



The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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



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May 2019

Hollywood's History

WITNESS HISTORY.
THE EPIC MOTION PICTURE BECOMES
A MONUMENTAL TELEVISION EVENT.

★PREMIERE★
Sunday, June 26
Part One 8PM/11PM encore
Monday, June 27
Part Two 8PM/11PM encore

TURNER NETWORK TELEVISION
PRESENTS
TOM BERENGER JEFF DANIELS MARTIN SHEEN
GETTYSBURG
SAM ELLIOTT as General John Buford

★SPECIAL ENCORE PERFORMANCES★
July 4 Parts 1 & 2 11AM July 9 Parts 1 & 2 7PM
July 24 Parts 1 & 2 2PM
All Times Eastern

MAY MEETING

Friday, May 10, 2019

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

**Pat Falci:
Gettysburg -
25 Years Later**

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, May 10, 2019. Our guest speaker will be Pat Falci.

For 24 years, Patrick Falci has been the face of General Ambrose Powell Hill, “Lee’s Forgotten General.” He has gained fame for creating the role of Hill and also as director/screenwriter Ron Maxwell’s historical advisor for the movies “Gettysburg” and “Gods and Generals.”

Mr. Falci is a first-rate spokesman for the legacy of this period of our history. He has spoken at countless CWRTs throughout the country and has wowed them consistently. He is the recipient of the CWRT/NY Distinguished Service Award, the Fort A.P. Hill Commander’s Award for Excellence, the U.S. Army M.D. of Washington, D.C. Commanding

General’s Award, the U.D.C. Jefferson Davis Historical Gold Medal, and the S.U.V. Commander’s Award for Excellence. In addition to these honors, Mr. Falci has earned a commission of Colonel from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, May 17 is the unveiling of the statue “Leaders for Freedom and Justice: Harriet Tubman and William Seward” at the Schenectady County Public Library. We believe the time will be noon, but check the local calendar.

The June 7, 2019 meeting of the CDCWRT will feature historian and author Will Greene. He is the former director of the Pamplin Historical Park and National Museum of the Civil War Soldier. His topic will be an aspect of the Petersburg Campaign.

June 14-19 is a Civil War Conference at Gettysburg College. The Civil War Institute of Gettysburg, in partnership with the newly formed Civil War Round Table Congress, is hosting this event. Because of our Round Table’s affiliation with the CWRT Congress, our members qualify for a 15% discount.

For the period of June 29-July 3, the Round Table will be fundraising in Gettysburg during the reenactment. Contact Matt George for details.

There will be no Round Table meetings in July and August 2019.

During August 2-4, the 6th Annual Emerging Civil War Symposium will be held at Stevenson Ridge in

Spotsylvania County in Virginia. For details about this excellent annual conference, please check their website: emergingcivilwar.com for the 2019 symposium information.

We are still planning a picnic for Friday, August 16 at Schuyler Flatts.

THANK YOU MEMBERS

We wish to thank and recognize the following individuals who made donations to the Round Table's Operating Account and/or Preservation Fund.

In the past month we have received donations from: Steve McErleane, Gene Gore, and Nick Thony.

HISTORICAL FICTION or FICTIONAL HISTORY?

by Erin Baillargeon

As a middle-school teacher, I both love it and cringe when a student loudly proclaims, "I know (insert our current topic). I watched a movie about it!" I think most teachers feel the same. Kids somehow have an innate ability to fixate on both the essential and irrelevant parts of a movie.

For example, *Gangs of New York*. There was violent and racist opposition to the Union war effort in the North. People also wore awesome plaid pants back then. *Pearl Harbor*: the Japanese attack must have been terrifying and confusing, especially in a tropical

"paradise." And, writing on people with lipstick is gross. *The Manchurian Candidate*: a lie told loudly, confidently, and repeatedly can, sadly, override common sense. Also, the character Raymond Shaw seems to be the same age as his mother.

Of course, most people find reasons to criticize movies. Academic and armchair historians alike love to debate anything from the cartridge boxes to the conversations. A quick search in Google will yield dozens of website "Best of..." lists, as well as podcasts and books arguing the merits of various films. In addition to the laudable aspects of each film is often a caveat: the uniforms were great, but the settings were wrong; while the battle didn't occur precisely as depicted, it captured the essence of the fight.

I'm often surprised, though, by how vehemently some people argue the inaccuracies of Hollywood's take on history. These films are made for popular consumption and entertainment. Nearly all of the conversations are imagined; who keeps a running transcript of every conversation? Yes, official records, court documents, letters and journals can and do contribute phrases to movie scripts, but tone and body language are added. Directors and actors add their interpretations to the events.

Even documentaries are influenced by trends of historical interpretation. "Great Man" biographies... Marxist angles... feminist perspectives... Any of these (and others) can shape the narrative of non-fiction scholarship in

both books and films. Newly discovered caches of letters or archaeological finds can shift our understanding of historical events. “Fringe attitudes” may have been more widely accepted than historians realized. Things that were previously mere speculations turn out to be true. Some of those cartridge boxes that we thought were correct may not be. If people are willing to accept that scholars may have gotten some facts wrong, why not give the same consideration to entertainment?

Those of you who read Matt George’s article in the online April newsletter know he visited a reenactment of the “Battle of Narcoossee Mill” in Florida... which never really happened. But, does that invalidate the reenactors’ (actors’) portrayal of a Civil War skirmish? Does the use of blank cartridges and lack of authentic injuries impede people’s ability to appreciate the soldiers’ experiences?

Fictional history... historical fiction... how much do the details really matter? Intentionally misleading audiences is one thing... that’s propagandizing. But, condensing a long and complicated struggle into a two-hour film that holds people’s attention and helps them better appreciate the challenges of the past... I’ll accept some inaccuracies.

No, most men of the Massachusetts 54th regiment had not escaped enslavement. However, *Glory* helps people recognize the tremendous struggles the U.S. Colored Troops went through to earn a fraction of what was given easily to white soldiers. And for that, I’ll put up with comments

about Ferris Bueller leading the Union Army.

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met on Monday, April 15 to discuss the business of the Round Table.

The Operating Account had \$1,994.99 in it after paying for the April speaker and making our annual donation to the Senior Services Center of Watervliet for use of their facilities. The Preservation Fund had \$2,558.61.

Matt George is heading our July fundraising plans in Gettysburg. We will continue to plan for the Cedar Creek event in October 2019.

In terms of publicity, Mark makes certain that the events and the podcasts are announced on Facebook.

Nick has directed more podcasts. Each podcast draws more listeners.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is Tuesday, May 21, 2019. If you wish for more information, please contact any board member.

BUFORD’S VIEW

by Matt George

In addition to all his stories, Pat Falci will show a number of pictures connected to the filming of *Gettysburg*. I’ve heard Pat give this talk several times (without the pictures), including at the Gettysburg

Reenactment. This is an experience you don't want to miss.

Pat is also a big John Wayne fan. Just ask him about Wayne's movies (particularly the "*The Searchers*" and "*The Horse Soldiers*"); then be prepared to sit and listen for a while.

At the unveiling and dedication of the new Harriet Tubman/William Seward statue, I'll be representing the Round Table in the uniform of a soldier of the 134th New York. I plan to be there around 11:30 AM. It's possible we might be able to set up a small information table.

The next day (May 18) I'll be on the road again to visit our friends at the Connecticut Civil War Round Table in Torrington. At their regular monthly meeting, Phil Vitello will be speaking on the Hunley.

A second meeting will be their first Civil War Round Table networking meeting. This is in response to a suggestion made at the National Civil War Round Table Congress. It was proposed that Round Tables in the same general geographical area share speakers and planning activities (like trips, conferences, etc.) to maximize available funds and to increase attendance. Sharing lists of speakers and making recommendations could also be included.

Finally on May 28th – June 3rd, I hope to attend the C.W.T. Conference in Lexington, Kentucky.

**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.

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