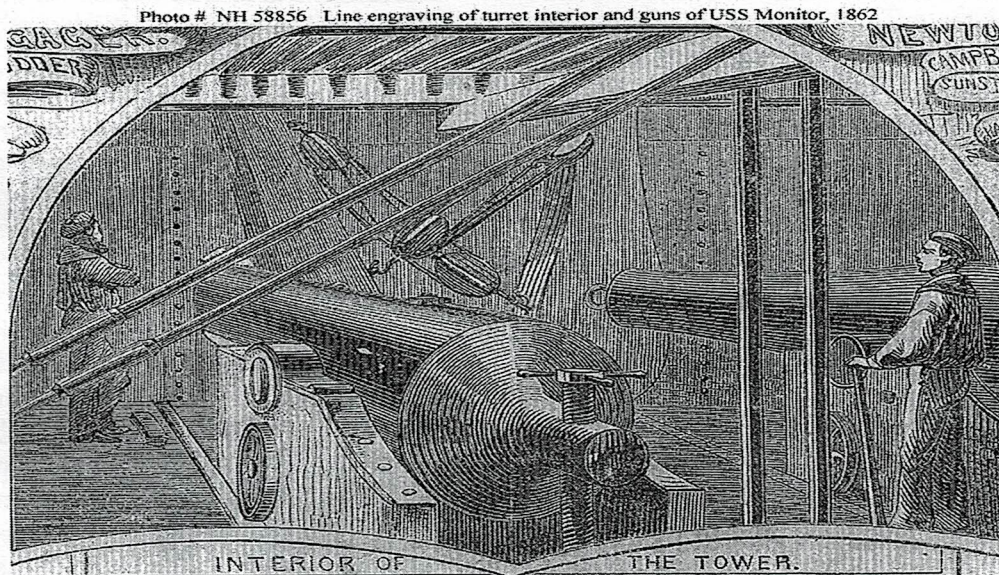
CDCWRT's web site: timesunion.com/communities/cdcwrt

Volume 20 Number 11

July 2003

Summer One Day Bus Trip!! Picnic!! Ericsson Bicentennial - USS Monitor Bus Trip.

July 26, 9 a.m.- 5 pm



Line engraving, published in "Harper's Weekly", 1862, depicting the turret interior and guns.
U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph

Join us as we celebrate the 200th birthday of John Ericsson, designer of the USS Monitor on July 26, on a one day bus tour of little seen Monitor sites right in our own area. It is well known; that this area was instrumental in building the *U.S.S. Monitor* which revolutionized naval warfare. We'll celebrate the 200th anniversary of *Monitor* designer John Ericsson's birth on a special tour while we flesh out the details for you during this bus tour of the relevant foundry and bank sites, plus local cemeteries where the key players now reside. Jointly sponsored by the Burden Iron Works Museum and Capital District Civil War Round Table. \$59 includes tour, bus, snacks, lunch and all materials. A very special opportunity! **Limited capacity, so early reservations are strongly suggested to avoid disappointment. You know our trips – this one is no exception! Details inside.**

July Picnic Meeting

Saturday

Peebles Island

State Historic Site

Cohoes NY

**PICNIC, PROGRAM & PARTY
BEGINS AT NOON TILL DUSK**
Music Program begins at 2 pm

CDCWRT MEETING

The summer picnic meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Saturday, July 12 at the Peebles Island Pavilion. The social hour will start at 12:00pm, with a music program at 2:00pm. Self guided tours will be available all day, so please plan on relaxing and socializing. It's a great time to bring friends and guests to introduce them to the CDCWRT too – all are welcome, but just RSVP so that we know how many people will be on site.

Rosemary Nichols, who has organized Songs of the 1860s in a musical interlude, will lead our annual picnic program. Several members of the RT have agreed to join Rosemary in the program, which will be fun for all!

Hot dogs and hamburgers will be provided by the CDCWRT. Please plan on bringing a dish to share and let our picnic coordinator Noreen Underhill know how many are coming and what your dish will be by contacting her at 371-4312.

Members are encouraged to bring a favorite artifact or display to share with the membership. Please contact Joe Stracuzzi or Sue Knost if a display table is required. This is a time when we can have outside space for those items that we can't fit in at the library.

Plan to wear your favorite Civil War T-Shirt. If you don't have one, there's nothing to fear!

Come topless and you can purchase our famous "The Original New York Yankees Civil War Baseball T-Shirt" for \$14, ALL SIZES, including S, M, L, XL, XXL and XXXL.

Peebles Island State Historic Site

Peebles Island is surrounded by rivers. On the east side of the island is the Hudson River. On the north side of the island is the fourth branch of the Mohawk River. On the west and south side of the island is the third branch of the Mohawk River. But despite its surroundings, the old military road from Fort Anne to Albany runs right through the middle of it. At the north end of the island, the road became a ford across the water as the following explains: A colonial ford across the Mohawk River from which Waterford derives its name. Site of the colonial fort, Half Moon. Today, there is an abandoned train bridge where the military road used to be.

Breastworks, erected under the direction of Thaddeus Kosciuszko in August-September 1777 to check Burgoyne's invasion.

On August 17, 1777, Americans retreated south to these islands. They prepared defenses to make a final stand against the British who intended to capture Albany. An American victory at Saratoga, however, made it unnecessary to rely upon the island's defenses. The fortifications consisted of three batteries of cannon protected by earth works all connected by entrenchments for troops. Their design has been attributed to Polish engineer, Thaddeus Kosciuszko. In 1668, Philip Pietersen Schuyler and Goosen Gerritsen von Schaick acquired Peebles and van Schaick Islands and used the rich flood plain for planting crops and other areas for grazing cattle. Built in 1735, the van Schaick House located near the intersection of van Schaick and Delaware Avenue on van Schaick Island was probably used by Generals Haratio Gates and Philip Schuyler as headquarters for the northern department of the colonial army between August 18th and September 8th 1777. The Revolutionary War emphasized the strategic location of Peebles and van Schaick Islands. During the major British offensive of 1777 when General John Burgoyne was advancing from Montreal in an attempt to capture Albany, the islands were garrisoned by Americans who built extensive earthen fortifications along the northern edge of Peebles Island.

USS *Monitor* (1862-1862)

USS *Monitor*, a 987-ton armored turret gunboat, was built at New York to the design of John Ericsson. She was the first of what became a large number of "monitors" in the United States and other navies. Commissioned on 25 February 1862, she soon was underway for Hampton Roads, Virginia. *Monitor* arrived there on 9 March, and was immediately sent into action against the Confederate ironclad *Virginia*, which had sunk two U.S. Navy ships the previous day. The resulting battle, the first between iron-armored warships, was a tactical draw. However, *Monitor* prevented the *Virginia* from gaining control of Hampton Roads and thus preserved the Federal blockade of the Norfolk area.

Following this historic action, *Monitor* remained in the Hampton Roads area and, in mid-1862 was actively employed along the James River in support of the Army's Peninsular Campaign. In late December 1862, *Monitor* was ordered south for further operations. Caught in a storm off Cape Hatteras, she foundered on 31 December. Her wreck was discovered in 1974 and is now a marine sanctuary. Work is presently underway to recover major components of her structure and machinery, to be followed by extensive preservation efforts and ultimate museum exhibition.

This information and reproduction of the engraving courtesy of the:
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY -- NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER
805 KIDDER BREESE SE -- WASHINGTON NAVY YARD
WASHINGTON DC 20374-5060

They have a great website, with more information and pictures available on
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/monitor.htm>

Our tour will include the Burden Iron Works Museum and the Monitor plates, the Troy and Schenectady Monitor sites, as well as the Clute Bros. Foundry site and their homes in the Stockade, and lunch at the local favorite Troy Brew Pub.

Sign up with the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway – they are handling the reservations for us at 518-274-5267. Reservations are made directly with them and can be paid in advance by mailing a check to The Gateway, 1 East Industrial Parkway Troy 12180-5942.

The tour will sell out, so early prepayment will help reserve your spot if you act now!

Will the Real Gerrit Smith Please Stand Up? Tuesday July 15 at 7 PM Peterboro NY

The Peterboro Area Historical Society invites the public to a program on Tuesday July 15 at 7 PM at the museum that reflects upon the life of Gerrit Smith, the wealthy 19th century philanthropist and abolitionist of Peterboro. Norman K. Dann will provide a look at the era in which Smith lived, and the social and personal forces which molded what Smith became. Dann will consider the mix of personality traits which seemed contradictory and which drove Smith's philanthropy, and describe Smith's resolution of 19th century issues and pressures in forming a lifestyle that reconciled opposites.

Norm Dann received his BA in Psychology at Alderson-Broaddus College, MA in Political Science at the University of Rhode Island, and his Ph.D in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at Syracuse University. Retired from SUNY Morrisville Liberal Arts Department, Dann has spent several years studying the Gerrit Smith papers in Special Collections at Syracuse University. His biography of Smith will be published in 2003 by Nicholas K. Burns Publishing. Company.

For more information, please contact Beth Spokowksy, President Peterboro Area Historical Society, 315-684-9022.