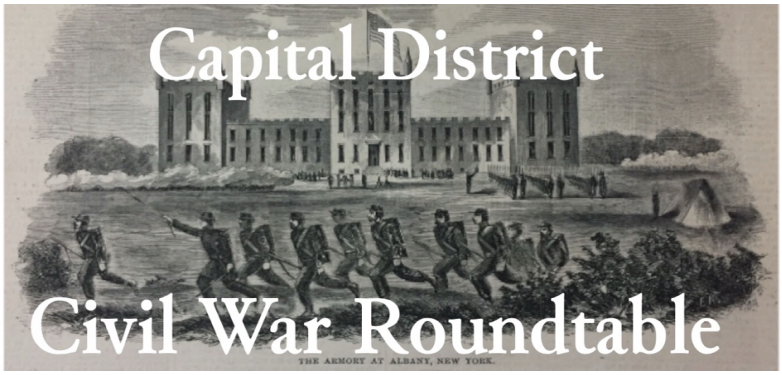
The Dispatch

Volume 43, Number 09 September 2026







P.O. Box 11493 Loudonville, New York 12211. www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.com

"The 11th New York Light Artillery in New York"

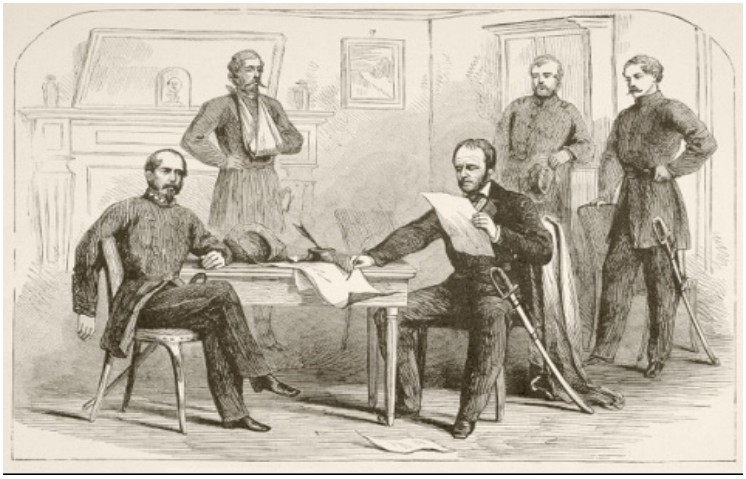


presentation by Dennis Doyle

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026 at 11:00am

Watervliet Senior Center 1501 Broadway Watervliet, N.Y. 12189

Civil War historian Dennis Doyle will be our speaker on September 12. He will discuss the history of the 11th New York Light Artillery (NYLA) Regiment. This history holds deep personal meaning for Dennis because his 2nd-great-grandfather served in the 11th NYLA for three years. Mr. Doyle, Professor of American History and Sociology at Joliet Junior College, Illinois, from 1999 to 2025, served as president of the Chicago Civil War Roundtable in 2024-2025. Doors open at 10:30 for social time; a brief business meeting begins at 11, followed by our guest speaker's talk. Don't forget to bring cash and check out our books, clothing, and memorabilia sale tables before and after the meeting.



CHANGE OF MEETING DATE & TIME SURVEY

The switch to holding membership meetings on Saturday mornings at 11 am has proven problematic. Over the past year, we had to cancel one meeting because the city was hosting a civil service test at the Senior Center. On another occasion, we moved the meeting from Saturday to Sunday because the floors were being waxed. And finally, we had to delay the start of a meeting because of a comic book festival.

To say the least, it is unfair to the guest speakers and members if there is no trusted, reliable day of the week and start time for the meetings. Therefore, the board is asking its members to respond to a survey via email. Please choose one of the following options:

1) Remain at Watervliet Senior Center but move the meetings back to Friday nights at 7 PM. The change will guarantee the Roundtable has an uninterrupted meeting venue and time. The drawback is driving at night during the long, dark winter.

2) Remain at Senior Center and move meetings to the first Saturday of the month, with a start time at 1 pm – right after the Sons of Union Veterans hold their monthly meeting. Their meetings rarely get interrupted by city events. Members of each group would be encouraged to attend the other meeting. Drawback: if the Sons meeting runs longer, then RT start time is delayed, too.

3) Do nothing and keep meeting at the WV Senior Center on Saturdays at 11 am.

Please respond to this survey at cdcwrt@hotmail.com by Sept 21st

RECENT DONATIONS MADE BY THE CDCWRT

Over the past few months, the RT has supported New York State Civil War organizations. We donated $550 to Grant Cottage: $50.00 for their Community Days event in June and, a few weeks ago, $500.00 toward the purchase of the historic US flag that draped General Grant's casket at Grant Cottage in 1885. Finally, we donated $100.00 to the preservation of the unique Cattaraugus County Civil War Memorial in Little Valley, New York.



Official Map of Territory of Arizona, 1963

FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, THE SMALL CONFLICTS MATTERED

by Rosemary Nichols

Do you have a special Civil War engagement? Not the Gettysburgs, Antietams, Chattanoogas, Vicksburgs or even Cold Harbors. Much smaller fights. Perhaps your special place is not even a battle or a skirmish. It might be a place where your ancestor over-wintered during the first year of his service. The place a unit from your hometown was sworn into federal service. A skirmish line where soldiers you study stood strong against another larger entity or fled in disgrace.



Prescott, Arizona

I fell in love with the Civil War the summer between my junior and senior years in high school. Unfortunately for accuracy in my studies, the only books to which I had access from my modest sized library in Prescott, Arizona were written by 'the two Franks', Frank Yerby and Frank Slaughter. Neither was a Civil War historian. They did, however, tell amazing stories.

There was no one around to steer me in a less controversial, more historically accurate direction. So I read the notorious 'bodice rippers' happily that summer. That was one way to learn about the Civil War. It was more fiction than fact. It wasn't until my freshman American history class at the University of Washington that I began to learn more about the actual Civil War.



View from the base of Picacho Peak

In Arizona there is almost no Civil War history. The only places soldiers died or were injured were Picacho Pass, Stanwix Station, Dragoon Springs and Apache Pass. You could count the soldier injuries and/or deaths in those tiny engagements on a single hand.



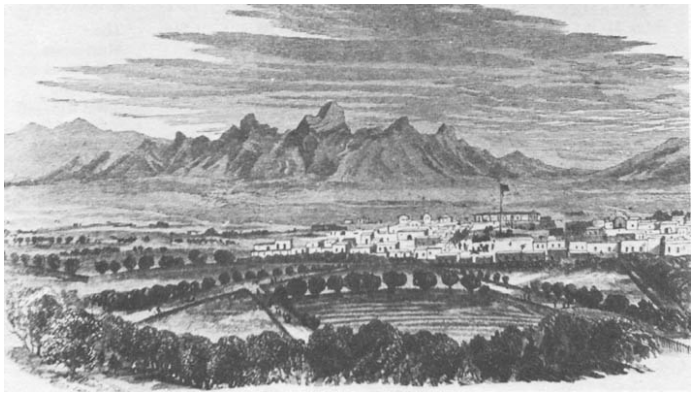
Stanwix Station, the westernmost battle of the Civil War

The four incidents (it's hard to think of them as battles) occurred between March 29 and July 15, 1862. First was Stanwix Station, Picacho Pass on April 15, then Dragoon Springs on May 5 and finally Apache Pass. No surprise, all these encounters occurred adjacent to the Butterfield Overland Mail Stagecoach line. The Butterfield route was built in the latter 1850s approximately 80 miles east of Yuma on the Colorado River. It was the major immigrant road between the Mississippi River and southern California.

Each of the identified encounters had the same basic outline. It was a contest between the Union's California Column and a Confederate unit or Native American combatants. The westernmost skirmish of the Civil War occurred at Stanwix Station. Captain William P. Calloway and a vanguard of 272 troops of the California Column encountered a small detachment of Confederate Arizona Volunteers led by 2nd Lt. John W. Swilling burning hay stored at the station to support the California Column's animals as the unit made its way east. The brief skirmish resulted in the wounding of William Frank Semmelrogge a German-born Union private who later recovered.

The significance of the hay burning at Stanwix and five other former stagecoach stations along the Gila River east of Fort Yuma was the delay of the California Column's advance to Tucson and Mesilla, which had been chosen as the territorial capital of Confederate Arizona. The incident also allowed Swilling to reach Tucson and warn Capt. Sherod Hunter, district military commander of western Confederate Arizona, that

the California Column was approaching.

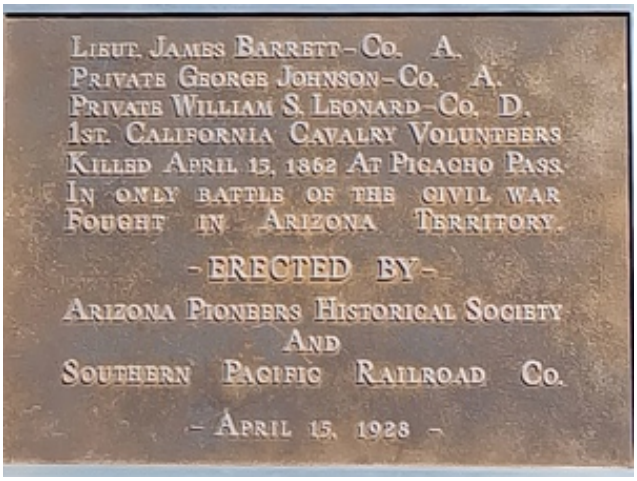


Engraving of Tucson, Az 1862

This led to the second incident at Picacho Peak. A Confederate force of 120 cavalrymen entered Tucson from Texas on February 28, 1862. The Confederates confiscated property of Tucson Unionists, who were jailed or driven out of the community.

The Confederates hoped a flood of sympathizers in southern California would join them, giving the Confederacy a Pacific Ocean outlet. This never happened. Slavery was not a popular subject in southern Arizona and California. Tales of the horror of slavery for Native Americans under Spanish hands had circulated widely throughout the West.

Twelve Union cavalry troopers and one local scout commanded by Lt. James Barrett of the 1st California Cavalry were scouting in the Picacho Peak area looking for Confederates who were reported to be nearby. The Arizona Confederates were commanded by Sergeant Henry Holmes.



Battle of Picacho Memorial Marker

Barrett had been ordered not to engage the Confederates, but to wait for the main column to come up. 'Lt. Barrett acting alone rather than in concert, surprised the Rebels and should have captured them without firing a shot, if the thing had been conducted properly,' by dismounting his tiny force according to reporting in the *Napa County Reporter* of June 14. Barrett was killed in the 'heat of battle'.

Two Union enlisted men were killed at Picacho Peak, George Johnson and William S. Leonard. After the war these two men were removed for permanent burial in the National Cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco. The location of Barrett's grave was lost to history, and he remains in the ground where he fell.

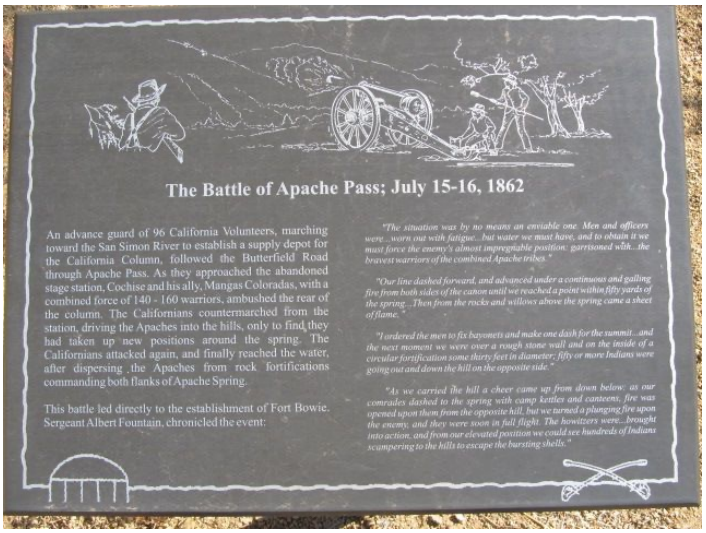


Confederate Graves at Dragoon Springs

The Battle of Dragoon Springs involved an encounter between a small group of mounted Confederates escorting Union prisoners to Texas and about 100 Chiricahua Apache warriors, commanded by war chiefs Cochise and Francisco, who ambushed the party. Three Confederate soldiers and a young Mexican stock herder named Ricardo were killed. The Apache captured a large number of livestock and horses. A few days later, on May 9, Capt. Hunter ordered his men to take back the captured herd of cattle and horses and avenge the deaths of their fellow soldiers. The Confederates succeeded, killing five Apache with no loss of their own troops.

The Battle of Apache Pass was fought between Apache warriors and the Union volunteers of the California Column. It was one of the largest battles between Americans and the Chiricahua during the Apache Wars.

After the Battle of Picacho Pass the Union force advanced on Tucson in three columns. They arrived on May 20, forcing the heavily outnumbered Confederate garrison to withdraw to Texas without a fight.



Tablet Describing the Battle of Apache Pass

Carlton, commander of the California Column, then prepared to march east with his main body in July. He intended to move into New Mexico through Apache Pass. He sent a column ahead as he had on his earlier march from Yuma to Tucson. The column was led by Capt. Thomas L. Roberts, Company E, 1st California Infantry, accompanied by two 12-pound mountain howitzers under command of Sgt. James D. Monihon, a 22-man cavalry escort from Company B, 2nd Regiment California Volunteer Cavalry, led by Capt. John C. Cremony and 21 wagons plus 242 mules and horses.

Roberts determined the water at Dragoon Springs was enough to

support the entire force. When Cremony joined with him the next day, Roberts advanced on the springs at Apache Pass, leaving Cremony with a guard detachment.

At noon on July 15, Roberts' detachment entered Apache Pass. After traveling two thirds of the way through the pass, his force was attacked by about 500 Apache warriors led by Mangas Coloradas and Cochise.

Low on water and realizing a retreat to Tucson without water could cost him many men, Roberts chose to fight. The Apache had thrown up defenses of several breastworks made of stone. They also surprised the invaders with an ambush, waiting until the soldiers came within 30-80 yards of their position before opening fire. At first the Union soldiers could barely see their attackers. Roberts ordered a retreat. His troops withdrew to the mouth of Apache Pass. The men regrouped and unlimbered the mountain howitzers for an advance against the Apache.

Roberts advanced with his howitzers and had them open fire. Once the guns were in effective range, the artillery opened fire in earnest. The Apache held their positions until nightfall, when they fled letting the Union troops reach the spring. Roberts allowed his tired men time to enjoy a meal. He then retreated to bring up Cremony's detachment. The next morning, though the Apache returned, they fled once the artillery opened fire on them. Two of Capt. Roberts' men were killed and three wounded in the battle for the spring.



Reenactors of Battle of Picacho Pass, 2012

Arizona has not forgotten its Civil War heritage. Every March, Picacho Peak State Park hosts a re-enactment of the Civil War battles of Arizona and New Mexico, including the battle of Picacho Peak. The re-enactments have now grown so large many more participants are involved than took part in the actual engagements and include infantry units and artillery as well as cavalry. The skirmish site and the remains of the Butterfield station are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

P.S. If you have a special site, draft a couple of paragraphs and submit it to cdcwrt@hotmail.com so we can all hear and read what is special to you.

CDCWRT
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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**

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