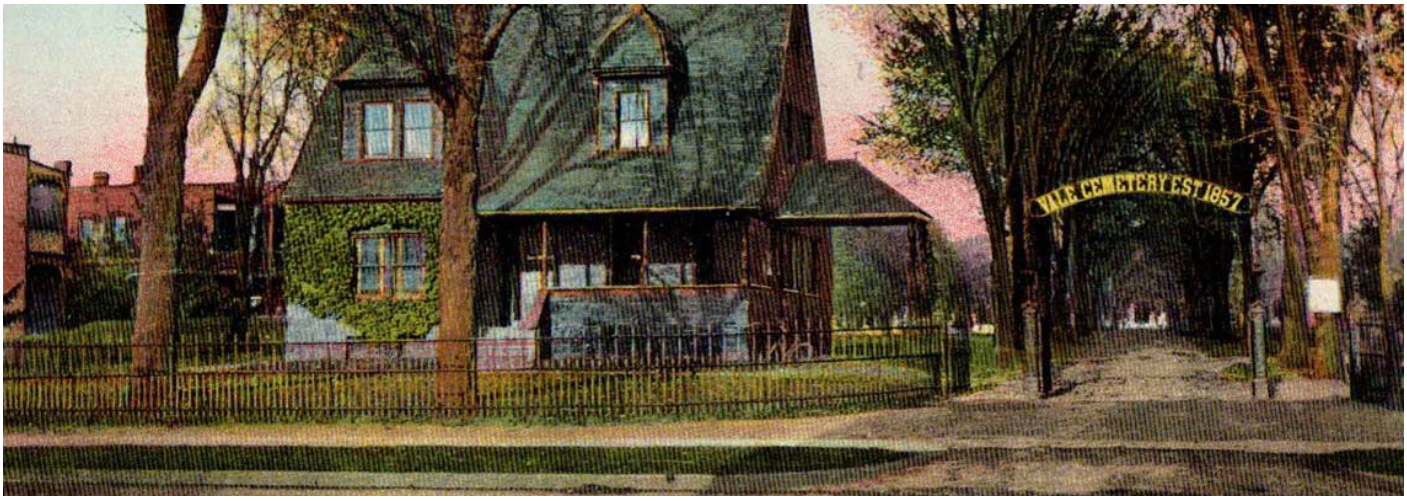
The Dispatch
Newspaper of the
CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org

Volume 33, Number 9 November 2016

VALE CEMETERY IN SCHENECTADY



In 1856, the Common Council concluded the land known as the Hospital Farm, off Nott Terrace (a 38-acre plot), then a rural area outside the city, would be a suitable site for a public cemetery. Burton Thomas and John Doyle designed a park-like landscape with pastoral vistas. Vale Cemetery was dedicated on Oct. 21, 1857, by Rev. Julius Seelye. Today there are more than 33, 000 people buried in Vale's 100 acres.

The cemetery includes the historic African-American Burying Ground. Since 2001, city residents have held annual commemorations of Juneteenth, celebrating emancipation and the end of the American Civil War; particularly since 2006, some have been held at the Burying Ground. The speaker for the November meeting of the CDCWRT was instrumental in helping to establish the Burying Ground as an historic site for the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

NOVEMBER MEETING
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2016

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

Rev. Horace G. Day: Abolitionist Minister In Schenectady

Neil B. Yetwin

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:00 – 8:00 p.m.**
Discussion	**8:00 - 8:30 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The November meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, November 11, 2016. The Round Table's special guest speaker will be Neil B. Yetwin, who will talk about Reverend Horace G. Day, an abolitionist minister.

On October 3, 1904, the obituary of Rev. Horace G. Day was reported in the New York Times. It reported that for 50 years, from 1847-1897, he served as Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Schenectady. Upon his resignation, the entire city paid him honor in a celebration that lasted one week.

Who was Rev. Day and why was he so celebrated? Come and listen to Neil, who himself has been honored as a local historian.

Neil B. Yetwin taught history, English and psychology for 35 years, 32 of those at Schenectady (formerly Linton) High School before retiring in June of 2014. He has published nearly 100 articles in a variety of journals and newspapers, including Yankee Magazine, the History Book Club Review, the Albany Times Union, the Schenectady Gazette, the Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter, The Thoreau Society Newsletter and The Papers of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, and has lectured extensively about local history at public schools, colleges, libraries, historical societies, places of worship and veterans organizations throughout New York's Capital District and beyond.

Yetwin was the 1989 recipient of the Louis B. Yavner Award of the New York State Regents for Excellence in Teaching the Holocaust and Civil Rights, and in 2005 was named "Outstanding Citizen of Schenectady" by the Schenectady City Council for his research and presentations about local history.

He was also the 2011 recipient of the "Preservation of History Award" for his contributions to the African-American Burial Ground Project at Schenectady" Vale Cemetery. In 2013, Yetwin's published research about escaped slave Moses Viney helped establish Vale Cemetery as an historic site in the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

He has been a presenter for the New York Council for the Humanities since 2010 with a lecture entitled, "Major Mordecai Myers: An American-Jewish Hero of the War of 1812," and in 2013 the Old Fort Niagara Association published his book, "To My Son…":The Life and War Remembrances of Captain Mordecai Myers, 13th United States Infantry, 1812-1815 with a foreword by Canadian military historian Donald E. Graves.

Neil will have copies of his book for sale at the Senior Center.

UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS

On Friday, December 9, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Ed Bonekemper, who will talk about the Myth of the Lost Cause.

On Friday, January 13, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will hear from several of its members in our annual Potpourri Meeting. Speakers and topic will be announced.

On Friday, February 10, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Fred Wexler who will talk about the Tammany Regiment.

On Friday, March 10, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Steve Trimm who will talk about a visit with Gen. U.S. Grant.

On Friday, April 14, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Terri Olszowy who will talk about the Elmira Prison Camp.

On Friday, May 12, The regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Chris Mackowski who will talk about Spotsylvania and the fighting at the Mule Shoe.

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Matt George, Program Chair, has asked to write a monthly column for the newsletter.

Any member may submit an article or a column to the editor for consideration of publication in the newsletter. After all, it is the members' newsletter. Submissions should be made as early as possible.

BUFORD'S VIEW – NOVEMBER

On October 10th I returned from The Mosby Heritage Conference: The Art of Command in the Civil War held in Middleburg, Virginia. Once again it was an excellent conference with excellent speakers. The theme this year was Gettysburg on Day 3. Friday evening Robert O'Neill talked about Elon Farnsworth; Jim Hesler discussed the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble Assault. On Saturday there were 6 speakers including Eric Wittenburg's analysis of the cavalry fight on East Cavalry field and Wayne Motts look at the Union defense of Cemetery Ridge. On Sunday we traveled by bus to Gettysburg where we walked parts of Culp's Hill and I got to walk Pickett's Charge for the 4th time. This time we followed the steps of Armistead's troops. Jim Hesler and Wayne Motts led the group.

The President of the Mosby Heritage Association is Childs Burden whose ancestor was Henry Burden of the Burden Iron Works in Troy. How ironic that this organization's President had an ancestor whose factory probably made most of the horseshoes on the horses of the Union Cavalry who were chasing Mosby for months.

I should report that Steinwehr Ave. in Gettysburg has a different look than what you veterans of past trips there might remember. As most of you know, the Wax Museum is no longer. It is now the Gettysburg Heritage Center and on the once empty lot north of it is a brewery and restaurant. However, more recent changes include the disappearance of the Chinese Restaurant….it is just an empty lot.

On the South side, the hotel next to the former wax museum is gone. It is currently being replaced by a bigger, newer hotel three stories high so I'm told.

On Saturday October 15 the Round Table made $113.00 in sales at The Rotterdam United Methodist Church Fall Festival. This was surprisingly good for such a small local event. The Church was originally built in 1863 as the Fisher Church. In the church cemetery is a veteran of the Civil War named John La Grange. At age 26 he enlisted with the 134th New York (Co. B) in Schenectady and at some point was detached for duty to the Pioneer Corps. He passed away in the early 1900s and is buried next to his wife. By the 1870's the Church had grown and by far the biggest donor to the Church was the mill owner Henry Crane who one year gave $200.00 to the Church (a huge sum in those days).

Our November speaker is Neil Yetwin who will be talking about the abolitionist minister Reverend Day of Schenectady. The three soldiers in the 134th who I feature in my living history presentation (Swales, Trask and VanAernum) were killed on day 1 of Gettysburg. Their bodies were returned to Schenectady late in July and as employees of the same Henry Crane, were buried in Crane's private grove on mill property. Crane promised to erect a monument to the "three heroes". The minister who performed the eulogy at the burial service was the same Reverend Day whom you will hear about at the meeting Friday. Furthermore, the Reverend Day shortly before the war married Jacob Trask to a girl from Rotterdam Rachel Truax. Jacob Trask a machinist later Sergeant Trask is one of the three soldiers above who were killed at Gettysburg.

Where Crane's Grove was originally on mill property is a mystery and when exactly the monument was first erected or moved is unknown. The monument is now located in Vale cemetery. The remaining mystery is that Crane's monument" to honor the three heroes" has only two names on it (Swales and Trask). Where the final resting place of the 21 year old Alonzo VanAernam is, also remains unknown.

One half of our Round Table's Mission is education. On October 4 I did my Living History presentation as a video for the SCHOPEG Co. of Cobleskill. This is a media/video company that serves mostly Schoharie County. They called yesterday and reported the finished video came out well and that they will send me two copies. One I will keep. The second I will make available for loan to any school, teacher, group or Round Table member who might be interested.

Also in October, J.J. Jennings accompanied a group of Maple Hill High School students on bus trip to Hildene in Vermont. He later spoke to this group of AP history students on Abraham Lincoln. J.J. reports that these students were interested and enthusiastic (even at 7:40 AM) and asked excellent questions such as what books influenced Lincoln? Or, how would Lincoln do today if he were running for President? This is certainly encouraging.

In November I will be returning again to Gettysburg for the Remembrance Day Celebration. From what I've heard, the keynote speaker will be actor, director, producer and writer LeVar Burton (of Roots & Star Trek fame) . I will also be attending the Lincoln Fellowship luncheon at the hotel and other events as well. I will be selling our sweatshirts at the Historian Bookstore on York Street whenever I can get a few free hours.

The book shed where the Round Table stores an estimated 15-20 boxes of donated books is in need of shelving. These books, piled up in boxes should be sorted and stored in a more satisfactory manner. A fair number of these books are antiquarian in nature from the late 1800's to the 1920's and some might have some value. Anybody who would like to

donate any type of reasonable shelving should please contact me.

Lastly, since June of this year the Round Table has made $2,298.35 at a variety of events large and small. They range from the Gettysburg re-enactment to small church festivals. Which ones have you helped with? Correction: in last month's column I referred to Bill Howe's wife as Julia. I knew better. Bill's lovely wife is Kim. Apparently at the time I was thinking of the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

The following letter was received from Jim Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust.

Dear Fellow Preservationists,

Grateful…thankful…appreciative…obliged…. beholden…indebted to…my thesaurus has run out of words to describe my appreciation of your wonderful $1000.00 gift to our recent appeal to help save an additional 503 acres at the four Western Theater battlefields of Shiloh, Stones River, Bentonville, and Rocky Face Ridge/Dalton. I wish there were some other way for me to adequately express my gratitude for this act of generosity, and for all that you have done for the cause of historic battlefield preservation in America. I don't know what we did to deserve you, but I am so glad to count you as a friend and fellow preservationist.

Above all, I want to thank you for "giving bac" to our nation such a generous portion of your own good fortune and success. You are helping the Civil War Trust meet the urgent, critical need of saving our American heritage while we still can. As Winston Churchill said, "A nation that forgets its past has no future." You are helping to insure that America never forgets its important Civil War past.

For all that you have done, continue to do, and will do for the cause of battlefield preservation into the future, I send you my deepest, most heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely yours,
Jim Lighthizer

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Members of the Round Table,

It is nearly a year into my tenure as President of this fine organization, and I'm still in awe I was elected to lead such a group. Many of you have been members much longer than I have been. Many of you know much, much more about the Civil War than I do. And, the amount of money you have helped to raise for preservation...astonishing! To be the head of a group that donated nearly $10,000 in funds and materials in 2015 is, frankly, a little bit intimidating. The majority of those funds went to the Civil War Trust to "buy dirt," to purchase endangered Civil War lands.

Getting personalized, hand-written comments from Jim Lighthizer, the President of the Civil War Trust, and being recognized by premiere historians like Ed Bearss and novelists like Jeff Shaara only comes from being as committed to historic preservation as the CDCWRT has been.

I want to thank all of you who, over the years, have spent hours affixing postage stamps to cachets so they could be sold far and wide. Thank you to everyone who has driven seven hours to Gettysburg, Pa. or has stood under a tent on the lawn of some historic site to proudly introduce us as the Capital District Civil War Round Table of Albany, N.Y. Thank you to everyone who has sold tee-shirts, or has bought tee-shirts, or has enticed people to take a picture with an old Civil War soldier.

But, it is getting harder and harder to fundraise. Not all of us can commit the time to go to places like Gettysburg, or to spend a full day at a Living History event. The media

seems less willing to publicize events, and the general public seems to care less about this definitive moment in American history now that the Sesquicentennial has passed. Our efforts in 2016 have raised only half as much money as was raised in 2015. So…

I want to announce a special fundraising campaign, which will take place at our December meeting and party! The Executive Board is asking you to bring not only goodies to snack upon, but also money to be pooled into a large, end-of-the-year donation. Any amount comfortable for your family is welcomed! Bring it to the December meeting, or send it in the mail. The total funds raised will be announced at our next meeting.

Please continue to help us "buy dirt" to preserve Civil War sites for future generations!

Sincerely,
Erin Baillargeon



TO DONATE TO THE ROUND TABLE'S PRESERVATION FUND!

WIDOW OF THE SOUTH

Caroline Elizabeth "Carrie" McGavock is the probably the most famous Southern woman you have never heard of.

Carnton was a working plantation of 1,400 acres of which 500 acres was used to raise wheat, corn, oats, hay and potatoes. After his father died in 1843, John McGavock took possession of the property and continued to farm it until his death. Under his direction, Carnton grew to become one of the premier farms in Williamson County, Tennessee.

Carrie Winder and John McGavock were married in December 1848. They had five children during the subsequent years, three of whom died at young ages. The surviving children, Winder (1857-1907) and Hattie (1855-1932), witnessed the carnage at their home.

In late July 1864 Gen. John Bell Hood assumed command of the 30,000-man Confederate Army of Tennessee while the Confederates were pinned inside Atlanta by Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman. Hood made a series of desperate attacks against Sherman but finally relinquished the city on September 1, 1864. No longer able to wage an offensive against the massive Federal force, Hood retreated into Alabama to regroup. In early November, Hood moved north into Tennessee, hoping to draw Sherman out of the Deep South by threatening his supply base at Nashville. Sherman did not take the bait. He sent General John Schofield's Army of the Ohio, 30,000 strong, to deal with Hood's threat while he took the rest of the force on his famous March to the Sea.

Hood knew that there were already 25,000 Union soldiers under Gen. George Thomas entrenched in Nashville, and he hoped to defeat Schofield before the two forces joined. On November 28 Hood surrounded half of Schofield's army in the town of Columbia, Tennessee, where they skirmished with Hood's cavalry. As Schofield continued to retreat, Hood missed a golden opportunity at Spring Hill to trap the other half of Schofield's army on the south side of the Duck River. In the dark of night the Yankees passed within earshot of the Confederates camped along the road. By morning, Schofield had successfully extricated his entire force from Spring Hill.

Arriving at Franklin at 6:00 a.m. on November 30, the lead Union troops began preparing arc-shaped fortifications along the southern edge of Franklin. The Union rear was protected by the Harpeth River,

so Schofield decided to make a stand. Hood's columns reached the Franklin area, around 1:00 p.m. Hood ordered his commanders to prepare for a frontal assault on the formidable Union defenses. However, Hood was at a disadvantage because one of his three divisions and much of his artillery had not yet arrived. His subordinates attempted to talk him into calling off the attack, but he would not relent.

At 4 p.m. on November 30, 1864, one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War began when Hood recklessly attacked the entrenched Federal army in a massive frontal assault larger than Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg. The Confederate lines moved in nearly perfect unison across two miles of open ground, and were immediately torn by scores of Union cannon; Hood had only one battery positioned to counter the enemy fire. Yet the line continued to sweep forward and quickly overwhelmed two brigades of Yankees in the outer trenches, half a mile in front of the main line. The Confederates then slammed into the Union center around the Carter house where there was fierce hand-to-hand combat. The Confederates retreated, reformed snd attacked again multiple times. At 7 pm Hood's third corps arrived and attacked, using torches to identify regimental lines. After 5 hours of fighting, Hood's men pulled back. There were 9000 casualties, 7000 of which were Confederates. Hood's command had 6 generals killed, 5 wounded, one captured, and 60 regimental commanders killed or wounded.

Carnton was less than a mile from the eastern Union flank. Since most of the battle took place after dark, the McGavocks witnessed the fire and explosion of guns and muskets that permeated the sky over Franklin. After the battle, many Franklin homes were converted into temporary hospitals, but Carnton was by far the largest field hospital, where hundreds of wounded and dying Confederate soldiers were treated. Soon big fires were built to give the suffering some warmth, and all the farm outbuildings were filled with wounded.

Many were taken into the two-story brick McGavock home, where surgeons worked at improvised tables to amputate. The floors of the home are still stained with the blood of the men who were treated here. About 150 wounded soldiers died in the house during the night. Hundreds of Confederate wounded and dying were tended by Carrie McGavock and her family. Some estimates say that as many as 300 Confederate soldiers were cared for inside Carnton alone. Scores, if not hundreds more, were spread out through the rest of the property.

On the morning of December 1, 1864 the residents of Franklin faced an unimaginable scene: over 2,500 dead soldiers, including 1,750 Confederates. Witnesses say Carrie McGavock's dress was soaked with blood at the hem that morning. The bodies of three Confederate generals killed during the fighting were laid out on Carnton's back porch: Patrick Cleburne, Hiram Granbury and Otho Strahl. All of the Confederate dead were buried as nearly as possible by state, and wooden headboards were placed at each grave with the name, company and regiment painted or written on them. Many of the soldiers had been buried on the battlefield in Franklin where they fell, mostly on property belonging to Fountain Branch Carter and James McNutt. Over the next eighteen months many of the wooden grave markers either rotted or were used for firewood, and the writing on the existing boards was disappearing. John and Carrie McGavock donated two acres of land adjacent to their family cemetery behind Carnton for the McGavock Confederate Cemetery, where the Confederate dead could be re-interred together.

The citizens of Franklin raised the money and a team of men took responsibility for the reburial operation in the spring of 1866. By June, the last of 1,481 Confederate soldiers from every state in the Confederacy, except Virginia, were now at peace. The names and identities of the soldiers were recorded in a book, which was turned over to the McGavocks. In 1896, a veterans' organization raised funds to replace the wooden headboards in the cemetery with granite markers. Carrie McGavock maintained the cemetery with African-American workers until her death in 1905. Throughout the remaining years of her life, she corresponded with the families of the dead soldiers and solidified her reputation as "The Widow of the South," The original cemetery book is on display upstairs in the Carnton mansion. It is the largest privately owned military cemetery in the nation.

Robert Hicks fell in love with McGavock's story while a volunteer board member for the historical site now at Carnton. So he put aside a career in country-music publishing to share McGavock's story in his best-selling novel, "The Widow of the South." Hicks centered his book on a fictional relationship between McGavock and a wounded Confederate sergeant named Zacariah Cashwell.