



*The Dispatch*  
Newspaper of the

## CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

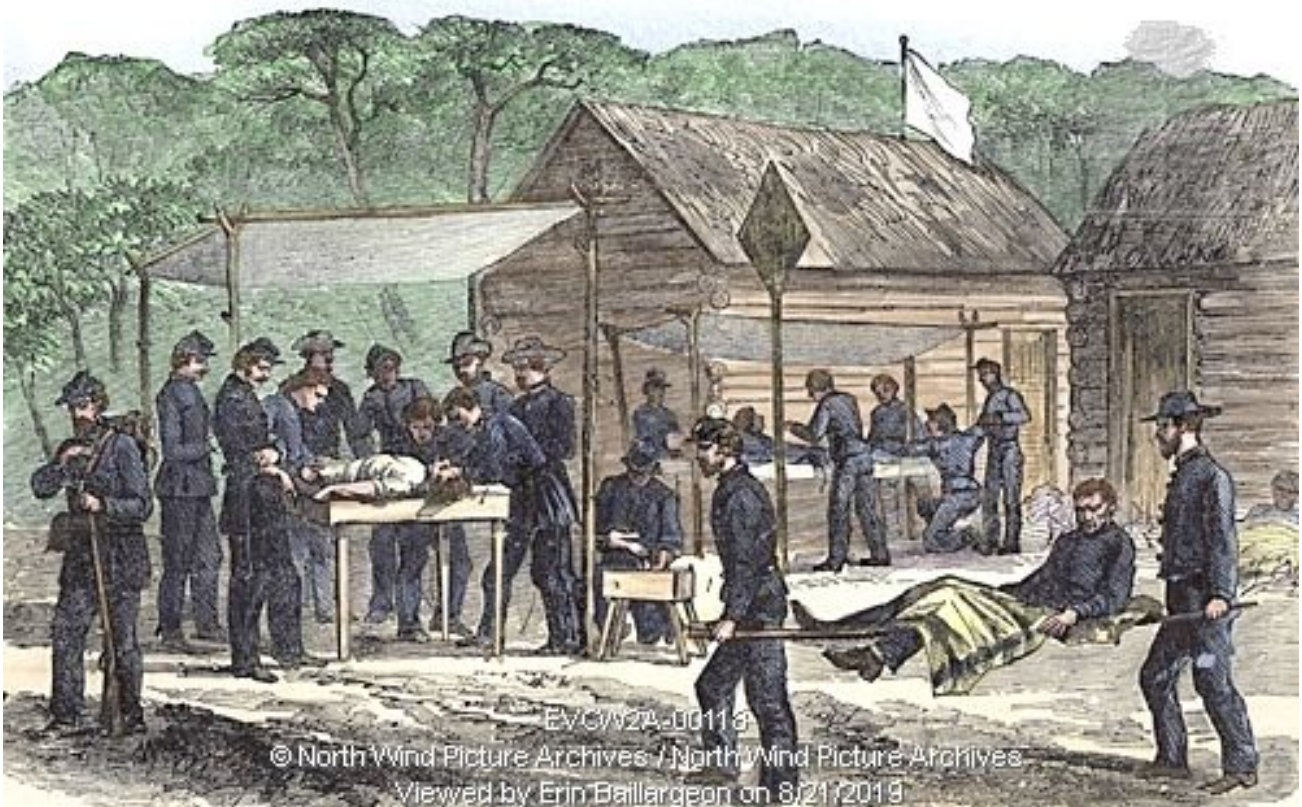
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### HOSPITAL SCENE - BRINGING IN THE WOUNDED AFTER THE BATTLE



from a sketch by Edwin Forbes  
North Wind Picture Archives, [www.northwindpictures.com](http://www.northwindpictures.com)

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

Friday, September 13, 2019

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

1541 BROADWAY

WATERVLIET, NY

### **Ron Kirkwood: *Too Much for Human Endurance***

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, September 13, 2019.*

*Our guest speaker is historian Ron Kirkwood who will speak on the Eleventh Corps field hospital on the Spangler farm in Gettysburg.*

*Ronald D. Kirkwood is retired after a 40-year career as an editor and writer in newspapers and magazines including USA TODAY, the Baltimore Sun, the Harrisburg (PA) Patriot-News, and the York (PA) Daily Record. Ronald edited national magazines for USA TODAY Sports and was NFL editor for USA TODAY Sports Weekly. He has won numerous state, regional, and national awards for his writing and editing and he managed the copy desk in Harrisburg when the newspaper won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012. Ronald is a native of*

*Dowagiac/Sister Lakes, MI, and a graduate of Central Michigan University, where he has returned as guest speaker to journalism classes as part of the school's Hearst Visiting Professionals series. Ronald has been a Gettysburg Foundation docent at The George Spangler Farm Field Hospital Site since it opened in 2013, and he explores the Gettysburg battlefield dozens of times a year. Ronald and his wife, Barbara, live in York. They have two daughters, two sons-in-law, and three grandchildren.*

## THANK YOU!

Our members spent many hours this summer raising money at various events for our preservation fund. Thank you to Matt George, Joyce Brooks, and Erin Baillargeon for your time and support.

Thank you to Bernadette LaManna for her assistance as newsletter proof-reader.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Joe Collea will speak at our October 11 meeting. His topic is Lincoln's two presidential trips through Albany.

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.

## **NOW, FIX ME**

from Ken Burns' *The Civil War*, p. 296-300

"Grant's Virginia campaign yielded an average of two thousand wounded men every day. Most of them made their way to Washington hospitals, where one of those who cared for them was the poet Walt Whitman.

"He was forty-two when the war began, too old for the ranks, unqualified to be an officer, unenthusiastic 'about firing a gun and drawing a sword on another man.' Critics found his poetry obscene and blasphemous; the public merely found it baffling. He lived with his mother in Brooklyn.

"But when his younger brother was wounded at Antietam, and Whitman went to find him in a hospital, he was so appalled by conditions there that he moved to the capital to see what he could do to help. He became a representative of the Christian Commission, giving out small gifts, changing dressings, playing 'an amusing game called twenty questions,' declaiming his poetry.

"The men whom he tended had undergone appalling ordeals before they reached him. The war was fought, the Union Surgeon General remembered, 'at the end of the medical middle ages.' Physicians knew nothing of what caused the diseases that raced through their wards, did not understand the need

for sanitation or good nutrition, or know how to halt infection.

"The wounded man's first stop was often the surgeon's tent. 'We operated in old, blood-stained and often pus-stained coats,' a surgeon recalled. '...We used undisinfected [sic] instruments from undisinfected [sic] plush-lined cases....If a sponge or instrument fell on the floor it was washed and squeezed in a basin of ...water and used as if it were clean.'

"Union surgeons amputated limbs steadily for four days and two nights during the Battle of the Wilderness. 'As a wounded man was lifted on the table, often shrieking with pain as the attendants handled him,' General Carl Schurz remembered, 'the surgeon quickly examined the wound and resolved upon cutting off the wounded limb. Some ether was administered. ...The surgeon snatched his knife from between his teeth, where it had been while his hands were busy, wiped it rapidly once or twice across his blood-stained apron, and the cutting began. The operation accomplished, the surgeon would look around with a deep sigh, and then - 'Next!'"

"Those who survived battlefield surgery were often left on the ground until they could be transferred to hospitals behind the lines. The lucky ones were sheltered in churches, houses, barns, shops.

"Clara Barton was there.

*"I saw, crowded into one old sunken hotel, lying upon its bare, wet, bloody floors, 500 fainting men hold up their cold, bloodless, dingy hands as I passed, and beg me in Heaven's name*

*for a cracker to keep them from starving (and I had none); or to give them a cup that they might have something to drink water from, if they could get it (and I had no cup and could get none)...*

*“I saw 200 six-mule army wagons in a line, ranged down the street to headquarters, and reaching so far out on the Wilderness Road that I never found the end of it; every wagon crowded with wounded men, stopped, standing in the rain and mud, wrenched back and forth by the restless, hungry animals all night - The dark spot in the mud under many a wagon told all too plainly where some poor fellow’s life had dripped out in those dreadful hours.”*

“When the war began there were just 16 army hospitals in all of the North. By its end, the Union army was running more than 350 hospitals, the Confederacy 154.

“The biggest and best, North or South, was Chimborazo at Richmond, with 8,000 beds, 5 soup houses, 5 ice houses, 200 dairy cattle, a herd of goats, a 400-keg brewery, and a bakery that turned out 10,000 loaves of bread a day. But even the most up-to-date institutions could do very little. The patients ‘would see that the doctor gave them up,’ a Confederate steward recalled, ‘and would ask me about it. I would tell them the truth. I told one man that and he asked, ‘How long?’ I said, ‘Not over twenty minutes.’ He did not show any fear. They never do. He put his hand up so and closed his eyes with his own fingers and he stretched himself out and crossed his arms over his breast. ‘Now, fix me,’ he said. I pinned the

toes of his stockings together. That was the way we lay corpses out, and he died in a few minutes. His face looked as pleasant as if he was asleep. And many is the time the boys have fixed themselves that way before they died.”

## **BOARD UPDATES**

The Executive Board met on Monday, July 22, to discuss the business of the Round Table.

The Operating Account had \$1,570.25 in it after paying for the June speaker. The Preservation Fund had \$2,224.25, with nearly \$100 raised from cachet sales. Matt George raised an additional \$65.00 in Gettysburg.

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. Board members will finalize envelope designs in September, with images relevant to the battle.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is Monday, September 16, 2019. If you wish more information, please contact any board member.

## **BUFORD’S VIEW**

**by Matt George**

I hope everyone had a wonderful summer. So far this summer “Mother Nature” has not been kind to us. I was at a fundraising event at the Elwood Museum in Amsterdam on August 8

and it was rained out by a thunderstorm in the first half hour. I did not have the tent but was able to save most of our materials and shirts by covering the table with a table cloth and my large Civil War wool blanket. Five days earlier at the Clarksville Heritage Day our sales were limited by thunderstorms. However, we did make a little money for battlefield preservation. Many thanks go to Erin Baillargeon and Joyce Brooks who volunteered to help at this fundraising event. However, the worst weather related disaster was yet to occur. The Round Table picnic was cut short by one of the most violent thunderstorms I've seen in years. Later reports said that gusts in the area were estimated at 60-80 miles per hour. The wind plus torrential rains destroyed not only the Round Table's "pop up" tent but also the tents of many of the re-enactors. And, the large tent we were using for the picnic was also wrecked. Two of the large wooden support poles and seven of the thick nylon ropes were snapped like twigs. The damage was so severe for many of the re-enactors that the entire weekend was cancelled. I still remember hot dogs and hamburgers flying through the air.

In June Nick Thony and I attended an excellent Civil War Conference In Gettysburg. The yearly event was sponsored by the Civil War Institute. Held at Gettysburg College, it included many great speakers and tours. One of the tours included several stops in Mosby's Confederacy. At one of the stops was a small stone marker, hidden in the weeds, on a back road indicating the spot of a rare Civil War atrocity. A number of Custer's men were executed during the increasing

ferocity of the fighting in the valley between Mosby's men and Sheridan's cavalry.

A few days later I was again back in Gettysburg for the July Gettysburg battle anniversary. I stayed with Round Table member Mark Allen and his wife Janet. One day we visited a small but interesting railroad museum in Westminster, Maryland. While in Gettysburg, I again toured the 11th Corps Field Hospital at the Spangler Farm and confirmed our September speaker Ron Kirkwood. Ron will be talking about his new book: "Too Much For Human Endurance – The George Spangler farm Hospitals and the Battle of Gettysburg". The many stories of the men who suffered and died there and of the nurses and doctors who treated and cared for them confirm the truth that this war and all wars are terrible and tragic. A number of the soldiers who were there were from our area.

In September I'll be traveling by train to the third Civil War Congress Convention, held this year in St. Louis. On the way there, I will be stopping in Springfield, Illinois for one day to visit the Lincoln Museum. The Convention is being hosted by the St. Louis Civil War Round Table.

A reminder, in October our Round Table will be having one of the biggest postal cancellations we've done in years at the Cedar Creek battlefield. Also in October, I will be attending the Mosby Heritage Civil War Conference in Middleburg, Virginia for, I think, the 8th year in a row. The topic this year is Civil War Washington (including Early's surprise attack on the capitol).

**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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