

# *The Dispatch*

Volume 41, Number 10

December 2024



Capital District Civil War Round Table  
PO Box 11493 Loudonville, NY 12211  
[www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org](http://www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org)

## Reimagining the Past



A newly published graphic novel that is a radical retelling of the American classic novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

## DECEMBER MEETING

Friday, December 13, 2024

AT THE WATERVLIET  
SENIOR CENTER

**Marcus Kwame Anderson**  
**“BIG JIM and the White  
Boy”**

Social Hour	6:00 p.m.
Business Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Presentation	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Commonly regarded as one of the great American novels, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has captured the hearts and imaginations of readers since 1885. But since its publication, critics have rightfully condemned Mark Twain's troubling portrayal of Black Americans as stereotypes and caricatures, with contemporary fans searching for a modern update to this iconic tale.

*Big Jim and the White Boy* is a radical retelling of this American classic, centering the experiences of Jim, an enslaved Black man in search of his kidnapped wife and children, along with his cheeky sidekick, Huckleberry Finn. Jim and Huck's high-stakes adventures take them on an epic voyage across the antebellum South and Midwest, through Confederate war camps and runaway safe houses, into Old West standoffs, and on the road as covert Underground Railroad agents. Intertwined into the story of Jim and Huck are the stories of Jim's descendants in the 1930s, 1980s, and 2020s, making this a multigenerational family epic as well as

an adventure story. *Big Jim and the White Boy* takes readers on a journey through Jim and Huck's past, present, and future, delving into their incredible friendship and years of adventures—a bond that transcends the gruesome racism of the Civil War era.

With compelling artwork and riveting storytelling, David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson push the boundaries of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in this incredible graphic novel, exploring the triumphs and tribulations of Jim and his family, and finally giving his due as a hero of American literature.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

January 10: Potpourri Night - Stacy Kilts and Rik Scarce will discuss the process to become a licensed Gettysburg Battlefield guide. Joe Thatcher will discuss the coal torpedoes developed by the Confederate army, and Bob Mulligan will share Civil War anecdotes

February 14: TBA

March 14: Debra Bruno will present “A Hudson Valley Reckoning”

## DUES ARE DUE

As you will notice, the Round Table's annual membership form is attached to this newsletter. The membership year begins January 2025. Anyone who wishes to renew or join at the December meeting may bring the completed form and payment to the meeting, preferably in an envelope so the check and form don't get separated. Those wishing to pay in cash should bring the exact amount as Treasurer Steve Muller will not be present to make change.

Memberships and donations can always be mailed to the Round Table's P.O. Box. Payments received in December will be deposited in January. Donations to the Operating Account and/or Preservation Account are always welcome.

## **CDCWRT'S 2025 ELECTIONS**

The election will be held at the January meeting, and any member in good standing (dues paid) may be nominated from the floor for any board position. The slate of nominations is:

President: Mark Koziol (current V. P.)

Vice President: Bruce Reed

Treasurer: Stevel Muller (continuing in this position)

Secretary: Shawn Connery

At-Large: Matt George (current Program Chair)

At-Large: \_\_ (open) \_\_

At-Large: \_\_ (open) \_\_

## **BOARD UPDATE**

The Board met on November 18 via Zoom. Prospective Board members Bruce Reed and Shawn Connery joined the current Board. Much of the meeting was spent discussing the transition of responsibilities from the retiring President to other Board members.

The membership database for the past ten years was shared with Rosemary Nichols, the head of the new membership committee. She will work with committee members to contact past members of the Round Table to solicit information about why they dropped their membership.

The Board also briefly discussed the

challenge of finding an alternate meeting location. This was discussed with the membership at the November meeting. Area libraries were appealing possibilities, but most did not allow standing reservations and reserved the right to preempt use of meeting rooms for library activities. The Board will continue to consider alternatives.

The Operating Account balance is \$2,492.84. This fund pays for speakers, which is the largest expense in the Round Table's budget. Dues are the primary source of income for this account, and in recent years speaker expenses have exceeded the dues rate. If you are considering making an additional donation to the Round Table, please strongly consider donating to this account so we can continue to provide excellent speakers. The balance in the Preservation Account is \$4,095.52.

## **CHRISTMAS 1862 ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK**

By Rev. John R. Paxton, D.D.

"Gentlemen, the chair of the Professor of the Mathematics is vacant in this college; permit me to introduce to you Captain Fraser." Rah! rah! rah! and away we went and enlisted – to go to Richmond. It took us three years to get there. No wonder; there were so many Longstreets to make our way through; so many Hills to climb; so many Stonewalls to batter down; so many Picketts to clear out of the way. It was as hard as a road to travel as the steep and stony one to heaven.

No preaching, sir! Can't you forget the shop? Don't you know that you have squeezed yourself into that faded, jacket, and are squirming, with a flushed face and short breaths, behind that

sword belt, which had caused a rebellion *in media res*?

I started for Richmond in July, 1862, a lad eighteen years old, a junior in college, and chafing to be at it, – to double quick it after John Brown's soul, which, since it did not require a knapsack or three days' rations or a canteen or a halt during the night for sleep, was always marching on. On the night before Christmas, 1862, I was a dejected young patriot, wishing I hadn't done it, shivering in the open weather a mile back of the Rappahannock, on the reserve picket and exposed to a wet snowstorm. There was not a stick of wood within five miles of us; all cut down, down, even the roots of trees, and burned up. We lay down on our rubber blankets, pulled our woolen blankets over us, spooned it as close as we could to get to steal warmth from our comrades and tried not to cry.

Next morning the snow lay heavy and deep, and the men, when I wakened and looked about me, reminded me of a church graveyard in winter. "Fall in for picket duty. There, come, Moore, McMeaus, Paxton, Perrine, Pollock, fall in." We fell in, of course, No breakfast; chilled to the marrow; snow a foot deep. We tightened our belts on our empty stomachs, seized our rifles and marched to the river to take our six hours on duty.

It was Christmas Day, 1862. "And so this is war," my old me said to himself while he paced in the snow his two hours on the river's brink. "And I am out here to shoot that lean, lank, coughing, cadaverous-looking butternut fellow over the river. So this is war; this is being a soldier; this is the genuine article; this is H. Greely's 'On to Richmond.' Well, I wish he were here in my place, running to keep warm,

pounding his arms and breast to make the chilled blood circulate. So this is war, tramping up and down this river my fifty yards with wet feet, empty stomach, swollen nose."

Alas, when lying under the trees in the college campus last June, war meant to me martial music, gorgeous brigadiers in blue and gold, tall young men in line, shining in brass. War meant to me tumultuous memories of Bunker Hill, Caesar's Tenth Legion, the Charge of the Six Hundred, – anything but this. Pshaw, I wish I were home. Let me see. Home? God's country. A tear? Yes, it is a tear. What are they doing at home? This is Christmas Day. Home? Well, stockings on the wall, candy, turkey, fun, merry Christmas, and the face of the girl I left behind. Another tear? Yes, I couldn't help it. I was only eighteen, and there was such a contrast between Christmas, 1862, on the Rappahannock and other Christmases. Yes, there was a girl, too, – such sweet eyes, such long lashes, such a low tender voice.

"Come, move quicker. Who goes there?" Shift the rifle from one aching shoulder to the other.

"Hello, Johnny, what are you up to?" The river was narrow, but deep and swift. It was a wet cold, not a freezing cold. There was no ice, too swift for that.

"Yank, with no overcoat, shoes full of holes, nothing to eat but parched corn and tabacco, and with this derved Yankee snow a foot deep, there's nothin' left, nothin' but to get up a cough by way of protestin' against this infernal ill treatment of the body. We uns, Yank, all have a cough over here, and there's no sayin' which will run us to hole first, the cough or your bullets."

(continued on page 7)



## Membership Form

### 2025 Calendar Year

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

**Membership Dues** All dues go into the Operating Account to pay for newsletters, program expenses, and the use of the meeting space. (circle appropriate level)

Regular memberships can choose between emailed or mailed newsletters.

Regular: \$35

Student memberships come with only emailed newsletters.

Student: \$10

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Email/Mailing address is the same as last year

If not: \_\_\_\_\_

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 through [www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org](http://www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org)



(continued from page 4)

The snow still fell, the keen wind, raw and fierce, cut to the bone. It was God's worst weather, in God's forlornest, bleakest spot of ground, that Christmas Day of '62 on the Rappahannock, a half-mile below the town of Fredericksburg. But come, pick up your prostrate pluck, you shivering private. Surely there is enough dampness around without your adding to it your tears.

"Let's laugh, boys."

"Hello, Johnny."

"Hello, yourself, Yank."

"Merry Christmas, Johnny."

"Same to you, Yank."

"Say, Johnny, got anything to trade?"

"Parched corn and tobacco, – the size of our Christmas, Yank."

"All right; you shall have some of our coffee and sugar and pork. Boys, find the boats."

Such boats! I see the children sailing them on small lakes in our Central park. Some Yankee, desperately hungry for tobacco, invented them for trading with the Johnnies. They were hid away under the backs of the river for successive relays of pickets.

We got out the boats. An old handkerchief answered for a sail. We loaded them with coffee, sugar, pork, and set the sail and watched them slowly creep to the other shore. And the Johnnies? To see them crowd the bank

and push and scramble to be the first to seize the boats, going into the water and stretching out their long arms. Then, when they pulled the boats ashore, and stood in a group over the cargo, and to hear their exclamations, "Hurrah for hog." "Say, that's not roasted rye, but genuine coffee. Smell it, you'uns." "And sugar, too!"

Then they divided the consignment. They laughed and shouted, "Reckon you'uns been good to we'uns this Christmas Day, Yanks." Then they put parched corn, tobacco, ripe persimmons, into the boats and sent them back to us. And we chewed the parched corn, smoked real Virginia leaf, ate persimmons, which if they weren't very filling at least contracted our stomachs to the size of our Christmas dinner. And so the day passed. We shouted, "Merry Christmas, Johnny." They shouted, "Same to you, Yank." And we forgot the biting wind, the chilling cold; we forgot those men over there were our enemies, whom it might be our duty to shoot before evening.

We had bridged the river, spanned the bloody chasm. We were brothers, not foes, waving salutations of good-will in the name of the Babe of Bethlehem, on Christmas Day in '62. At the very front of the opposing armies, the Christ Child struck a truce of us, broke down the wall of partition, became our peace. We exchanged gifts. We shouted greetings back and forth. We kept Christmas and our hearts were lighter of it, and our shivering bodes were not quite so cold.

–*Christmas Number, Harper's Weekly, 1886.*

**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.*

Contact the Capital District Civil War Round Table through  
our website: **[www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org](http://www.capitaldistrictcivilwar.org)**  
or email: **[cdcwrt@hotmail.com](mailto:cdcwrt@hotmail.com)**

**THE OFFICERS**

President	Erin Baillargeon	Vice-President	Mark Koziol
Treasurer	Steve Muller	Secretary	(open)
At-Large	Rik Scarce	At-Large	(open)
At-Large	(open)		

**THE NONCOMS**

Program	Matt George	518-355-2131	Jbuford63@aol.com
Membership	Erin Baillargeon and Steve Muller		
Refreshments	Dean Long and Luanne Whitbeck		
Webmaster			
Education	Matt George		
Newsletter	Rosemary Nichols and Erin Baillargeon		