



# The Dispatch



Newsletter of the

**Capital District Civil War Round Table**

P.O. Box 8874, Albany, NY 12208

**Volume 11 Number 8**

**April 1994**

## Breaking the Peach Orchard Salient

by  
**Major Steve Hawley**

There are many accounts attesting to the furious way in which William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade swept Sickles's salient at the Sherfy Peach Orchard, July 2nd at Gettysburg. On Friday, April 15th Major Steve Hawley of the Department of History, USMA, will explore the generalship of William Barksdale on that bloody afternoon.

Major Hawley, a 1982 graduate of the USMA, teaches the history of Military Art and a colloquium on Civil War generalship. Receiving his MA in History from Texas A&M, he has published numerous book reviews and an article on Barksdale at Fredericksburg in *Civil War History Magazine* (March 1992)

### APRIL MEETING

Friday, April 15, 1994  
Bethlehem Public Library  
Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY

Doors Open: 7:00 PM  
Program Begins: 7:30 PM

## CDCWRT CALENDAR

••• 1994 •••

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APR 15 **Barksdale's Attack at the Peach Orchard: Gettysburg, July 2, 1863.** Major Steve Hawley, History Department, USMA.

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MAY 13 **The Life of Major General John Gibbons.** Mark Jordan will present a somewhat different version of the program he presented at the January meeting.

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JUNE 24 **A Civil War Medical Re-Enactment.** Alvan Jacques.

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NOTE: Please note the change in the date for the June meeting from the 10th to the 24th.

### *✍ Dues, Dues, Dues, Dues!!!*

Don't forget to renew. Your membership expiration date is on the mailing label of each month's Dispatch. Membership is still only \$15. Send your renewal to: CDCWRT, PO.. Box 8874, Albany, NY 12208



### \* **Adirondack Civil War Round Table Forms**

**Chris Heidorf** is leading an effort to form a new Civil War round table in the Adirondacks. **Mike Barrett** and **Mark Silo** traveled to Glens Falls (on the same evening as thousands of rabid Siena basketball fans) to share some of our Roundtable's experiences and some of our material, such as our charter and bylaws. Mike and Mark both found the discussion interesting and entertaining. Anyone interested in joining or finding out more about the Adirondack Civil War Round Table should contact:

Adirondack Civil War Round Table  
C/O Box 207  
Gansevoort, NY 12831

Good luck with your new Roundtable!

### \* **Old Baldy Reaches Goal**

We recently received a letter from the Old Baldy Civil War Round Table of Philadelphia announcing that they have reached their goal of raising \$2,500.00 for the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation. The donation was made possible by the contributions of a number of round tables, including our own.

### \* **Grant Cottage Update**

The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage organization recently issued an optimistic report on the prospects for the upcoming season: *"From the testing grounds of 1993, the Friends' organization has moved into 1994 with confidence for*

*keeping Grant Cottage open to the public, for planning and carrying out special events, and for expanding programs as much as possible."*

Attendance at the Cottage in 1993 was 2,317 compared to 1,754 in 1992. The Friends membership is at an all-time high of 220.

The Cottage opens for the 1994 season, Wednesdays through Sundays, 10:00 to 4:00 beginning on Saturday, May 28. You can contact the Cottage at (518) 587-8277 after May 1st for information on this season's programs.

### \* **Speakers Wanted for 1995**

**Mike Russert**, our program chairman, wants to know if anyone wishes to speak to the Round Table during the 1994-95 season. Mike is presently filling the January through June dates and would like to use local speakers before going to outside speakers. Contact Mike if you are interested.

### \* **Capital District Genealogical Society 12th Annual Conference - 4/30/94**

The Capital District Genealogical Society will hold their annual conference at the New York State Museum on April 30th. The afternoon session will feature Ann Smith Lainhart, author and lecturer, whose topic will be State and Federal Census. Here is the conference schedule:

10:00 am -- Registration  
10:15 am -- Opening Remarks & Schedule Notes.  
10:30 am -- First Speaker  
12:00 pm -- Lunch Break  
1:00 pm -- Afternoon Session/Speaker

**Speakers:** Anne Lainhart, Violet Fallone, Melinda Yates.

**Where:** NY State Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY (NYS Library and Museum Building), Mtg. Rooms C & D.

Door prizes will be drawn throughout the day. Free parking is available in the state lot adjoining the museum's east side. A drop off area is located directly in front of museum. Book sellers, societies, and sharing sessions will also be featured. Bring your bag lunch for the 12:00 lunch break. Coffee, juice, and soda will be available.



## Reward Offered for Return of Eagle

In July 1993, a large bronze eagle was stolen from the monument at the grave of Brigadier General Adolph von Steinwehr in Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, NY. The monument was erected by the Grand Army of the Republic through member contributions. The eagle has large eyes and the wings are just beginning to spread as if preparing for flight. Its talons are grasping several cannon balls resting atop a square pedestal. It is approximately 18" tall.

In order to assist in the recovery of the eagle, Albany Rural Cemetery, the Sons of Union Veterans Col. George L. Willard Camp #154, the Capital District Civil War Round Table and the 125th NY Regimental Association have offered a reward for information leading to the recovery of the eagle and the arrest and conviction of the thief or thieves. Persons with information concerning the eagle's theft should contact Investigator Douglas Wingate of the New York State Police at 518-783-3225 or Officer Kevin Franklin of the Menands Police Department at 518-463-1681. All calls will be kept confidential. Organizations interested in participating in the reward fund should contact Mr. Joseph Germaine, Albany Ru-

ral Cemetery, Menands, New York at 518-463-7017.

Collectors are urged to cut out this article and take it with them to antique shows and flea markets. If you see the eagle, contact one of the police agencies listed above. Please help to rectify this desecration of our Civil War heritage.

## State Library Expands Civil War Resources

The State Library has acquired *Civil War Unit Histories: Regimental and Personal Narratives*. This microfiche set gathers reference books, personal histories and other narratives about the war to facilitate research for the historian and genealogist. Created from materials borrowed from a variety of sources, including the State Library, the collection provides access to a previously underused and overlooked first-person source on the Civil War era.

The introduction to the guide describes this collection as: "...a wondrous testimonial not only to the gallantry of those soldiers but equally so to their sense of history. The existence of so much writing might well be called providential in that American soldiers of the 1860s were more educated than their counterparts in Europe; larger numbers returned home and were able to relate their stories; the majority of them experienced much to tell. Ink and paper survive with a peculiar freshness. The words of Civil War soldiers recreate their era with an immediacy and revelation that, six score and ten years later, bring a new understanding of the indivisible nation and the war that made it so."

Personal narratives for the 1860s fall into four types: letters, diaries, reminiscences, and regimental histories. During the Civil War, a popular camp activity was letter writing. This correspondence presents an immediate and intimate picture. Diaries or journals also provide unique insights, although some, embellished or compiled decades

later, are suspect. A large number of personal narratives exist and qualify as excellent campaign histories. Frank Wilkeson, a NY Artilleryman and prison guard, in his *Recollections* (1882), provides a cynical view of the Civil War. Some Northern personal narratives, like Richard Eddy's *History of the Sixtieth Regiment, NY Volunteers*, were condemnations of slavery and southern institutions. Regimental histories, such as Frederick C. Floyd's *Fortieth New York*, offer excellent information about individual regiments.

The Library has only added that portion of the collection that deals directly with New York State. The microfiche and its guide are located in the 7th floor Microform Area.

## *Jefferson Davis, The Man and His Hour* by William C. Davis.

*A book review by Don Gavin*



How can a man with great achievements - a Congressman, a war hero, a Senator and a Secretary of War - when thrust into a great position fail to act like a great man? Historian William C. Davis (no relation) attempts to answer this question by revealing the character of Jefferson Davis, both the virtues and vices that guided his presidency. Once these traits are recognized his political actions are more readily understood and the inevitable collapse of the Confederacy more fully appreciated.

The primary source of information chosen for this biography was the superabundance of Davis correspondence, over 50 thousand items. By design, the text is a contemporary reflection of Davis that in principle could have been written 100 years ago, during "his hour." In it the author finds Davis to be a man continuously driven by a noble sense of duty yet unable to rise above the petty and mean traits that constantly flaw his actions. The actions cited show Davis as a difficult person to like yet the examples are somehow

marred in several instances by Davis' opponents whom also possess the same undesirable characteristics. It was a different time with different standards for behavior that today would seem to be harsh or at least rude. But at the time of the Civil War, Davis was considered to be a great statesman by almost the entire South.

Near the beginning of the biography we meet Davis as a young cadet in the US Military Academy at West Point struggling to survive. Having entered the Academy with a fine classical education (fluent in both French and Greek) his record is poor both in studies and military conduct. Upon graduation, Davis begins a seven year tour in the infantry (the service branch for underachievers) then abruptly resigns when court marshaled for insubordination and neglect of duty. (He failed to attend roll call on a rainy morning.) The court martial transactions present a vivid picture of Davis at that time. He is witty, sensitive and intelligent. Yet the good Dr. Jekyll quickly becomes the bad Mr. Hyde when his actions are criticized. He affects a fixed mind set; to prove himself right -- completely right! Facts are overlooked, dismissed or misstated. His mind cannot accept reality when it implies wrong doing or poor judgment on his part. This emerges as Davis' greatest weakness: an unreasonable pride that blinds him to actuality and his own fallibility. (This weakness, at a later time, allows Braxton Bragg to cripple an army.)

As the years pass, we follow Davis as he successfully develops his own plantation and returns to the scholarly studies he had abandoned at West Point. In time he enters politics and is elected to the US Congress where he gains a reputation for a "cool head and logical mind." He addresses such issues as the naturalization of foreigners (make it less restrictive), the boundary with Canada (much less belligerent than "54/40 or fight") and the need for territorial expansion via Manifest Destiny and the annexation of Texas. Territorial expansion is however always coupled with the expansion of slavery into this new land with the option of state secession from the Union should the North attempt to block it. On this issue, Davis

was at least 10 years ahead of the rest of the South.

By today's standards, Davis was neither "cool" nor "logical" in his speeches to the Congress. In one he maintained that the "best means of promoting the eventual freedom of the slave is to promote the spread of slavery." In another he claimed, "the North has reaped the largest profit from the introduction of the slaves." Here we find a specific issue in which Davis (and most of the South) was blind to reality. Did Davis really believe that slavery would be reduced if it were spread into the new territories? Did he believe the North profited most from Slavery? Simply a case of convoluted reasoning with an open abuse of the facts.

During the war with Mexico (1848), Davis raised a Mississippi regiment and personally led it through the Battle of Buena Vista until he was wounded. His personal courage and military leadership were well documented and he returned home a war hero. With the dual accomplishments of a successful politician and a war hero, Davis easily obtained higher office in the US Senate and later as Secretary of War under Franklin Pierce.

With the election of James Buchanan in 1856, Davis reclaimed his Senate seat and became the leading proponent for secession. With an established motto of "I make no terms, I accept no compromise", he appeared to be uniquely qualified to lead the South out of the Union and into a Civil War, if it became necessary.

What personal traits did Davis bring to the Confederate presidency? His friends claimed he was loyal, (but almost to a fault) brave, intelligent and compassionate. They may have added that he was an excellent judge of his enemies. On the other hand, his enemies (Andrew Johnson in the forefront) would claim that he had an unreasonable pride, a morbid fear of error and that he was highly insecure. They too would have added that Davis was a dreadful judge of his friends. Unfortunately both the good and the bad traits combined to impede his work. Davis would be slow

to make decisions and later unable to change the poor ones. From insecurity he would appoint mostly close friends to high command and then, out of loyalty, leave them in place too long. His enemies, though qualified for service would be ignored. With such baggage, it was not possible for Davis to be a great leader and it showed.

The greatest challenge that Davis faced as president was the need to unite the individual state governments in order to utilize in the most efficient and effective manner all the resources available to the South. Initially he was successful but as the war continued the fragile unity cracked and military operations suffered when they could have and should have been sustained.; The author lists several battles, including Vicksburg and New Orleans, in which Davis either withheld support or caused so much confusion in the military command structure that he must share personally in these defeats. His appointments of Polk, Bragg, and Johnston, while based to a large extent on personal friendship, were reasonable but he allowed them to keep commands long after their armies had lost confidence in them. Beauregard was left out in the cold for three years after quarreling with Davis in the summer of 1862.

Some would claim that was not a mistake, but Beauregard should have been offered the opportunity to serve in an active role as the third highest ranking officer in the South. The only military accomplishment that Davis can be easily associated with was the promotion of Robert E. Lee.

In the end there was this blindness to reality and a progressively mean spirit that prevented Davis from acting as a great man. When defeat was inevitable, he sought means to continue the conflict using guerrilla tactics. It is noteworthy that neither Lee nor Johnston requested permission from Davis to surrender their armies. (It would not have been given.)

In summary, the author has presented a creditable and indeed critical review of the life of Jefferson Davis. However, I would have preferred a shorter version (much less than the 700+ pages

here) with more correspondence from the countless military leaders that knew and visited Davis. Too much of the book is based on correspondence from secondary players, politicians and newspaper editors. For civil war buffs the book has a special value in that it gives substance to the role Davis played in the South's defeat. Jefferson Davis was an active president.



The following was found in the personal papers of President Jefferson Davis and was served for the Holidays at the Confederate White House.

### Jeff Davis Punch

1 1/2 pints	lemon juice
3 1/2 lbs.	sugar dissolved in water
12 bottles	Claret
1 1/2 bottles	Sherry
1/2 bottle	Brandy
1/4 bottle	Rum
1 C.	maraschino
3 bottles	Ginger Ale
6 bottles	Soda
2	lemons
1	orange
1/2	cucumber

Mix all ingredients and garnish with thin slices of lemon, orange, and cucumber (with peel). If too strong, water may be added until the quantity reaches 5 gallons. Best made 24 hours ahead of time, add soda and ginger ale just before serving. Serve with plenty of ice.



### Krick Entertains Round Table at Spring Banquet

Bob Krick, author, historian, preservationist, and Chief Historian at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, presented a thoroughly entertaining program at the Spring

Banquet on March 12th. Bob's topic was *Stonewall's Failed Protégés*.



Bob Krick and Mark Silo

Stonewall made a string of poor choices of those who were to serve directly under him; Jackson's criteria seemed weighted toward people who shared his values, background, and interests rather than on an objective evaluation of their leadership abilities. Bob spoke about Brigadier General R.E. Colston who Stonewall hand picked as his successor. Colston had taught at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) with Jackson before the war. At the battle of Chancellorsville, he was reported to be "brave, but inert."

Jackson brought in Robert Lewis Dabney as his Chief of Staff when his former staff officer was captured (Jackson: "he failed to report on time"). The stern and devout Dabney was highly visible in camp (always preaching to the troops) yet largely invisible on the battlefield.

Jackson chose another VMI professor, Daniel Truhart, as his ordinance and artillery officer. Truhart knew Jackson at VMI before the war where they found they shared an interest and belief in hydrotherapy. Jackson, at Truhart's recommendation, visited a spa in Jefferson County New York. Unfortunately, Truhart's knowledge of hydrotherapy did not prepare him well for a position as Jackson's ordinance and artillery officer.

Jackson promoted E. F. Paxton, a fellow Presbyterian deacon from Lexington. Although

Paxton had many admirable qualities, those good qualities were not related to anything of a military nature. Paxton was killed in battle too soon to see if he would develop into a capable military leader.

Jackson promoted John R. Jones, another VMI associate of his, over many other men and after Jones had lost an election for a leadership position. At Fredericksburg, Jones was found hiding behind a tree. At Chancellorsville, Jones left the battlefield due to "an ulcerated leg". Eventually Jones is captured and the Confederates, in a telling gesture, never got around to asking for his exchange.

Discussion following Bob's prepared remarks centered around Jackson's leadership style where he expected his subordinates to blindly obey orders to the letter. Jackson was secretive and didn't share much information with his subordinates. Jackson preferred subordinates who acted as robots, not thinking individuals. Given his leadership style, perhaps Jackson realized that their experience and military abilities would be largely irrelevant with him as their direct superior.

Bob lived up to his reputation as an excellent speaker. By mixing humor, story-telling skills, and a thorough knowledge of the people and the events, Bob kept the audience entertained all evening, never missing a beat when pandemonium began to intrude from the room next door.

Bob worked out an excellent travel deal to come to Albany early on the day of the banquet. Mark Silo and Bob used the day traveling the Capital District visiting bookstores. The following are excerpts from a letter from Bob Krick to Mark Silo following the banquet:

*Dear Mark:*

*Thanks so much for your hospitality during my recent venture into your Arctic latitude. Your generosity in squiring me around the bookstores in the region*

*deserves the most effusive praise, even without blueberry crisp....*

*Your group displayed considerable courage in resisting the urge to stand up and begin dancing to the beat throbbing through the meeting room at high intensity. You have them well trained. Had Hennessy been there, though, he surely would've done so.*

*My regards to the long-suffering Mrs. Silo.*

*Bob K.*

The following is an accounting of the revenue and expenses for the banquet:

REVENUE:

Dinners (64)	\$1,440.00
Print & Book raffle	300.00
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Total Revenue:	\$1,740.00

EXPENSES:

Speaker:

Travel	\$166.00
Room	73.39
Parking	14.00
Honorarium	146.61
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	\$400.00

Raffle:

Troiani print	\$0.00
Framing	57.29
Krick Book	32.50
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	\$89.79

Total Expenses:	\$1,313.79
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DINNER NET REVENUE: \$426.21

Created in 1984, the Capital District Civil War Round Table is an incorporated non-profit educational organization. Meetings are held monthly at the Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar, New York. This newsletter is published ten times per year. Annual dues are \$15. 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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To join or renew membership, send \$15 to the CDCWRT address below.

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**CDCWRT**  
**P.O. Box 8874**  
**Albany, New York 12208**

### The Officers

Chairman	Michael Barrett
Vice-Chairman	Richard Becker
Treasurer	Mark Silo
Secretary	Sue Knost
At-Large	Robert Johnson
At-Large	Dan Lorello

### The Troops

Programs	Michael Russert
Newsletter	Robert Johnson
Preservation	Richard Becker
Field Trips	Mark Silo, Kathy Silo
Banquets	Michael Aikey, Kathy Silo
Refreshments	Jack Lancto
Nominations	Jack Lancto
Membership	Kathy Silo, Russ Denegar
Video Library	James Carey



**Capital District Civil War Round Table**