

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
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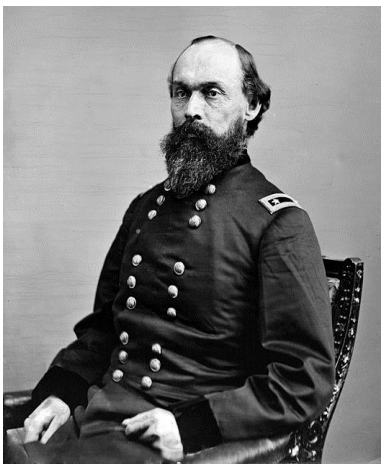
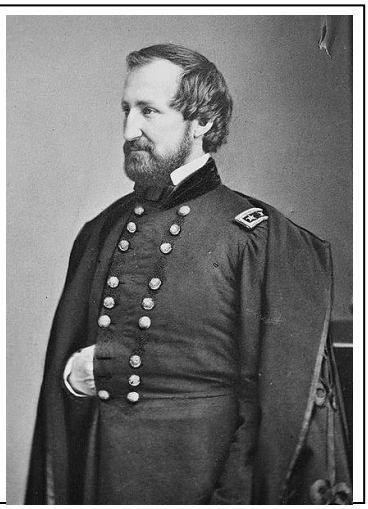
GARFIELD TO ROSENCRANS: THOMAS "STANDING LIKE A ROCK"



Gen. Gordon Granger



Gen, George Thomas



Gen. William Rosecrans

(AP-Chattanooga September 20,1864)

Word has reached Washington that the Army of the Cumberland has suffered a major setback by Confederate forces under Gen. Bragg. After heavy fighting yesterday, a determined Confederate attack broke through a weak point in the Union line. Gen. Rosecrans left the battlefield in order to rally and organize defenses in Chattanooga where the greater part of the army has fled. Gen. Rosecrans sent one of his staff officers, Gen. James Garfield, to Gen. George Thomas informing him that Thomas was to assume command of remaining troops and try to slow the Confederate advance. It appeared a rout was developing. However, Garfield found Thomas holding firm against repeated assaults. Garfield reported that Thomas is "standing like a rock." Almost forgotten on the far Union left were Gen. Gordon Granger and the Reserve Corps. Rather than retreat to Chattanooga, Granger acted without orders and joined Thomas in his fierce defense of Snodgrass Hill.

MAY MEETING
FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2014

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

General Gordon Granger: The Savior of Chickamauga and the Man Behind Juneteenth"

Robert C. Conner

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:15 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:15 – 7:45 p.m.**
Discussion	**7:45 - -8:15 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The May meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will occur on Friday, May 9, 2014 at the Watervliet Senior Center. Our guest speaker will be Robert Conner, and his presentation is entitled, **"General Gordon Granger: The Savior of Chickamauga and the Man Behind Juneteenth."**

Most Civil War enthusiasts recognize Union General George Thomas as the "Rock of Chickamauga." But on that day of September 20, 1863, General Granger marched on his own authority to reinforce Gen. Thomas at the Battle of Chickamauga, and helped prevent a Union defeat from becoming a catastrophe. Had he and Thomas not held the line through the daylight hours, the entire Army of the Cumberland might well have been captured. That would have immeasurably raised Confederate morale and Union war-weariness. The results would definitely reverberated into the next year, possibly contributing to the defeat of President Lincoln's re-election campaign, thus enabling the Confederacy to establish its independence.

Granger's name fell back into obscurity after the war. But in 1865, just after the war, as commander of all U.S. troops in Texas, Granger's June 19th order abolishing slavery was one of the most significant documents of Reconstruction. It sparked "Juneteenth" celebrations that continue to this day all over the United States, including the Capital Region. Granger was from upstate New York, and after the war had ties to this area.

Bob Conner served as an interpreter at the Grant Cottage at Mount McGregor in Saratoga County in 2011 and 2012. Granger and Grant attended West Point and served in the Mexican War. But the two of them never got along, as Grant's memoirs make abundantly clear. Conner **researched Granger and a paper with the same title as this talk was published in 2013.**

AUBURN TRIP IN MAY

The CDCWRT overnight trip to Auburn on Saturday and Sunday, May 17-18, 2014 will visit the Seward house, Tubman house and the Women's Rights Hall of Fame. The cost is $75 per person, and will cover a room for two at the Days Inn, tours, tolls and gas for drivers. Attendees will buy their own lunch and dinner. Call Matt George or Rosemary Nichols.

DEADLINE DATE FOR THIS TRIP IS FRIDAY, MAY 9TH.

SUE KNOST MEMORIAL CONFERENCE – FROM OCTOBER 31 TO NOVEMBER 2, 2014. SAVE THE DATE NOW!

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly. Other events have a Civil War connection and are sponsored by other groups. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site: www.nycivilwar150.org.

On June 13, 2014, the CDCWRT will meet at the Roger Bacon Hall at Siena College at 6:00 P.M. Our guest speaker will be Ron Coddington, and the title of his presentation will be "African American Faces of the Civil War." This program is co-sponsored by the Underground Railroad Workshop.

On July 26, 2014, Saturday, at the NYS Military Museum, at 1:00 p.m. there will be a talk by Dr. Donald Wyman, a former Army and Central Intelligence Agency Officer. He is the author of The Chosen Path, based on the life of Elizabeth Van Lew, one of our nation's best spies. During the Civil War, Elizabeth Van Lew left Richmond society to spy for the Union Army and earn the title, Grant's spy.

Dr. Wyman will reveal many of the clandestine sources, methods and the professional trade craft that Ms. Van Lew employed while accomplishing her patriotic and dangerous mission as spymaster in the Confederate capital.

The program is a joint effort on behalf of the NYS Military Museum and Grant Cottage.

On September 12, 2014, the CDCWRT will meet at the Watervliet Senior Center. Our presenter will be David Dziewulski. He is a historian and a member of the U.S. Naval Landing Party. He will talk about black Americans in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War.

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL LIBRARY PROJECT

1864: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

This is a continuation of the library exhibit in the Sandhills Community College Library in Southern Pines, NC.

Kings Mountain Military School

Micah Jenkins, the Confederate Brigadier General who fell mortally wounded in the volley that toppled General Longstreet in the Wilderness of Virginia in May 1864 had come from his home in Yorkville, South Carolina in April of 1861 to take his part in the defense of the South.

Micah Jenkins, a graduate of the Citadel along with Asbury Coward founded the military school in 1855. The school, located in Yorkville, South Carolina was known as the Kings Mountain Military School, taking its name from the Revolutionary War battle fought on its nearby slopes. The school was thriving by 1861, but duty called. Teachers and students both felt the call of the War and it was not long until most were in Virginia fighting for their lives.

Little survives from the Kings Mountain Military School. An attempt was made after the War to resume normal operations, but normal no longer existed in the South and after years of struggle, Asbury Coward was forced to close what was then known as the Academy.



Gen. Micah Jenkins of York, SC



Promoted to Brigadier General on July 22, 1862, he was severely wounded at The Battle of Second Bull Run. He fought at Chickamauga and at the Wilderness, where he rode with General James Longstreet on a reconnaissance of the federal position. In a similar incident to the wounding Stonewall Jackson at Chancellorsville, James Longstreet and Michah Jenkins were accidentally shot by their own men. While suffering with delirium from the mini ball lodged in his brain, he urged his men to press forward. He died a few hours later.

Pictured below is a very rare button from the school uniform which is displayed in the exhibit.



The Battle of Cedar Creek (Belle Grove Plantation) October 19, 1864

This battle was one of the final, and most decisive, battles in the Valley Campaigns of 1864. Confederate General Jubal A. Early had withdrawn "up the Valley" under pressure from Union Gen. Philip Sheridan and his Army of the Shenandoah. Sheridan's army was engaged in destroying the economic base of the Valley, meant to deprive Robert E. Lee's army of the supplies they required. They were encamped at Cedar Creek near the Bell Grove Plantation.

Sheridan planned to return the VI Corps to the Petersburg siege lines, assuming that Early had no aggressive moves left in him after more than a month of battling. However, the pugnacious Early had some aggression left in him and he had Lee's exhortations to take action guiding him. In a letter of October 12, 1864, Lee told Early, "You had better move against him and endeavor to crush him. . . . I do not think Sheridan's infantry or cavalry numerically as large as you suppose." General Early

examined the Union position behind Cedar Creek and found an opening. The Union left relied on natural obstacles for cover. Early planned a surprise attack on the Union left, rolling up the line.

After an audacious night march, the Confederate corps of John B. Gordon followed a "pig's path" along the base of Massanutten Mountain and across the river. Just before sunrise, under a cover of dense fog, Gordon struck. The surprise was complete. The Union VIII Corps fought momentarily, then broke. Hundreds of prisoners were taken, many of them still in their bed clothes. The XIX Corps under William H. Emory was next hit, by Gordon, and Emory's Union soldiers broke. Retreating soldiers caused confusion and damaged the morale of the remaining Union defenders. Confederate guns across the creek were able to shell the open Union flank. Wright's VI Corps, last in the line, withdrew slowly and fought a strong defensive battle.

But General Early did not keep up pressure because he was so pleased with his victory, including the capture of over a thousand prisoners and eighteen guns. He mistakenly assumed that Wright would retreat from the battlefield. He told Gordon, "This is glory enough for one day." Early's failure to pursue them is considered his fatal mistake in the battle and caused lasting enmity between General Gordon and himself.

General Sheridan was away at Winchester, Virginia, at the time the battle started. Hearing the distance sounds of artillery, he rode aggressively at full speed 20 miles on his powerful horse, Rienzi, to his command. His horse is on display at the Smithsonian Museum. (A famous poem, *Sheridan's Ride*, was written by Thomas Buchanan Read to commemorate this event.) Sheridan reached the battlefield about 10:30 a.m. and began to rally his men. Fortunately for Sheridan, Early's men were too occupied to take notice; they were hungry and exhausted and fell out of their ranks to pillage the Union camps. When he finally resumed his offensive, it was easily repulsed.

At 4:00 p.m., Emory's Union corps counterattacked. Early's three divisions were stretched out on a line about three miles long, with the flanks unprotected. Emory was reinforced by George A. Custer's cavalry division, which exploited the open left flank and broke the Confederate line. Other cavalry units destroyed a bridge in the Confederate rear, cutting off the escape route. Certain they could not fight their way out of the debacle, many veteran Southern troops surrendered.

The Union took hundreds of prisoners, 43 guns (18 of which were their own guns from the morning), and supplies that the Confederacy could not replace. The battle resulted in a crushing defeat for Confederates. They were never again able to threaten Washington through the Shenandoah Valley, nor protect the economic base in the Valley. Jubal Early's command was effectively ended and his surviving units returned to Petersburg that December. This victory just weeks before the fall elections, helped assure Lincoln's re-election.



Editor's comments:
On display is a rare statue of Sheridan's ride on Rienzi by artist and sculptor, James E. Kelly (1855-1933). The detail on the statue is as breath-taking as any Remington sculpture I have seen. It is valued at $25,000. The Goddess Columbia, atop the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Troy, NY was sculpted by Kelly. The statue of Gen. John Buford at Gettysburg is also a Kelly sculpture. As an artist, Kelly conducted extensive interviews of Civil War generals while he sketched them for post-war publications. He compiled some 50 boxes of notes and planned to publish a book of the interview. Just after World War I, he submitted his draft which had over 1500 pages. Publishers were not interested in war books after the Great War, and Kelly refused to modify it.

He donated the 50+ boxes to the New York City Public Library where they remained un-discovered for decades. William Styples discovered them in the early 2000s, and published a much shortened and edited version of Kelly's book in 2005, entitled, ***Generals in Bronze.*** Kelly was buried in an unmarked grave in New York City, but in 2006 Stypes raised funds to mark the grave with a granite monument with Kelly's image on it.

The Civil War in 50 Objects

This book by Harold Holzer looks at 50 objects in the prized collection of the New York Historical Society. The Editor will occasionally report on one of the objects, like "Hidden Glory" several months ago.

Leonard Wells Volk (1828-1895) was a moderately talented sculptor who had studied in Rome and later worked in Chicago. One of his patrons was his wife's cousin, U.S. senator, Stephen Douglas. Volk had produced a sculpture of the "Little Giant." Volk learned in March 1860 that Lincoln was to be in Chicago representing a client in a lengthy railroad case. Volk decided to ask Lincoln, who by now was being widely discussed as a Republican candidate for the presidency, to pose for him. Other than photographers, Volk was the first artist for whom Lincoln posed.

Volk explained he wanted to make the sculpting process as efficient as possible. He would make a plaster cast of Lincoln's face. Then he would use a model for Lincoln's body, thus relieving Lincoln of the need for prolonged posing. Lincoln consented.

Abe did not enjoy the process. After sitting about an hour for the plaster life-mask, with straws inserted into his nostrils to help him breathe, Volk had problems getting it off. Some of Lincoln's hair came off also, making his eyes water. Fortunately, he had not yet decided to grow a beard. He returned to the studio several more times when Lincoln took his shirt off to model his brawny shoulders for a bust that Volk had promised. When the statuette was finished Lincoln commented, "In two or three days after Mr. Volk commenced my bust, there was the animal himself!"

The Republican Party chose Lincoln as their presidential candidate the next month. Volk wanted to quickly obtain casts of Lincoln's two great hands so he could complete the statue. He went to Springfield, and on May 19, 1860 arrived at Lincoln's home only to find the candidate's right hand badly swollen due to excessive hand-shaking the evening before. Volk suggested Lincoln hold something in his right hand to minimize the puffiness. Lincoln went to the woodshed and sawed off a piece of a broom handle. While Volk applied the plaster, Lincoln pointed out a scar on his left thumb obtained while splitting rails.

Surprisingly, it would not be until 1876 that Volk unveiled his Lincoln statue, clutching the Emancipation Proclamation instead of the broomstick. Alas, the statue appeared somewhat squat and bulky, with a bearded face that was not realistic at all. However he had

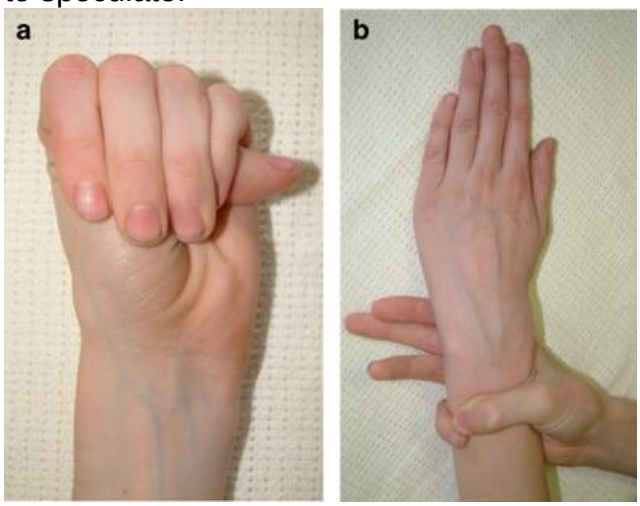
patented the life-mask and hands, and began selling mass-produced plaster and brass copies.

Later sculptors such as Daniel Chester French and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, have used Volk's originals as guides to fashion works of their own. The bronze hand in the New York Historical Society collection is Saint-Gaudens's very own. Richard Watson Gilder organized a committee to purchase Volk's original from the sculptor near the end of his life.



Editor's comments:
Much has be conjectured about whether or not Lincoln had Marfan Syndrome because of his tall stature. Typically thefingers in the syndrome are described as arachnodactyly or spider-like fingers. Below are pictures of the hands in Marfan syndrome and the x-rays of the hands. Although not a physical criteria for making the diagnosis, in 40 years experience with Marfan patients, I never saw one whom I would have described as muscular or robust. Lincoln was a big man. He was a strong wrestler and handled great physical labor with his great strength. These are **not** typical Marfan characteristics. The Volk fingers are not pathologically long. The increased flexibility of joints and connective tissue would have been associated with dislocations in someone who engaged in Lincoln's physical activities.

Although Congress authorized the DNA testing of Lincoln remains for Marfan syndrome in the 1990s, it has not been carried out. There are no direct Lincoln family survivors, so Congress authorized testing. Many collectors own Lincoln remains such as blood on towels, pillowcases and sheets from the bed in the Petersen House. The Military Medical Museum has the bone plug and scalp from Lincoln's assassination site. Testing today would require minute amounts of tissue, but there are no takers. We can only continue to speculate.





CDCWRT
P.O. BOX 14871
ALBANY, NY 12212-4871

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 $25. The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.

THE OFFICERS

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Vice-President	Art Henningson	355-5353
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