



The Dispatch
Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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



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October 2019

Lincoln's Two Trips through Albany



the Lincoln Funeral Train at Cleveland, Ohio
from the Sandusky Library history blog
http://sanduskyhistory.blogspot.com/2009_04_01_archive.html

OCTOBER MEETING

Friday, October 11, 2019

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

Joe Collea: *Lincoln and Albany*

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, October 11, 2019.

Our guest speaker is Joseph D. Collea, Jr. He has spent over forty-seven years as a public school teacher and administrator.

Joe has written two books on the Civil War: The First Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War: a history and New York and the Lincoln Specials: the President's Pre-Inaugural and Funeral Trains Cross the Empire State.

Joe writes in the “Preface and Acknowledgements” of New York and the Lincoln Specials that the inspiration for the book came from growing up in the Mohawk Valley listening to the sounds of the New

York Central’s rail traffic and watching the trains as they passed.

As a history teacher, he tried to make local and state connections to national history for his students. He also made the personal connection that the spot from which he watched the trains with his father and grandfather was the same spot from which residents of Ilion watched the Lincoln Special pass on April 26, 1865. This meeting of local and national history allowed him to draw upon the wealth of knowledge found in various libraries, historical societies, and associations, and to bring “small town history” to a wider audience.

GREAT JOB!

In the summer 2019 issue of *Hallowed Ground*, the American Battlefield Trust published its list of members who cumulatively made more than 100 individual gifts to the organization. The Patriot Division of members who donated over 200 times includes J.J. Jennings, one of our long-time officers. The Heritage Division of members who made over 150 gifts includes our program chair, Matt George.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 18-20: The Round Table will sell postal cachets at Cedar Creek, Virginia for the 155th anniversary of the battle (Oct. 19, 1864). Please see Rosemary Nichols for more information.

Sue McLane is our November 8 speaker. Her topic is Victorian Secrets: Civil War Fashions.

Bill Howard is coming on December 13 to discuss the Battle of Ball's Bluff.

Matt George is looking for speakers for the potpourri meeting on January 10. If you have some interesting Civil War-related knowledge to share, please see Matt for details.

WHEN LINCOLN CAME TO ALBANY

by Rosemary Nichols

Albany's Institute of History and Art has an ongoing online discussion, Abraham Lincoln: The Albany Connections. It tells many of us much of what we already know about Lincoln's two well-documented visits to our region, but the two paragraphs are fact-filled and provoked some thoughts.

"Abraham Lincoln visited Albany twice, the first time in 1861 while on his way from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington for his March 4 inauguration as the country's sixteenth president.

Peter Hess, for many years the head of the Albany Rural Cemetery board and the sponsor of the early Civil War Heritage Days at Albany Rural, an annual event most of us supported and on whose advisory committee many of us served, wrote an interesting post for The New York History Blog on June 17, 2015, "1861: Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth in

Albany". In it he talks about the arrival of the Lincoln family in the city:

"As their train passed the West Albany railroad shops, an electrical switch was turned off at the nearby Dudley Observatory, causing an electromagnet mounted on the roof of the Capitol in downtown Albany to release a metal ball that slid down a pole, signaling to military officials to start a 21-gun salute in Capitol Park."

When Mayor George H. Thacher greeted the president-elect as he stepped down from the train on February 18, 1861, he said, "Mr Lincoln, on behalf of the Common Council and the citizens of Albany, I have the honor to tender you the cordial welcome of the city." Lincoln's reply could barely be heard over the deafening roar of the crowd.

Mayor Thacher, who issued the official greeting of the city, was a Democrat. But he was a well-known businessman and an experienced politician so I am certain his remarks were as polished as one might expect from a public figure on such a significant occasion.

During his brief time in the city, Lincoln addressed the New York State Legislature, dined with Governor Edwin D. Morgan, and met with citizens of Albany at the Delavan House, where he stayed overnight. The next morning, Lincoln and his entourage boarded the special train and continued their journey to Washington.

And what did people talk about at the Delavan House reception? Peter Hess says,

“The main topic of conversation was the seceding of southern states, as Jefferson Davis was being sworn in as president of the Confederacy in [Montgomery, Alabama] while Lincoln was speaking in Albany. Part of the reason for Lincoln’s visit was to judge the breadth and depth of support. At each stop in New York, Albany being no exception, he witnessed a strong demonstration of patriotism.”

Most of us know that John Wilkes Booth was performing in the city during Lincoln’s visit. Hess explains in more detail why Booth, a busy actor, had time to observe Lincoln’s carriage passing his hotel.

“As the carriage proceeded down Broadway and turned up State Street, it passed Stanwix Hall, then the residence of John Wilkes Booth. Undoubtedly, Booth watched with almost all of Albany as the new President went by.”

“Booth was in Albany starring in the play “The Apostate” at the Gayety Theater. He had fallen on his dagger during a performance earlier in the week and had been sidelined for several performances. He was spending his time in the Stanwix bar and lobby, criticizing Lincoln and the Union to the point where the Gayety’s treasurer, Mr. Cuyler, told him to keep his comments to himself or he would discourage attendance.”

Thurlow Weed’s Albany Evening Journal said of Wilkes’ performance: “Undoubtedly one of the finest actors this country has ever produced.”

I know what the politicians and prominent figures in Albany were

thinking during the Lincoln reception in 1861. They were doing the same thing political figures would be doing at a presidential reception in 2019: working the crowd and wondering how the newly elected President who had defeated New York favorite son William H. Seward with the new Republican Party would affect them and their political futures.

But what about the ordinary people of Albany who came out to cheer their newly elected President? I wonder how they felt. Probably uncertain. Lincoln was not a known quantity in Albany. Some people may have read printed versions of Lincoln’s famous speech delivered at Cooper Union the previous February. Some Albanians may have followed Lincoln’s subsequent progress through New England in Thurlow Weed’s Albany Evening Journal or other local newspapers.

Then, as now, most people were too busy earning a living, raising their children, or supporting their churches to spend much time thinking about events in distant places, even frightening events like Southern states seceding from the Union.

The second time Lincoln visited Albany was on April 26, 1865. The AIHA website says “the people of Albany once again came out by the hundreds to honor him. Twelve days earlier, as Lincoln was attending a play at a theater near the White House, he was shot in the head by an assassin. His death the next day set off a period of national mourning which involved a special funeral train retracing most of the 1,654-mile route the president-elect had made just four

years before, only now in the opposite direction to take his body home to Springfield for burial. That journey also included a stop in Albany, where his remains would lay in state in the New York State Capitol for several hours before continuing on to Illinois.“

The people of Albany, like the rest of the nation, had just been through four years of a terrible war. Many of them had lost loved ones; many of them didn't know if their sons, brothers or husbands had survived the carnage. For some, primarily business interests, the war had resulted in great profits. For the workers, then as now, wages had not kept pace with inflation so there was significant hardship, even in a prosperous city such as Albany.

Albanians would not have known that on April 26 John Wilkes Booth had been captured and killed the same day Lincoln was again in Albany. By the time the Lincoln Funeral Train left the city, the information that Lincoln's assassin had been executed would have been transmitted to the grieving community by telegraph and special editions of the local newspapers.

But everyone of whatever party or affiliation probably took time to grieve at least a little. For the first time, a president had been murdered. What did that terrible event mean for the future of our battered country? Only time would tell.

BOARD UPDATES

The Executive Board met on Monday, September 16, to discuss the business of the Round Table.

The Operating Account had \$1,481.36 in it after paying for the September speaker. The Preservation Fund had \$1,831.53, with just over \$250 raised through merchandise and raffle sales. We also paid for our storage unit for the next six months. This unit is where the Round Table stores the cachets, tee-shirts, and books that we sell to raise preservation funds.

Matt George provided an updated program list. We have speakers scheduled through the spring of 2020.

A cancellation design for the Cedar Creek anniversary event has been submitted to the U.S. Postal Service. Relevant envelopes have been set aside to bring to the event, and we have period-looking "Forever" stamps to use on the envelopes.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is Tuesday, October 15, 2019. If you wish for more information, please contact any board member.

BUFORD'S VIEW

by Matt George

I returned recently from my trip to the 3rd annual Civil War Round Table Congress in St. Louis. This included a wonderful one day stopover in Springfield to see the Lincoln Museum. The Lincoln Museum was well worth the effort. In some good ways it was a combination of Disney and Lincoln. It is a state-of-the-art

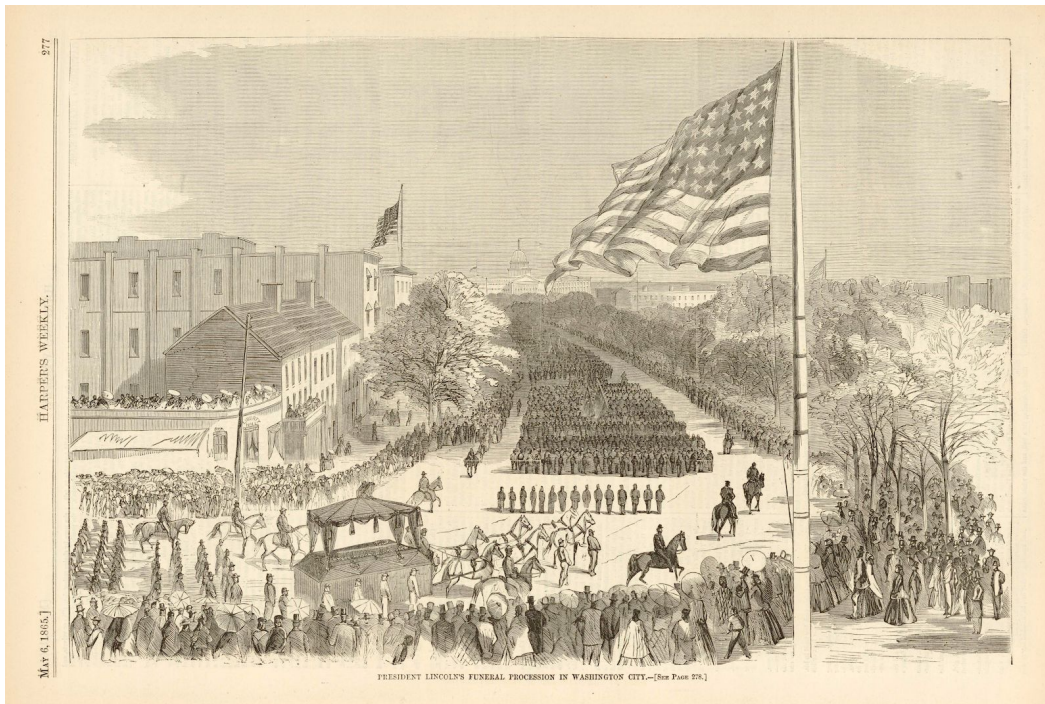
museum with interactive displays, life like models and even a holographic theater presentation. There is also a small cafeteria and a neat bookstore. The Springfield Visitor's Center is located in the historic Lincoln-Herndon Law Office. There were so many other sites that I did not have the time to visit, including the Lincoln home and the G.A.R. Museum. I plan to return in the future when I'll be able to spend a few days. Everyone I talked to was friendly and willing to assist an out of town visitor.

The Civil War Congress in St. Louis was excellent as well. I met a great many representatives from many other Round Tables. It involved some useful discussions of best practices in respect to how other Round Tables meet the challenges of increasing membership, raising money and efficient organizational techniques. The Congress concluded with visits to the Jefferson Barracks and the Grant home in St. Louis where Ulysses and Julia lived with her father. Not too far from the Jefferson Barracks is the grave of Frank Brownell. Sergeant Brownell was the soldier who killed the proprietor of the Marshall House (Jackson) after he killed Elmer Ellsworth when Ellsworth took down the Confederate Flag. Brownell was from Troy, N.Y. We also heard a great

living history presentation by Dr. Curt Fields as General Grant. His presentation was well researched and authentic. Dr. Fields as it turns out, knows Ben Kemp of Grant Cottage who also portrays General Grant. I told him he should visit Grant Cottage at Mt. McGregor in the future. Ben Kemp ran the living history weekend at Hadley Luzerne where our Round Table made \$124.50 a few weeks ago.

October 3rd – 6th I'll be at the Mosby Heritage Conference in Middleburg, Virginia. This has been a consistently high level conference every year with great speakers. The topic this year is Early's attack on Washington and its defenses. One of the featured speakers will be Eric Wittenburg who has replaced the retiring Ted Alexander as the coordinator of the Chambersburg Civil War Seminars & Tours.

Oct. 18th through the 20th our Round Table will be doing one of the biggest Commemorative Postal Cancellations we have done in years at the 155 Anniversary of the Battle of Cedar Creek. Myself, Rosemary Nichols, Al McLeod and Nick Thony will be participating.



“President Lincoln’s Funeral Procession in Washington City”
from Harper’s Weekly, May 6, 1865

<https://www.aoc.gov/blog/lincoln-catafalque-us-capitol>



“Broadway, Albany, April 26, 1865 - just as the catafalque containing President Lincoln’s remains enters from State Street”
from Historic Albanica

<https://kamcgop.wordpress.com/2015/05/01/lincoln-in-albany-the-final-passage/>

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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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