



The Dispatch
Newspaper of the

**CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

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



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Oh, the Things We Do for Fashion...



Vivian Leigh and Hattie McDaniel in *Gone With the Wind*, produced by Warner Brothers, 1939.

Scarlett O'Hara (Leigh) is unhappily reminded by her mammy (McDaniel) that her waist will never be eighteen and a-half inches ever again after having a baby. She'll just have to settle for a twenty inch waist.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Friday, November 8, 2019

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

Sue McLean

***Victorian Secrets: Civil
War Fashions***

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, November 8, 2019.

Our guest speaker is Sue McLean, who will speak on fashions during the Civil War.

For more than 20 years Sue has done programming as the Victorian Lady. She teaches about clothes, manners, courtship rituals, food, and anything else “Victorian”.

More than 20 years ago she was one of the founders of the Victorian Social Club, a group which meets monthly for the pleasure of dining out and dressing Victorian.

While she lived in Johnstown, Sue did many programs on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Vale Cemetery.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 13: Bill Howard is coming with his presentation: “All the Drowned Soldiers: the Battle of Ball’s Bluff.”

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.

THANKS AND AN APOLOGY

Our thanks go out to the Watervliet Police Department who went above and beyond to assist us last month. They first spent a considerable amount of time trying to locate a city official who could unlock our meeting space. When that was unsuccessful, the police then found us a room to use at “the Dome” - Watervliet’s indoor recreational center.

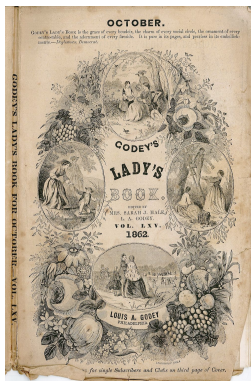
We apologize to members who missed last month’s meeting. The decision to change locations was made just before 7 pm, and we were unable to post the new address physically or online.

excerpts from HOOPSKIRTS AND CRINOLINES, and BUSTLES AND RUFFLES

from Leslie Sills’ *From Rags to Riches: a History of Girls’ Clothing in America*, p. 16-17, 19.

“As the country became more prosperous, people began to care

more about their clothing and appearance. The invention of the sewing machine helped them look their best. Now factory clothing was made quickly and in great quantities. Families could make clothes easily at home, too, if they bought their own machines. Sometimes several families bought one machine and shared it.



“Ladies magazines, such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, introduced in the late 1830s, promoted an interest in European fashions. Women all over the country and from every economic background read it.

Godey's called the sewing machine the ‘queen of inventions’. It published sewing patterns, as well as guides to cutting fabric, and even indicated the length of time it would take to machine-sew certain garments. Women who didn’t sew or buy factory-made clothes hired a dressmaker or sent measurements with an order by mail to a city dressmaker.

“Queen Victoria of England, crowned in 1837, greatly affected American styles as well. Although she was a monarch across the Atlantic Ocean, she had tremendous influence. American designers copied the queen’s fancy, restricted clothing. Queen Victoria loved dresses with fitted bodices so tight that they required a corset. Her skirts were extremely wide, extended by underlying layers of crinolines. Crinolines, made from a layer of horsehair between two layers of cotton, were heavy and tiring to wear. In 1866, cage crinolines, rows of flexible steel or bamboo hoops held together by cloth tape, replaced weightier versions. Cage crinolines were a relief, but still made it hard to move about. A girl wearing hoops under her skirt might have trouble walking through a doorway, sitting down, or even using a bathroom. A strong wind could knock her over. ...

“In the 1860s, the Civil War forced families to make sacrifices. Cloth became scarce and clothes were expensive. In the South, cloth was recycled. Silk dresses became banners and flags. Women unraveled

A hand-colored steel-plate engraving from the Jan 1857 issue (v. LIV) of *Godey's Lady's Book*. “Our fashion plate,” according to the publisher and editor L. A. Godey, “contains six figures, about treble the number given by any of our contemporaries, and it is now generally conceded that they surpass all others.”

<http://www.codex99.com/design/66.html>



woolen blankets and knitted the yarn into mittens and socks. Petticoats were cut up for bandages.

“In the North, women formed the Women’s Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries. These women wanted everyone to refuse to wear fabrics from Europe, especially velvets, silks, lace, and fur. They considered anything extra, such as hair ornaments, artificial flowers, and feathers, extravagant and perhaps immoral. Hundreds of women, including the well-to-do, agreed and signed a pledge to boycott these luxuries.

“American fashion magazines, however, seemed to ignore the war, with articles on and pictures of the latest styles. In the 1860s, children’s fashions...became regular features. *Godey’s Lady’s Book* printed paper dolls with ornate clothes, saying that these would help girls ‘to develop design, taste, and ability.’ Even in the West, where families made clothes from whatever was available, Jenny

June, a writer for *The Prairie Farmer*, stated, ‘It’s a woman’s duty to be as attractive as possible.’ Being fashionable was still emphasized for women and girls.

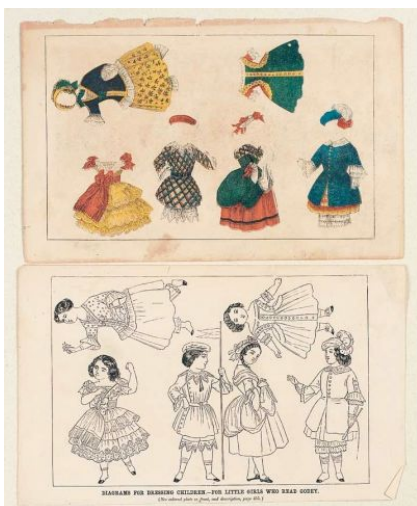
“When the Civil War ended, the country was poor. Yet women used sewing machines more than ever. Families in the remotest areas received fashion magazines, mail-order fabric, and pattern catalogs. In 1863, Ebenezer Butterick started a highly successful pattern business that offered children’s styles as well as adults’. For the first time, measurements were standardized, making it easier to sew clothes at home that fit. By 1871, the Butterick Company was producing 23,000 patterns a day and sold six million that year. Even Queen Victoria ordered them.”

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met on Tuesday, October 15, to discuss the business of the Round Table.

The Operating Account had \$1,421.37 after paying for the September newsletter. The Preservation Account had \$1,855.55 with income from the Clarksville heritage event in August and funds raised by Matt Farina in North Carolina. We did not have a raffle at the October membership meeting due to our last minute change of venue.

Several Board members traveled to the Battle of Cedar Creek reenactment in Virginia. They report it was a cold and wet event. Approximately \$300



Two sheets from an 1859 issue of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, one with colored one-sided costumes, the other page with uncolored dolls designed to wear those costumes.
<https://www.theriaults.com/two-godeys-lady-book-paper-dolls>

was raised through the sale of postal cachets and other merchandise.

Executive Board elections will take place in the new year. We have open seats, so people interested in serving should speak to any Board member regarding the (few) responsibilities of serving.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is Monday, November 18. If you wish for more information, please contact any board member.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

Civil War events held outside are always at the mercy of the weather. This was decidedly the case at the 155th Cedar Creek reenactment held last weekend in Middletown, Virginia.

Our Round Table was there to offer the official commemorative postal cancellation. Fully realizing that things have changed since the heyday in the 90s, I still had hopes of raising several hundred dollars.

The weekend started with promise. At the end of Saturday we had made at least \$235.00. But Sunday was a miserable, cold, rainy day. Many of the re-enactors (particularly the horsemen) left early. Spectators were almost non-existent. By the end of the day we were lucky to have added another \$30.00. Things could have gone better with better weather.

At the next meeting, I will have a few postal cancellations from Cedar Creek for anybody who wishes to purchase them.

Friday afternoon Rosemary Nichols, Al McLeod, and I took an excellent National Park Service tour which followed Wesley Merritt's cavalry during the battle.

We had great cooperation from both the local post office and the Park Service.

I had my picture taken with General Grant for the third time in the last month. What was interesting was that each picture was with a different Grant. These Grant living historians included the renowned Dr. Curt Fields and our own Ben Kemp from Grant Cottage. They all know each other. I also had a picture taken with Lt. Colonel Fremantle of the Coldstream Guards of the British Army. The real Fremantle spent three months with the Confederate Army as an observer.

On November 2, I'll be raising money for the Round Table at the Rotterdam United Methodist Church's annual Flea Market.

Although not connected to the Civil War era, I heard two interesting talks this past week. One was on George Lunn: the very progressive mayor of Schenectady in 1912, and the other on scientist /inventor George Steinmetz. They both were in Schenectady at the same time and not only knew each other, and had similar views.

I'm busy adding speakers for later in 2020. I will have more information on these soon.

**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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