

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.net



Volume 31, Number 4 April 2014

THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD!



NOW HE BELONGS TO THE ANGELS

APRIL MEETING
FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2014

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

MALICE TOWARDS ALL: NORTHERN VIOLENCE IN RESPONSE TO LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

Bruce Eelman Ph.D.

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 April meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will occur on Friday, April 11, 2014 at the Watervliet Senior Center. Our special guest speaker will be Professor Bruce Eelman, and his presentation is entitled,* "Malice Towards All – Northern Violence in Response to Lincoln's Assassination."**

Friday afternoon, April 14, 1865, Lincoln was greatly relieved that the Civil war was just about over. He and the country had come through a great ordeal, and he was probably thinking ahead to the task of reuniting the country. The public as a whole was jubilant that the war was ending. Lincoln was still reviled in the South, despised by the Democrats, was unpopular among radical Republicans who wanted the South punished, was the butt of many newspapers' editors, and was still not liked by a large segment of the Northern population. But the war was finally over.

Saturday afternoon, as word of Lincoln's assassination spread, the emotional response of the public caught many by surprise. Anyone who spoke out against Lincoln was beaten, tarred or killed. Democrats and editors were doing 180s. Radical Republicans wanted reprisals and hard time for Confederate leaders. Even Southerners were condemning Booth. What was happening? Where was the public going? Where was the government going? Bruce Eelman will tell us! Come listen!

Dr. Eelman is an Associate Professor of History at Siena College. His area of expertise is the American Civil War and 19th-Century History. He spoke at our 2012 conference about Ellsworth's Avengers.

BOARD MEETING

At the Board Meeting on March 17th, the Treasurer reported $2239.41 in the regular account and $11,898.11 in the preservation account. The cost to print the monthly newsletter is now $150. Donations of books and Civil War items have come from member, Stan Bergman, and the estate of an NPS Park Ranger at Gettysburg.

The CDCWRT overnight trip to Auburn on May 17-18, 2014 will visit the Seward house, Tubman house and the Women's Rights Hall of Fame. The per person cost of $75 will cover hotel, tours, tolls and gas. Attendees will buy their own lunch and dinner.

The CDCWRT has been invited to the Civil War Trust's Grand Review in September and to the 25th Anniversary of the Gettysburg Foundation on June 30th and July 1st.

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 May 9, 2014, the CDCWRT will meet at the Senior Center. Our guest speaker will be Bob Conner, and the title of his presentation is "General Gordon Granger: The Savior of Chickamauga and the Man Behind Juneteenth." (But you thought General George Thomas was the "Rock of Chickamauga! Come and hear the whole story!)

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, at the NYS Military Museum, there will be a talk on secret codes used by a female Union spy in Richmond to provide information to U.S. Grant. The speaker will be a retired CIA member who worked in codes before retiring. This talk is co-sponsored by Friends of Grant's Cottage and the Museum. A book is forth-coming. Put this on your calendar!. Details to follow!!

MARCH MEETING SUMMARY
Frances Harper and Black Women Abolitionists

Johanna Ortner gave us an interesting and detailed account of African American women's roles in the abolition movement. She began by reminding us that black women's history is a relatively new field of research, growing in the 1980s with the work of historians like Deborah Gray White. Ortner also reviewed the typical gender conventions of the nineteenth century, such as piety, subservience, and domesticity. These traits, which were expected of white women as well as black women, were particularly difficult for African Americans to adhere to due to their status as slaves.

Black women were often "devalued and defeminized", according to Ortner. Myths of black women as either a promiscuous jezebel or asexual mammy contributed to the exploitation of black women and made black women abolitionists seem radical for speaking out against slavery. Their activism of speaking out in public, writing for newspapers, and raising money went against the ideas of subservience and domesticity that were so prevalent in the 1800s. Ortner then told us the stories of several black women and how they worked to gain momentum for the abolition movement.

Maria Stewart was a free black from Hartford, Connecticut who held abolitionist lectures. She claimed that God had given her permission to speak out against slavery because of the Christian values of equality and humanity. These values meant, to Stewart, that she had as much right and responsibility to speak for abolition as men did. She even argued that if black men were more active in the abolition movement, she wouldn't need to be.

Sojourner Truth, born as a slave to a Dutch family in New York was emancipated as part of New York's gradual abolition of slavery. Truth's experiences were seen as being

representative of the experiences of the larger black community. She travelled and lectured, giving an eyewitness account of the inhumanity of slavery and the need for women's rights.
Harriet Jacobs of North Carolina also spoke of her own experiences as a slave before she escaped to the North. She often spoke to white women in the North about how fortunate they were to be able chose who to love and to be able to care for their families. Slave women, Jacobs pointed out, did not have those choices and had the additional burden of having to see their children sold away from them.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a free black woman living in Maryland, lived a fascinating life. She wrote novels and poetry, worked for the abolition, women's rights, and temperance movements, and even spoke out against President Andrew Johnson after the Civil War. Unfortunately, though, despite being one of the most active black woman lecturers, she left no personal papers behind.

Harper joined the abolition movement when she was teaching in Ohio in 1853. At this time Maryland passed a law stating that any free black who moved to the state could be sold into slavery. This meant that Harper could not move back to her home state without the risk of enslavement. She gave touring lectures for groups like the Maine and Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Societies and published letters about the difficulties she experiences travelling in the North. She emphasized that true freedom could not exist as long as slavery existed and that education would be crucial for African Americans so they could read contracts. Harper argued after the Civil War that the federal government should have done more to stop slavery and that President Johnson should be impeached and sent back to Tennessee "to rust away the rest of his life".

Ortner's presentation of the lives of various black women highlighted the role these women played as trailblazers in both the abolition and women's rights movements. She reminded us of the social conventions these women went up against in their efforts to draw attention to conditions of slaves and women, and she gave us a deeper look into an often overlooked field in American history.

This excellent summary was provided by our secretary, Erin Baillargeon.

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL LIBRARY PROJECT

In The fall of 2010 Matt Farina approached Dr. John Stacey, Director of Library Service at Sandhills Community College in Southern Pines, NC about a series of exhibits for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. In February 2009 the library had sponsored a Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibit with a number of artifacts that were in the collection of a local collector of Lincoln memerobilia.

Farina contacted John Stacey later in 2009 and he proposed a library exhibit for February of 2010 for Black History Month. That exhibit focused on the theme of evolution of blacks in the 19th-Century from slave to Civil War soldier to Buffalo Soldier post-Civil War. The exhibit utilized five photographs of United States Colored Troop soldiers displaying their wounds. The pictures had been taken by Troy's Civil War surgeon, Reed Brockway Bontecou. The exhibit was a success.

The plan for the sesquicentennial involved an exhibit in the library for the five Aprils beginning in 2011 and extending to 2015. Each exhibit would concentrate on some of the events of that year of the war, including 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864 and 1865. Members of the Rufus Barringer CWRT of Southern Pines contributed artifacts for the exhibit. The exhibit area included a 30-foot long display wall and four 6-foot long, lighted, locked display cases. Paul Brill, a member of the Barringer CWRT, is an

antique dealer who has provided superb Civil War items, many of which had ties to North Carolina soldiers. This also made the exhibit more personal to residents in the area.

The informative portion of the exhibit provides an overview of each year of the war, a brief description of some of the battles in that year, and some of more unique or significant events that occurred that year. Accompanying these descriptions are historical prints, newspapers, modern prints, stamps, maps, etc. The display cases hold weapons, swords, buttons, statues, belt buckles, canteens, Civil War letters, Civil War currency, CDVs, etc. The value of this year's exhibit is $120,000.

The following sections are from this year's exhibit.

1864: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The year 1863 ended with mixed results for the North. In the West, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant captured Vicksburg and drove Confederate forces from Chattanooga, but in the East, Gen. Gordon Meade was unable to destroy Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia after Gettysburg. Any chance that Britain would recognize and aid the Confederacy had disappeared with the Emancipation Proclamation. Both sides were preparing for the spring campaigns, but many northerners were becoming discouraged over the war. Casualties and war debt were high. Draft riots took place.

Paradoxically, the South's last hope came from the North. The Democratic Party contended that the nation could not be reunited by war, but only through peace. Peace could be achieved by allowing the seceded states an opportunity to return to the Union with the same rights they had when they left. If war-weary voters repudiated the pro-war and antislavery policies of Lincoln in the 1864 presidential election, a Democrat president could end hostilities and start negotiations to restore the Union.

This assumption gave Southerners hope of victory in 1864. If they could hold out against Union armies through the spring, summer and fall, the North might lose its will to win. The South would not return to the Union, but instead, the North would accept Southern independence once the war was stopped. There would be no will to resume fighting.

Lincoln decided to act decisively. On March 3, 1864, Secretary of War, Stanton, informed Grant he was to assume command of all Union armies. Although the 5-foot 8-inch, 135 pound commander was not much to look at, Lincoln perceived Grant was the military leader who could make up for the failures of Generals McDowell, McClellan, Pope, Burn-side, Hooker and Meade. On March 9th Grant was made Lieutenant General, a rank previously held by George Washington.

After Grant met with Meade, Grant decided to keep Meade as commander of the Army of the Potomac. However, Grant's headquarters in the field would be with that army, and Gen. Halleck would function as Grant's chief of staff in Washington. Grant commanded some 662,000 men. His plan was simple in concept: put all the Union armies on the move in the spring with the primary objective to destroy the two main Confederate armies in the field.

He disbanded the now small 1st and 3rd Corps and moved the men into 2nd and 5th Corps. He stripped Washington of the heavy artillery regiments where they served primarily as guard duty, and converted them into infantry regiments. He placed Gen. Phil Sheridan as commander of the Cavalry Corps. He made Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman commander of the Army of the Tennessee. Sherman was assigned the task of defeating Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston's army. Grant ended the exchange of prisoners of war to curtail the replenishment of Confederate soldiers. Many Union soldiers in the East were skeptical of Grant.

Grant's strategy was to order all the Union armies to move within the same time frame. This would

prevent the South from shifting forces from quiet theaters of war, to active theaters where men were needed. Meade, with Grant, would go after Lee in Virginia; Sherman would go after Johnston in Georgia; Sigel would go up the Shenandoah Valley to deny Lee food and supplies for horses; Butler would move on Richmond from Fortress Monroe; Banks in Louisiana would move east into Mississippi and Alabama.

Jefferson Davis' strategy for 1864 was also simple: to make the coming offensive so costly for the Union, that, by November, the weary and grieving Northern electorate would vote out Lincoln and replace him with a man who would be willing to negotiate peace and thereby recognize the Confederacy as a separate, independent country.

Would the results of 1864 bring about the end of the Union as Lincoln perceived it, or would 1864 bring about the end of the Confederacy?

Would "Unconditional Surrender" Grant be the match for "Bobby" Lee? Union soldiers in the East considered westerners to be undisciplined farmers who were fighting a second-rate Confederate army, while western Union soldiers considered easterners to by "band-box dandies" who did not fight but just polished uniform buttons. The commanders of the Union army in the East had included Generals McDowell, McClellan, Pope, McClellan again, Burnside, Hooker and Meade. All had been disappointing in their attempts to secure a solid victory over Confederate forces. Could Grant lead easterners, and would they follow him? READ ON.

Confederate Andersonville Prison

On February 27 1864 the first Northern prisoners arrive at the infamous Confederate prison named Camp Sumter at Anderson Georgia, the largest Confederate military prison during the American Civil War. During the 14 months the prison existed, more than 45,000 Union Solders were confined here. Of these, almost 13,000 died from disease, poor sanitation, malnutrition, overcrowding, or exposure to the elements. Major Henry Wirz, commandant, was the only Civil War soldier executed on November 10, 1865 for war crimes.

The Battle of Plymouth was an engagement fought from April 17 through April 20, 1864, in Washington County, North Carolina. Confederate forces attacked the city in an attempt to recapture ports lost to the Union two years before.

In a combined operation with the ram boat *CSS Albemarle*, Confederate forces under Maj. Gen. Robert F. Hoke, with 7,000 men attacked the 2,800-man Union garrison. His troops began to capture some of the outer defenses, but he needed the *Albemarle* to bomb the city from the river before attacking the Federal garrison of 12 regiments on April 17.

On April 19, the ram appeared in the river, sinking the Union boats *Smithfield*, damaging the *Miami*, and driving off the other Union ships supporting the Plymouth garrison. Confederate forces, consisting of four NC regiments, including the famous 6th North Carolina Regiment, captured Fort Comfort and drove the defenders into Fort Williams. On the 20th, the garrison finally surrendered. The Battle of Plymouth forced 9 companies of the 85th New York Volunteers to surrender and be taken prisoners. Most of the enlisted men of the 85th New York who were captured were sent to Andersonville Prison, arriving April 29th.

One such prisoner was Sgt Charles H. Humphrey, 24 years old, who enlisted on August 26 1861 at Springwater NY as a Corporal in Co. B. He re-enlisted on January 1 1864.

His 1864 diary along with his military and personal paperwork and his 50th Anniversary Reunion Medals that he received at the 1914 New York State Monument Dedication on the old Andersonville

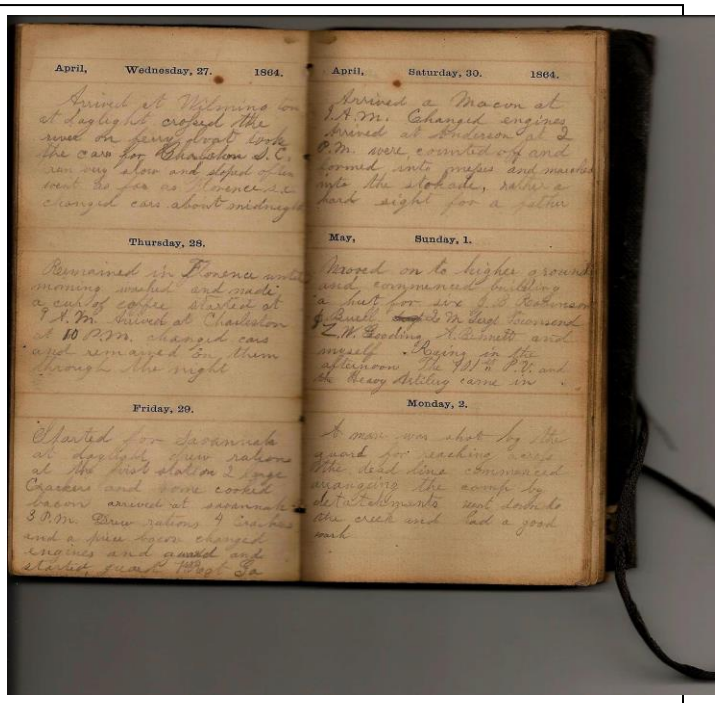
grounds are presented in the display case.



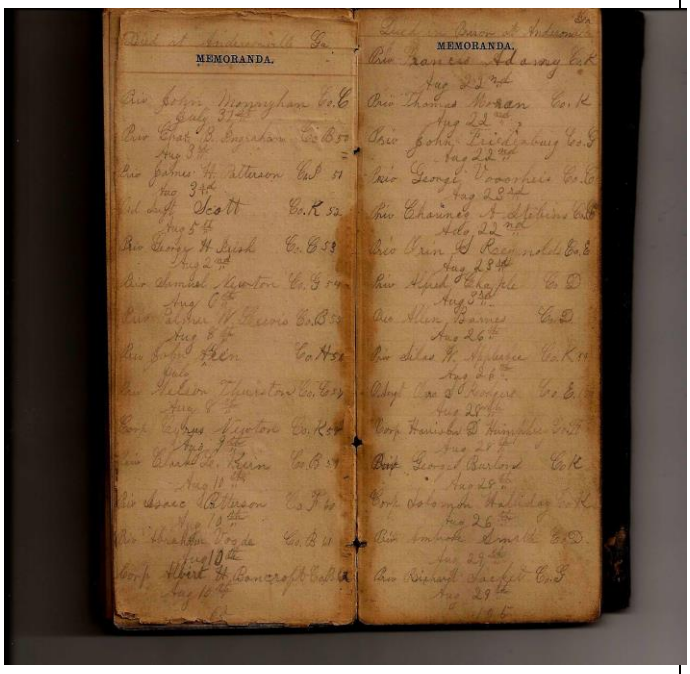
From L to R, Qtr Master Sgt. Charles H. Humphrey Andersonville Medals: 1914 New York's Prisoner's Survivor Medal, NY State Monument Dedication Medal, National Society Andersonville Survivor Member Badge

Charles Humphrey arrived at the prison on Saturday April 30th at 2 am by train. He remained at the prison till September 11, recording the names of 117 men from the 85th who died in the back of his diary. He also documented his day to day life, the food eaten, weather, maintaining his shebang (hut), soldier fights, marauding gangs, and other hardships.

He was next carried by train to Charleston SC after "133 days in the pen" to another Confederate prison at the city horse race track. He remained there another 167 days until he was sent to Goldsboro, then back to Wilmington where Charles was released in a prisoner of war exchange February 26, 1865. Amazingly, Humphrey returned to duty after he was released, was promoted to Qtr Master Sgt on March 1 1865, and mustered out of service on June 27 1865 at New Berne, NC.



1864 diary page stating he (Charles) arrived at the prison on April 30th and was marched to the stockade. He moved to higher ground, built a hut with six other men; it rained in the afternoon. On May 1st a man was shot by guard for reaching across the "Dead Line". Went to the creek and had a good wash.



Sample Pages in back of Charles Humphrey's 1864 Diary listing the Dead Soldiers from the 85th New York Volunteers Regiment by Name, Rank , Company, and Day of Death at the Andersonville Prison

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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 $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.

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