



*The Dispatch*  
*Newspaper of the*

**CAPITAL DISTRICT  
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

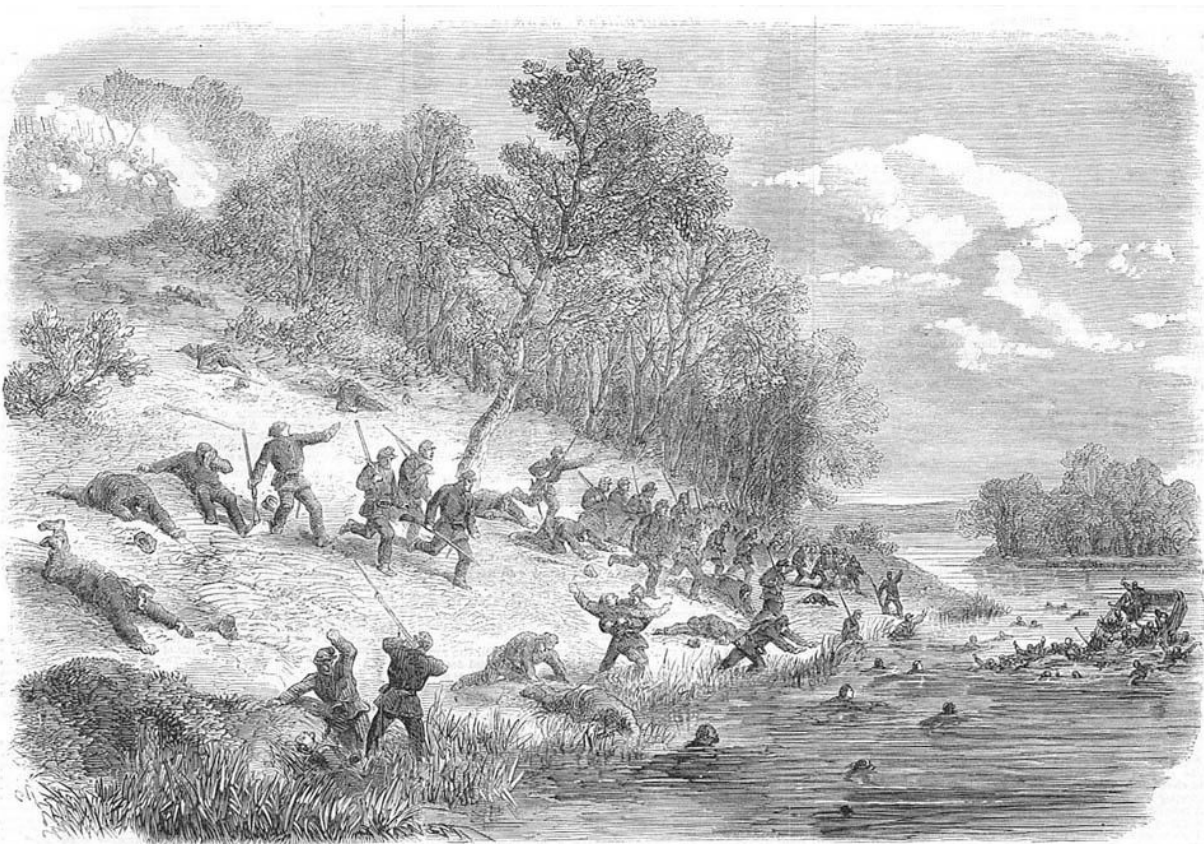
PO Box 11493 Loudonville, NY 12211  
[www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org](http://www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org)



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## Why the Battle at Ball's Bluff Still Matters



THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA: RETREAT OF THE FEDERALISTS AFTER THE FIGHT AT BALL'S BLUFF, UPPER POTOMAC, VIRGINIA.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.

## DECEMBER MEETING

Friday, December 13, 2019

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

**Bill Howard**

*“All the Drowned Soldiers:  
the Battle of Ball’s Bluff”*

Social Hour	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Business Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Presentation	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Questions & Answers	8:00 – 8:30 p.m.

*The regular meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, December 13, 2019.*

*Our guest speaker is Bill Howard who will speak on the battle of Ball’s Bluff.*

*Mr. Howard is a graduate of Manhattanville College with a degree in American Studies and was a Herbert H. Lehman Fellow at the University at Albany Graduate School of Public Affairs. He was a key advisor to two New York governors, was named a Henry Toll Fellow by the Council of State Governments, and completed the Program for Senior Executives in State & Local Government at Harvard’s JFK School of Government. Mr. Howard was awarded the NYS Defense of Liberty Medal for his service during the September 11th attacks. He also spearheaded efforts to establish a New York State Military Museum in*

*Saratoga Springs, New York and served as a board member of the NYS Archives Partnership Trust.*

*Howard edited and provided introductions for reissues of several Civil War history classics, “The Peninsula” by Major General Alexander Webb and “The Battle of Gettysburg” by Samuel Adams Drake. He published a full length history of the Civil War battle of Ball’s Bluff in 1994. In 2007, Howard published an edited volume, “The Civil War Memoir of William T. Levey.”*

*Beginning in 2011, Howard authored a series of articles about the Civil War that appeared in the Albany Times Union newspaper. The articles followed the chronology of the war and commemorated the conflict’s 150th anniversary*

## IT’S A PARTY!

We are continuing our tradition of asking members to bring holiday snacks to the December meeting. And, as a treat, we will have a special auction of an autographed copy of James MacPherson’s “Battle Cry of Freedom” in addition to our regular auction of Civil War books.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

January 10: Potpourri Night. Matt George has arranged for Mary Scicchitano to speak on local soldiers G.W. Guernsey and Lewis Shipley. Philip DiNovo will speak on Italian Americans in the Civil War.

February 14: to be announced

## **DUES, DUES, DUES**

The Round Table membership year starts January 1. The basic dues level is \$35, and members also have the option to make donations to the Operating and Preservation Accounts. Payments at the meeting will be accepted by check or cash (correct change, please) and held for deposit in January. The membership form is included in this newsletter, and copies will be available at the meeting. Payments can always be mailed to the Round Table's P.O. Box.

## **A LITTLE SHORT OF BOATS** by Rosemary Nichols

"I think [Brig. Gen. Nathan 'Shanks'] Evans is 4,000 strong, with perhaps four or more pieces of field artillery, and, say, three pieces masked. Prisoners state that he expects re-enforcements. I believe this command can occupy Leesburg today. We are a little short of boats." Telegram from Brig. Gen. Charles Stone to Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, October 20, 1861

Coming as it did shortly after two major Union defeats at First Bull Run on July 21, 1861, near Manassas, Virginia, and Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861, near Springfield, Missouri, Ball's Bluff rocked a Northern populace already reeling. Being as visible as it was, the Battle of Ball's Bluff and Edwards Ferry assumed a large role in public and military perception in the early days of the Civil War.

Measured against the troops engaged [28,450 Union soldiers and 32,230 Confederate fighters at Bull Run, and

11,000 Union troops and 5,400 Confederates at Wilson's Creek], the 1,700 Federals and a matching number of Confederates at Ball's Bluff were a slight engagement. Later in the war, an encounter of that size would have been reported as a skirmish.

In terms of casualties, the Union forces at Bull Run had 460 killed, 1,124 wounded and 1,300 missing or captured. The Confederates at Bull Run had 387 killed, 1,582 wounded and only 13 missing or killed. The casualties at Wilson's Creek were approximately equal, counted as 1,235 on the Union side, and 1,317 of the Confederate force. By contrast, more than half the Union force at Ball's Bluff became casualties, with 223 killed, 226 wounded and 553 captured out of 1,720. The Confederates suffered 36 killed, 264 wounded and 3 captured.

Though small by later standards, the Battle of Ball's Bluff mattered in 1861, in large part because of the character of the leadership and the horror of the civilian public in Washington, DC, who had to watch for weeks as Federal uniformed corpses drifted down the Potomac in full view.

The political fallout included creation of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, which was a persistent thorn in Lincoln's side, as well as a constant irritant for the Union Army's leadership for the remainder of the war.

The leading casualty of the battle was Oregon Senator Edward Dickinson Baker, who was a close friend of President Lincoln's from their shared days as young lawyers in Springfield, Illinois. The closeness of the affection is demonstrated by the fact that

Lincoln named his youngest son Tad as Edward Baker Lincoln.

Charles Pomeroy Stone, disgraced commander of the Union forces, has a Watervliet connection. Stone was born in Greenfield, MA. He attended West Point where he graduated 7th of 41 in the class of 1845. After initial service at West Point as an assistant professor, teaching geography, history, and ethics from August 28, 1845 to January 13, 1846, Stone was posted to the Watervliet Arsenal as Assistant Ordnance Officer, and then to Fortress Monroe. After fighting in the Mexican War, Stone returned to Watervliet Arsenal in 1848 as Assistant Ordnance Officer. Following a leave of absence to study European military practices, Stone once again returned to Watervliet in 1850 briefly, and then was transferred once again to Fortress Monroe.

Stone secured the capital for the arrival of President Lincoln, and was instrumental in defeating plots against President Lincoln's inauguration. Despite that distinguished performance and in clear violation of military law, Stone was arrested following the Ball's Bluff defeat and imprisoned in solitary confinement, without counsel or a trial for six months. He never held a position of importance in the Union Army again. A lesser man might have been defeated by his treatment by the Army, but Stone went on to distinguished service in Egypt's military.

When the facts of the Ball's Bluff engagement were finally published, Stone was exonerated. With the facts now known, The New York Times editorialized: "General Stone has

sustained a most flagrant wrong—a wrong which will probably stand as the very worst blot on the National side in the history of the war."

## BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met on Monday, November 18, to discuss the business of the Round Table.

The Operating Account had \$1,421.38. The Preservation Account had \$1,689.61 and was awaiting deposits of approximately \$500 for merchandise sales at a number of events.

Nick Thony continues produce more podcasts for the Round Table. They can be accessed through our website at [www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org/podcast](http://www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org/podcast)

The next meeting of the Executive Board is Monday, December 16. If you wish for more information, please contact any board member.

## CDCWRT'S 2020 ELECTIONS

J.J. Jennings has agreed to chair the nominating committee for the Executive Board elections. Current Vice President Mark Koziol has decided to move to an At-Large position, and At-Large member Nick Thony has agreed to run for the Vice President's position. The other officers have agreed to serve another term in their current positions.

The election will be held at the January 10 meeting, and any member in good standing (dues paid) may be nominated from the floor for any board position. We have one At-Large position open.



# CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 11493 Loudonville, NY 12211  
www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org

## Membership Form 2020 Calendar Year

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter Preference: Email \_\_\_\_\_ OR Copy Mailed to Home \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Dues \$35  
(All dues go into the Operating Account to pay for newsletters,  
program expenses, and use of the meeting space)

Additional Donation for the Operating Account \_\_\_\_\_

Donation for the Preservation Account \_\_\_\_\_  
(Preservation money pays for donations to preserve historic  
sites/lands, rental of the storage shed, and the Round Table's  
insurance)

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your payment to: CDCWRT  
P.O. Box 11493  
Loudonville, NY 12211-0493

- \* Early payments will be held and deposited in January.
- \* Credit/Debit card payments can be made at the January and February meetings.





## **BUFORD'S VIEW**

by Matt George

On November 19th I attended the Remembrance (Dedication) Day events in Gettysburg. The weather was perfect, sunny with a high near 50 degrees. The ceremony in Soldier's National Cemetery that morning featured historian Michael Beschloss, author of "Presidents at War". One of the highlights was the swearing in of twelve recent immigrants as new American citizens. Their smiles and visible excitement are hard to forget.

The subsequent luncheon speaker was Kent Gramm, an author and professor at Gettysburg College. Gramm's book, "November: Lincoln's Elegy at Gettysburg", was a Pulitzer Prize nominee a few years ago. His talk was one of the best I've heard at the luncheon in years.

The Fortenbaugh Lecture was again held at the Majestic Theater in town. The speaker was historian Brooks Simpson, author of several books on Ulysses Grant. His talk was on the changing attitudes by historians towards Grant over the decades.

The day I left, I stopped at the Adams County Historical Society to do a little quick research. As many of you know, I've done some research on the 134th N.Y. who fought at the "brickyard" on Day 1 of the battle of Gettysburg. Their Colonel was Allen H. Jackson, a lawyer and graduate of Union College. After the 134th withdrew from this brutal "holding action" Colonel Jackson was nowhere to be found. He turned up later after the battle. There were stories about him taking refuge in

the house of a Gettysburg civilian. What I was able to find at the Gettysburg Historical Society was a copy of an article from the Sept. 30, 1902 edition of the Gettysburg Compiler newspaper. It seems that when the 134th withdrew, Colonel Jackson "escaped capture by entering the rear.....the residence then occupied by (the recently married) Mrs. Henry Meals. When capture then seemed imminent he was hidden by Mrs. Meals in a loft over her kitchen." Later, "Mrs. Meals covered his brass buttons and helped complete a disguise so that he safely passed through the rebel lines to his own command".

Thirty nine years later Colonel Jackson returned to Gettysburg accompanied by his daughter for a celebration called "Slocum Week". According to the newspaper article, "Colonel Jackson and his daughter enjoyed, while here, a visit to his old hiding place and a call upon Mrs. Meals." The house is still there at 154 York Street. Louisa Meals passed away in April of 1919. Allen Jackson is buried in Vale Cemetery in Schenectady. Sadly his beautiful monument has been vandalized.

Our next meeting will feature Bill Howard who will discuss his book "All the Drowned Soldiers – The Battle of Ball's Bluff". One of the Union Soldiers wounded there was the later Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. A direct descendent of Justice Holmes is a young man named Henry Holmes, a recent graduate of West Point, who played baseball for me a few years ago at Duanesburg High School.

**CDCWRT  
P.O. BOX 11493  
LOUDONVILLE, NY 12211**

*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.*

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