



# 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](http://timesunion.com/communities/cdcwrt)

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### THE INEVITABLE QUESTION: WHAT DID YOU DO THIS SUMMER?

Upper right: Our Sue Knost (a.k.a. Sally Buck Preston) with historian, Ed Bearss.

Upper left: CDCWRT's 'money machine' at the Cyclorama, manned by Sue Knost, Rose Mary Nichols and Matt George.

Lower right: David Getty in kilts talks to some of the crowd at the Cyclorama.

Lower left: Mike Spaulding next to the 76<sup>th</sup> NY Infantry monument at Gettysburg.

## September Meeting

Friday 09/19/03

Pruyn House

Route 155

Newtonville, NY

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

*when his wife lived and worked in northern Virginia for eleven years. Matt and Nancy began visiting battlefields, and Matt discovered the CDCWRT in the early 1990's. His presentation weds his interest in Civil War medicine with his interest in Civil War history.*

*The second part of his presentation will be delivered on Saturday afternoon when Matt will talk about the wounding and death of 'Stonewall' Jackson.*

*Activities start 9:00 am Saturday, and conclude at 8:30 pm. There are lectures at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm.*

*Sunday's activities begin at 10:00 am when the camp opens, and conclude at 4:00 pm.*

**DIRECTIONS:** *From Albany, exit 5 on the Northway; right at the light on route 155 west; take second left onto Old Niskayuna Road before passing under the Northway bridge; look for brown historical signs; Pruy House 0.6 miles on left.*

*From the North, exit 5 on the Northway; left at the light onto route 155 east; pass under the Northway bridge; take first right onto Old Niskayuna Road; look for brown historical signs; Pruy House 0.6 miles.*

### JOHN BROWN'S SONG

This was written by Edwin Cotter, who was caretaker of the John Brown Farm State Historical Site at Lake Placid, NY, for 30 years. It was sent to me by RT member, Robert Breuer, who felt it would be a good article for a future newsletter. He was right.

*We all know where John Brown's body is buried. And like millions of people the world over, we have sung the words to the famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic."*

### CDCWRT MEETING

*The September meeting of the CDCWRT will be held in the BURMASTER BARN AT THE PRUYN HOUSE on Friday 19, 2003 at 7:30pm. as party of a Civil War Weekend, September 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS THE THIRD WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER. The Friends of the Pruy House, 125<sup>th</sup> NY Regimental Association, and CDCWRT are jointly sponsoring this weekend event. There will be tours, military demonstrations, camp life activities, lectures, displays, gifts for purchase, period artifacts related to the Civil War, and much more. This will be a perfect time to introduce students to living history, just in time for back to school American history.*

*Our original planned speaker was going to speak about John Brown and the Adirondack connection, but unfortunately he had to cancel as of September 5<sup>th</sup>.*

*Instead, Round Table member and former president, Matthew Farina, will speak on The Wounding and Death of Joshua Chamberlain. Dr. Farina is a pediatric cardiologist whose boyhood interest in the Civil War was rekindled*

But few people realize that the world famous song owes its existence to the "John Brown Song." Fewer still, know that the John Brown, who lies buried on his North Elba farm, is not the same John Brown the song was written about.

Here are the facts:

Shortly after the Civil War started in 1861, a new company was formed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Boston Light Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, and was stationed in Boston harbor. In this company was a young Scotsman, who bore the suggestive name of John Brown.

It was inevitable that because of his name, he would become the butt of jokes by his comrades. The soldiers soon formed a singing group, which included the voice of John Brown. They sang various tunes including the chorus of "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah."

One of the group added a new line: "John Brown's Body Lies a Mouldering in the Grave." Soon, others added, "His Soul's Marching On." This of course was meant to tease their friend, John Brown.

Thus was born the first verse of the "John Brown Song." The balance of the song was hammered out in folksong fashioned over a period of several weeks. The tune was soon being sung by other units in the army, who knew nothing of the Scotsman, John Brown of Boston, but only of the John Brown who in 1859 captured the United States Arsenal at Harpers Ferry in an attempt to end slavery in America.

None of the soldiers who sang the song had known the abolitionist, but the author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," Julia Ward Howe, had been a personal friend.

Julia and her husband, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, met the abolitionist in their Boston home in 1857. Dr. Howe became a close friend of Brown's, a financial backer, and one of the inner circle who knew and approved of the campaign against slavery in the South.

In 1861, two years after John Brown had been hanged in Virginia, the Howes were visiting Washington, DC. During a review of the Union Army of the Potomac, they heard the soldiers singing "John Brown's Body." A friend suggested Julia write more appropriate words to the song.

The next morning, Mrs. Howe awoke before dawn, sat down, and wrote verse after verse of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." She called it "my poem," but it was soon put to music and quickly became an inspiration to the war-weary people of the North.

Over the years, the popularity of the song did not diminish. Many thought it should be the song for all occasions. Even President Theodore Roosevelt started a movement to have the "Star Spangled Banner," as our national anthem.

The abolitionist, John Brown, never heard the "John Brown Song," or the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." He was "mouldering in the grave" before the first words were written.

But what of the young Scotsman, John Brown, who started it all? He died early in the Civil War and did not live to see the song originally written about him, become an inspiration to so many others. He fought and died for a cause he believed in, and there is one thing we can be certain of: "He's gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord."

## JUNE & JULY MEETINGS

This Army marches on its stomach!! As usual the picnic was a culinary delight with the usual fare of Strucuzzi-cooked hot dogs and hamburgers, and a wide assortment of salads, special dishes, and sweet desserts. Rosemary Nichols got everyone singing Union Civil War songs, accompanied by Roxanne Wegman on her soulful fiddle. Roxanne then played several encores including A Shokan Farewell. The weather even cooperated, and that's a statement for this summer of rainy weekends.

## BOARD MEETING

A short Board Meeting was held on Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. This was a busy but successful summer for members of the RT who were engaged in cachet sales at various events. These included:

- June 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, Peterboro Civil War Days
- June 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, Cooperstown, Induction Day at the Baseball Hall of Fame, netted \$1088.
- June 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, Troy Civil War Days at the Masonic Temple
- June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>, 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, grossed \$12,700.
- August 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, re-enactment of the 140<sup>th</sup> Battle of Gettysburg, grossed \$9000.
- August 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>, Chamberlain Days in Maine, a collection of cachets, unsigned and signed by the late author, John Pullen, were donated to the Chamberlain House to be sold for fund-raising, estimated value \$1100.

Two weeks before the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, the organizing

committee for the re-enactment made the difficult decision to cancel the re-enactment and reschedule it for August. Somewhere between 30,000 and 35,000 re-enactors were expected to attend the event, but the very wet spring and early summer resulted in very poor conditions at the site of the event. This resulted in changes in plans for thousands of people. Many had committed to the original date with vacation days, motel reservations, and travel plans, and could not revise them. This included a large contingent of re-enactors from Australia and Great Britain who came anyway. RT volunteers changed their plans also, and staffed both events. About 14,000-16,000 re-enactors attended the August event.

The Board wants to recognize and thank the following members: Matt Farina, Matt George, David and Maxine Getty, Sue Knost, Rosemary Nichols, Cindy Schechter, Mike Spaulding, Joe Stracuzzi, Dave Wilcox.

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The Board is sad to announce that CDCWRT member, John Scaringe, died last week from complications after a fall from a ladder. John was a good friend of Ron Tunison and his family. A condolence card will be available at the September meeting for anyone who wishes to sign it as a member of the Round Table.

## UP-COMING EVENTS

The October Meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, at the Guilderland Library. Our speaker will be Dana Shoaf, the editor of *America's Civil War Magazine*, and a board member of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF).

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The November meeting of the CDCWRT will be the Sixth Annual Northeast Conference on the Civil War. It will be held on Saturday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. The general theme of the conference will be *The Six Fateful Months from Fredericksburg to the Beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign*. There will be more details in next month's newsletter, but guest speakers will include authors, Frank O'Reilly, Richard Carlton, and Troy Harmon. Our own member, Chris Kolakowski will also be on the program. Those members who have been on our trips will remember Frank from Fredericksburg, and Troy from Gettysburg.

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The December meeting of the CDCWRT will be held on Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at the Guilderland Library. This will include our holiday party and annual elections.

## MISCELLANEOUS

The July 2003 issue of *Gettysburg Magazine* is available at our next meeting for \$5.00. Articles include Jeb Stuart's advance to Gettysburg, Longstreet's July 2<sup>nd</sup> attack, and how four generals precipitated a battle. However, on page 125 is an article on several letters of Sgt. Isaac Barnes of the 125<sup>th</sup> NYVI, which vividly describes fighting at Plum Run and Pickett's Charge. The letters belong to a descendant who lives in Suwanee, Georgia. I believe this is the first time these letters have been published.

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At the Civil War Weekend at Pruyn House from Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, to Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, the CDCWRT will be selling T-shirts, commemorative postal cachets from the 140<sup>th</sup> Gettysburg

Anniversary, framed portraits of Civil War generals, and some Civil War books. This is a great time to do some gift shopping, and supporting your RT's preservation efforts.

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In a letter to the editor of the Civil War News, Dennis Frye reported on an interesting phenomenon. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, "*Gods and Generals*" was released as a DVD and a video. All 650,000 copies of the DVD sold out in **four days**, and hundreds of thousands of videos have been sold. It ranked as the Number One best seller on Amazon.com and BarnesandNobles.com, outselling "Lord of the Rings," "Gangs of New York," and other box office "hits."

*"The film's DVD and video success compels one to consider this question --- did intelligent people care about the reviews of mainstream film critics?"*

*The critics cheerfully displayed their ignorance of the Civil War's complexities and intricacies. They paid more attention to lack of patience in their hindquarters rather than stimulation within their headquarters. They also refused to embrace the concepts that a film can be both entertaining and educational.*

*The rapid rate of DVD and video sales of "Gods and Generals" proves that the box office is not the sole measure of a film's reception. In fact, some have opined that the box office and film critics reflect a certain segment --- the amusement park crowd."*

Warner Brothers is producing more DVD copies, and a full six-hour double DVD will be out later in the year.

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## CIVIL WAR NEWS

Speaking of "Gods and Generals," several of us had the opportunity to hear Jeff Shaara speak at the Greystone tent in Gettysburg on the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He was asked about the meaning of the title of his book. Jeff related that he did not think of the title until writing almost three-quarters of the way through the book. After the battle of Chancellorsville, he considered how the common soldier thought of their leaders. To the Confederates in the Army of Northern Virginia, their generals were like gods. To the Union soldier, their leaders were mere generals, in the lowest and worst sense of the word.

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Member, Liz Fiore, sent me an article from Doylestown, PA, regarding the Bucks County Civil War Roundtable. A charter member of this pecuniarily poor organization died last year, and left the group \$1.5 million on the condition it buy a home for its headquarters. The roundtable plans to spend \$485,000 for a converted house. The benefactor also left his collection of over 700 Civil War books to the group. I suppose the interest on the remaining \$1 million should cover taxes with a little left over to donate to preservation activities.

Has anyone seen if any of our charter members did **very well** at Saratoga last month? Does anyone hear the flutter of angel wings around charter members?

Seriously however, many charitable organizations now remind donors to consider their organization in wills and estate planning. Former member, Norm Sebastian, donated money to the Shiloh battlefield in his will, via the CDCWRT.

### What's Happening at Chancellorsville?

You may recall that on March 27<sup>th</sup>, the Dogwood project on the Mullins farm was denied a zoning variance, thus effectively killing the development of the self-contained Town of Chancellorsville. The coalition of preservation groups, spear-headed by the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust (CVBT) had organized public opinion against this unnecessary project. In an editorial, I warned about hollow victories, since Mullins indicated he would develop the land anyway, even if it meant building single-family homes on ten-acre plots. He seemed almost determined to prevent the preservationists from acquiring the land.

Mr. Mullins purchased the almost 800 acres in 1995 for \$2.8 million. At about the time of the failed variance, the land's assessed value was \$5.6 million. Mullins indicated he would sell the land to the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) for \$40 million. That would have been an obscene profit.

In the months since the Dogwood decision, Mullins has moved forward with seeking a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to pursue his original plan. The permit would allow for six culvert road crossings over streams on the site. Mullins has indicated he is willing to proceed with the more costly option of building bridges over the streams, since bridges would not require the Corps permission. In an effort to re-establish meaningful discussions, new CVBT president, Michael Stevens, has extended an olive branch to Mullins. This isn't over yet, and the land is not preserved yet. If you have comments on this issue, send them to me.

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Are you interested in finding grave sites of Civil War figure, such as generals and admirals, other officers and soldiers of note, heroes and scoundrels, Medal of Honor recipients, or politicians and Cabinet officials. Then *Grave Matters* may be for you. This is a new quarterly publication dedicated to providing readers with a forum for the exchange of information about Civil War gravesites. It will include interesting information about grave sites, along with photos and directions or maps for finding the grave sites. The web site is [www.gravematters.net](http://www.gravematters.net). Subscriptions forms will be available at the meeting.

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The cover of this newsletter features some of our members at the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. I want to single out two for special kudos. Board member, **Mike Spaulding**, has been a wiz on his computer and has designed and printed a number of special cachets for the RT to sell. Having a quality item is key to sales. Special thanks and recognition goes to Program Chair, **Sue Knost**. Sue spent untold hours organizing events this summer. She designed envelopes and cancellation stamps, organized hotel reservation, cancelled envelopes, sold cachets, and lined up guest speakers for future meetings. It has been primarily through Sue's organizational efforts that our Round Table's fund raising has been so successful.

## TRIVIA QUESTION

Who said this, and when was it said:

*"Not all the glory in the world, General Lee, could atone for the widows and orphans this day has made."*

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## EDITORIAL

The following is excerpted from an editorial in *The Chronicle of High Education* by Shannon French, Ph.D. Dr. French teaches philosophy to future Navy and Marine Corps officers in a course, "The Code of the Warrior."

The purpose of a warrior's code is to restrain warriors, for their own good as much as for the good of others. The code must set definite limits on what warriors can and cannot do if they want to continue to be regarded as warriors, not murderers or cowards. For the warrior with such a code, certain actions remain unthinkable, even in the most dire or extreme circumstances.

Although warrior traditions may seem outmoded, the genuine emotional connect of today's warrior to an intentionally idealized warrior tradition is more important than ever. The privileged warriors of today increasingly will find themselves pitted against adversaries who fight without any rules or restraints because they see no other way to advance their objectives. These desperate adversaries are likely to employ methods that are rightfully viewed as horrific and appalling. No matter how they may justify their actions, if they refuse to accept any rules of war, they forfeit the right to be regarded as warriors.

While codes differ, all tend to share one point: the insistence, that warriors accept a set of rules governing when and how they kill. There can be no honor in any conflict for those who believe that they have no moral obligation to restrain their behavior. If the warrior crosses that thin line, the psychological harm may be severe.

The warrior's code is the shield that guards his humanity. Without it, the warrior will not find a way back from war.

*Please remember in our prayers and thoughts our warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan on the anniversary of 9/11.*