

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
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GENERAL GRANT DEAD AT MT. MCGREGOR



(Saratoga Springs-AP-July 1885)

General Grant is dead. Word was received from Mt. McGregor that the ex-President died this morning, July 23, 1885, after a long struggle with throat cancer. He was surrounded by his wife, Julia, and most of the couple's family according to sources. The General arrived at the hotel in mid-June, but he, his wife and his doctor have been staying in a cottage a short walk from the hotel.

Grant has been reportedly working on his personal memoirs for publication. It had been hoped that royalties from the memoirs would provide some economic relief for the family. Congress had restored his rank of general to provide him with a salary of $13,000 per annum, and this had helped the family with their debts. With the General's death, the widow's pension will be meager. Family friend, Samuel Clemens, has been helping to have the memoirs published.

OCTOBER MEETING
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2016

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

Sam and Sam: Twain and Grant at Mt. McGregor

Vernon Benjamin

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 October meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, October 14, 2016. The Round Table's special guest speaker will be Vernon Benjamin, and the title of his presentation is **"Sam and Sam: Twain and Grant at Mt. McGregor."**

"Sam and Sam" is Vernon Benjamin's tribute to both Ulysses S. Grant and Mark Twain in an accounting of Grant's final months at Mt. McGregor in Saratoga County, where he went to finish his Memoirs while suffering from terminal throat cancer. Twain joined him and published the Autobiography, along with the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, both of which became immediate bestsellers. As promised, Twain dedicated all of the proceeds of Grant's account, $450,000, to the President's family, thereby ensuring their economic future when he was gone.

Vernon Benjamin is an adjunct lecturer at Marist College since 2003 and has also taught at Bard College. He holds a master's degree in literature from Long Island University and a bachelor's in sociology from Siena College. He has an extensive career in journalism and public service (having served as an Ulster County legislator and Saugerties town supervisor), has written extensively on the Hudson Valley for various publications, and has appeared on C-SPAN. He lives in Saugerties, New York.

His first book was **A History of the Hudson Valley: From Wilderness to the Civil War, published in 2014.** ***The sequel,*** **A History of the Hudson Valley: From the Civil War to Modern Times (2016)"** ***is published by Overlook Press of New York City.***



UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS

On Friday, October 14, 2016, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Vernon Benjamin, who will talk about the Hudson Valley during the Civil War.

On Friday, November 11, 2016, Veterans' Day, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Neil Yetwin, who will talk about Reverend Day.

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.

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Matt George, Program Chair, has asked to write a monthly column for the newsletter. The September newsletter was complete early in August, so Matt's September column is being included in this month's newsletter along with the October column.

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 – SEPTEMBER

Greetings fellow Round Table members and others interested in history. The purpose of this new and hopefully continuing column is fourfold: 1) to encourage more members to attend and support Round Table activities and events especially our fund raising endeavors. The dual Mission of the Round Table since its inception in 1984 has been education and battlefield/historic preservation. Neither one can succeed without both active member involvement and financial support. This must come from all members to some degree no matter how modest and not just the officers;
2) to make members and friends aware of the vast number of events, talks, and activities of the many varied history groups in the area particularity those dedicated to the antebellum, Civil War and Reconstruction periods of our American story. Publicity is becoming an increasing problem for most groups whether they are historical societies, Round Tables, museums, historic sites, etc. The only way we all succeed is if we pool our resources and publicize not only our own events in our newsletters and communications but also as many of the events and activities of other organizations as possible. This includes sharing speaker lists, meeting dates and notification of upcoming events. General media sources such as newspapers are becoming less reliable. All people with an interest in history need to be informed and using each other as a vehicle is perhaps the most sensible way;
3) to relate to our membership and others interesting facts, stories, and details of the individuals who lived here in our area who experienced the events that transpired on the national stage whether in uniform or on the home front. The story of one local soldier, nurse, wife or family is emblematic of all who lived through that critical period of our history;
4) to give this writer's opinion on the many issues that relate not only to historical interpretation but also to the future directions our own organizations will take and the goals that we will set. It should be stated that this writer's opinions do not necessarily represent the official position of the Capital District Civil War Round Table but, they should serve as a springboard for future thought and discussion. However, I have always felt that any organization fulfils its own destiny when it sees its future in terms of finding reasons why things cannot be done or will not work instead of looking at what might be accomplished and saying why not.

On June 24, 1864 the third Sergeant in the 76th New York was killed in action near Petersburg, Virginia. The 76th New York is very same Regiment featured on our Civil War baseball tee-shirts we have successfully sold for at least 15 years. William Liddle enlisted in Middleburgh, New York in the only Company to come from the western part of Schoharie

County. The rest were from Otsego County from such places as Cherry Valley and Cooperstown. Liddle survived the "railroad cut" fight at Gettysburg, the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor. Somewhere around this time he re-enlisted and continued to serve. Around June 18 he survived a Confederate attack attempting to break the siege. The week that followed was apparently quiet except for constant sniper fire.

However, on June 24 Sergeant Liddle was killed perhaps on picket duty. It is a sad but common story of just one man who died for the Union when he could have been home. But, his sacrifice is still important particularly to a 12 year boy today. Caleb O'Hanlon is our newest Round Table member. He will be starting 7th grade at Duanesburg this September. William Liddle was his great, great, great grandfather.

Professor Eelman of Siena College has asked me to inform our members that author Dr. Daniel W. Crofts will be discussing his new book, Lincoln & the Politics of Slavery: the Other 13th Amendment and the Struggle to save the Union on October 5, at 7 PM in the Sarazen Student Union on campus.

On Thursday the Capital District Council for the Social Studies will be taking a tour of the Stephen and Harriet Myers residence in Albany. It was a major stop on the Underground Railroad. It is now listed on the National Register of historic places. The cost is $10.00 for members and $27.00 for non-members.

Grant Cottage State Historic Site will be holding a number of programs: Sept.4 – General Grant Remembers President Lincoln, Sept. 10 – Citizen of a wider Commonwealth: Grant's Post Presidential Diplomacy, Oct. 7- Grant's Grand Ball, and Oct. 8 Meet the Union Generals Night.

Finally, since June 12th The Round Table has raised over $1800.00 at 8 different events including Peterboro, the 157th N.Y. Living History day (near lake Oneida), the Gettysburg re-enactment, the General Thomas Commemoration Cancellation, the Elwood Museum in Amsterdam Ice Cream Social, the Windom Civil War Music Festival, Cooperstown (Mike Spaulding), and Schuyler Flatts Living History Timeline week end. Upcoming fund raising events include: the Joe Merli Memorial Canal/Railroad Fall festival on Route 20 in Duanesburg (Sept. 24-25), and the Old Stone Fort Living History weekend in Schoharie (Oct. 1-2). WHICH ONES WILL YOU ATTEND?

BUFORD'S VIEW – OCTOBER

Yet another ongoing controversy has surfaced in one of the leading Civil War newspapers in the country. As has often been the case, this is in regards to book reviews. The publication utilizes a number of respected historians and Civil War experts to review recently released Civil War books. In a recent edition the editors implied that they have terminated the services of a nationally known historian for the crime of unfavorably reviewing a recently released book on the Civil War. This was a result of the book's author complaining about the review.

Since then I have been in contact with another nationally known historian and mentioned this incident. He informed me that he too has resigned and was not forced out or asked to leave. This was because the new publisher informed him in writing that he had lost $1,500.00 in ad revenues because of a negative review. And, this cannot be allowed to happen again. As result, he said I immediately resigned. He continued, I felt "this policy violated my own sense of journalistic and book review ethics. I believe my professional integrity would be impaired by participating in a process that eliminates the independence of book reviewers and deprives readers of open, honest, reliable, untainted opinions about the worthiness of a book." He, the previously mentioned historian, and others have resigned over this issue.

Next year's Underground Railroad History Project's Conference will be Friday and Saturday March 24 & 25. Fortunately by being the third weekend in March this will not interfere with our regular meeting in March. Although I mentioned it in last month's column, Professor Eelman of Siena College has asked me to inform our members that author Dr. Daniel W Crofts will be discussing his new book, Lincoln & the Politics of Slavery: the Other 13th Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union, on October 5, at 7 PM in the Sarazen Student Union on campus.

On October, 7 Grant Cottage will be holding its Grant's Grand Ball and October 8 a Meet the Generals Night. The New York City Round Table's October 5 speaker will be Martha Hodes the author of Mourning Lincoln. The National Abolition Hall of Fame Induction this year will be Saturday, October 22. This year's inductees include James Pennington, Beriah Green and Angelina Grimke, and John Gree.

The Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway annual fundraising gala and auction will be Thursday, October 20, 5:30 – 8:30. Members of the Round Table have traditionally assisted them in this endeavor. There is a correction in the title of our October speaker presentation. It is now "Sam & Sam: Twain and Grant at McGregor" Again any local or area historical group, Round Table, etc. that has a speaker or event related to the ante bellum, Civil War or Reconstruction period of our history please contact me and I will try to get it in my column.

Former members/ where are they now Department: I met Bill Howe yesterday and he is still reenacting in the 125th New York. His wife Julia is however is no longer involved in living history. Bill and Julia were members years ago and some of you might remember that they spent their honeymoon in the Cashtown Inn outside Gettysburg. You might also recall his "ghost story" from that historic location. Bill still insists on the validity of his spooky account. I was glad to hear from our last speaker Bruce Venter that that former student member Mark Morrison is still pursuing a career in history. Mark was from Albany, a graduate of C.B.A. He was a good friend of the late sculptor (and former Round Table member) Ron Tunison. The two of them re-enacted together at many events. Mark then went on to college at the Citadel. He excelled at school and while there wrote some well received Civil War papers as well as continuing his re-enacting. He portrayed a historic Citadel cadet in a funeral procession honoring the lost members of one of the Hundley crews. Their uniforms had not changed much in over 100 years. Mark got married went into the military and last I had heard was living with his wife in Georgia. Well, according to Bruce Venter, Mark now lives near Philadelphia and is working on his PHD at Temple University. That was definitely nice to hear.

GRANT'S FINANCIAL PLIGHT

In order to understand why U.S. Grant decided to write his memoirs, you must first have some background of Grant's financial situation. After his presidency, Grant and his wife embarked upon a long world-wide tour where he was very popular and where he was wined and dined. The scandals associated with his ad-ministration were like a bad dream.

Ferdinand Ward from upstate NY was one of Wall Street's rising tycoons who epitomized a go-for-broke attitude during what was already known as the "Gilded Age." He married the daughter of the head of New York's prestigious Marine Bank. His father-in-law introduced him to the bank's president, James Fish, who was a highly respected New York financier. Ward and Fish became good friends and by 1881 he was the "young Napoleon of finance."

Ulysses S. Grant, Jr. (Buck) was the brightest and most educated of the Grant children, and he married Fannie Chaffee, daughter of a wealthy Colorado senator. Buck and U.S. Grant were entranced by Ward. Ward symbolized America itself: self-made, out-going, confident, relentlessly expansive, and

experienced in the ways of Wall Street. Buck and Ward became good friends and formed Grant and Ward Investment Co. underwritten by the former president ($100,000), Buck ($100,000 borrowed from his father-in-law, Chaffee), Senator Chaffee himself ($400,000), along with James Fish (Marine Bank) and Ward. Within 3 years the president's investment was worth $750,000, and after his presidency he had an office in the firm. His presence was primarily to reassured investors.

The Grants lived modest lives. He gave his wife $1000 a month to spend as she saw fit. They had a lavish home. He bought the best horses. But by early 1884 there were rumors that Ward's money was made too easily. The firm's profits were not worth the pile of gilded paper they were printed on. On May 4th, Ward met Grant and said that the firm was solvent and healthy, but the Marine Bank was not. There had been a large withdrawal from the bank by the City of New York. The firm's cash reserves were in the bank, and the withdrawal imperiled their investments. An immediate cash infusion of $150,000 was needed for only one day.

Grant borrowed the money from William Vanderbilt (president of Penn RR) as a personal loan. Grant gave the money to Ward who later that next day told him the bank needed $600,000 to cover its creditors' demands. Buck Grant visited Jay Gould, who looked over the firms holdings, and pronounced them worthless. Buck and his lawyer visited Ward's home. Ward tried to reassure them that the firm was solvent. Buck said it would be helpful if the firm would write a check for $400,000 to cover the investment his father-in-law, Senator Chaffee, had made.

The bank refused to honor the check the next day, and closed its doors. Other banks refused to honor the investment firm's checks. Ward fled. Grant was stunned to hear of the firm's collapse. "I have made it a rule of life to trust a man long after other people gave up on him. I don't see how I can trust any human being again," Grant said.

The headlines in the New York Sun read: **"Is Grant Guilty?"** Grant vowed he would repay every penny of the debt he owed. He immediately sold all the property he owned. He collected all his wartime mementos including his sword, maps, medal, boots and uniforms and put them in a pile. Julia added to it all the gifts they had received during their world tour. All of this was sent to Vanderbilt the next day with a value calculated at $150,000 plus interest for one day of $417.22. Vanderbilt directed the Grant mementos and articles be presented to the U.S. Government in honor of Grant.

The collapse of Ward and Grant's investment firm and Fish's Marine National Bank of New York was the immediate cause of the Panic of 1884. Grant became depressed. On June 2, 1884 the Grants were vacationing at Long Branch on the Jersey Shore, where they had gone regularly since 1869. Many of the wealthy went there as did Presidents Hayes and Garfield, and subsequent Presidents Harrison and McKinley. Garfield died there of his wounds in 1881.

Grant bit into a peach and had a sudden, severe, sharp pain in his throat that subsided after a second bite. The pain returned with increased frequency with eating and in mid-July, Julia asked that their vacationing neighbor, Dr. Jacob Da Costa, examine the President. Da Costa was Chair of Medicine at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, and was probably the best known expert on physical diagnosis in the United. States. He immediately recognized the problem, but Grant was not his patient but just a sought after opinion.

Da Costa recommended he see a throat specialist in NYC immediately, but because his

family doctor, Fordyce Barker, was on vacation in Europe, Grant delayed and the pain subsided. Later pain reoccurred again. In October Grant finally saw Dr. Barker who referred the general to Dr. John Hancock Douglas, the foremost specialist on the East Coast. Douglas had discovered a remedy for scurvy during the war (sauerkraut and pickles). His exam of Grant revealed a small inflamed growth at the base on the tongue. He truthfully answered Grant's question. "Is it cancer?"

The carcinoma Douglas knew would spread into the neck making it impossible for Grant to eat and then breathe. It could not be treated, and Grant would die in excruciating pain. Comfort care was all that was possible. Topical cocaine was applied with immediate relief. The President was to return twice a week for topical lodoform, a derivative of chloroform, as a disinfectant to treat the infection in the inflamed tonsil.

The stage was now set for Grant's writing career.

SOME FUNERAL NOTES ON GRANT

Gen. Grant died at 8:08 am on July 23, 1885. Within a half hour of Grant's death, the Mt. McGregor train went to Saratoga to bring Holmes, the local undertaker, to the mountain. Holmes brought with him an ice coffin to be used before the embalming. Col. Grant also summoned Stephen J. Merritt, an undertaker in NYC. Merritt and his son arrived later the same day and brought their embalming equipment. The embalming took two evenings to complete. Karl Gerhardt, a sculptor Grant had met earlier in the year, made a death mask.

GAR veterans from Wheeler Post 92 in Saratoga arrived the evening of Grant's death, pitched a tent near the cottage, and stood guard. The U.S. Grant Post of the GAR Brooklyn Unit arrived the evening of the 24th, and also set up a tent. The unit guarded the porch and reception room while the Wheeler Post guarded the grounds.

The Grants had a difficult time deciding where to inter the body. West Point was out because wives could not be buried there, and Julia wanted to be buried with her husband when the time came. The family requested Central Park in NYC. Chief Clerk, W.L. Turner, by direction of Mayor W.R. Grace, met with the Grants at Mt. McGregor on July 25th suggesting Riverside Park. Jesse and Col. Grant went to the city and found this a favorable location. Upon their advice, Julia agreed on July 26th.

Representatives of President Cleveland, the Governor of NY and Mayor Grace conferred with Col. Grant at the cottage. They decided funeral services would be held August 4th at Mt. McGregor, then travel to Albany to lie in state in the Capitol overnight, and then onto NYC where the body would lie in state three night and two days. Public services would be August 8th at Riverside Park.

Gen. Grant was buried in a black broadcloth suit, white linen shirt with a standing collar, coat with a Prince Albert cut, a black silk scarf tied in a plain bow at the throat. He wore patent leather slippers over white stockings. Col. Grant placed a gold ring on his father's finger and a packet of mementos in the breast pocket of the coat.

Grant was not buried in a military uniform, nor with any sword, because these items had been given to W. H. Vanderbilt to pay off Grant's loan.

President Cleveland chose the pallbearers, keeping in mind the wishes of Julia Grant – for every Union General there was to be a Confederate General. His pallbearers were Gen. Sherman, Gen. Sheridan, Gen. Joseph Johnston, Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, Adm. David Dixon Porter, and Senator John A. Logan, head of the GAR.