

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

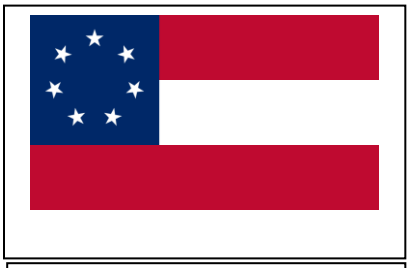
CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

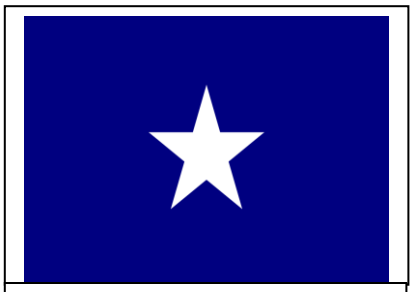
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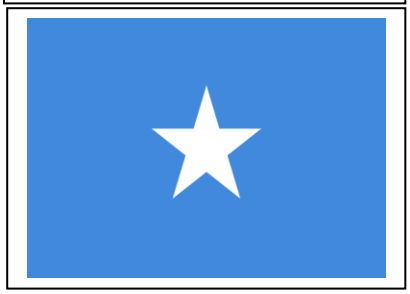
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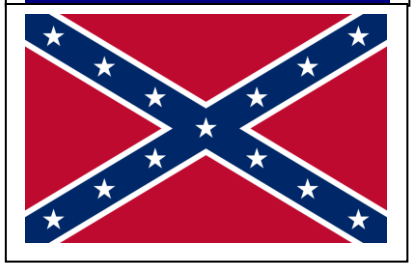
WHICH FLAGS ARE OFFENSIVE TO YOU?

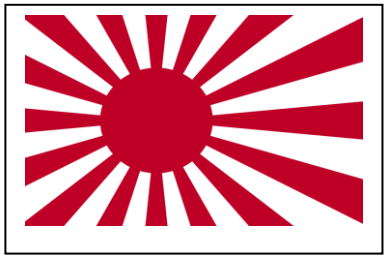


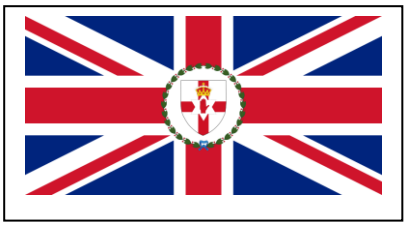




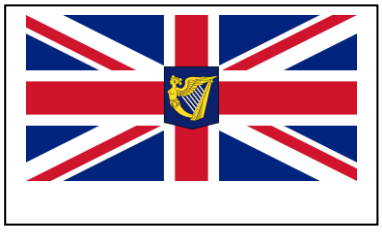












Many people are offended by certain flags because of what the flag represents to them. The Confederate battle flag may mean a regiment to one, and the KKK to another. Here are 9 flags that may be offensive to different people for different reasons, but all are historical. The flag you may hate (or like) may not be what you think it is. Turn to page 7 of the newsletter to find out if the flag represents what you think it does.

SEPTEMBER MEETING
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2015

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

RAILROADS & TELEGRAPH
Their Effect on the Civil War

DAVID HOCHFELDER

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 September meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, September 11, 2015. Our special guest speaker is Associate Professor David Hochfelder and his presentation is entitled **"Railroads and Telegraph: Their Effect on the Civil War."**

Many of us appreciate the impact of the railroad during the Civil War. The wide-spread use of the railroad to transport troops and supplies first occurred in the Civil War. Both armies recognized the critical value of railroad hubs and centers. Examples include "Stonewall" Jackson's destruction of Manassas Junction in 1862 and Grant's destruction of the rail links at Petersburg to cut off Lee's access to supplies and food.

World War II examples of railroad use during war include the Germans' ability to move troops into Russia and the Allies' ability to prevent German reinforcements and tanks from reaching Normandy. After WWII the Russians changed the track width of their railroads to prevent European armies from using Russian railroads for invasion again.

Telegraphy in the nineteenth century approximated the internet in our own day. David Hochfelder offers listeners a comprehensive history of this ground-breaking technology, which employed breaks in an electrical current to send code along miles of wire. The telegraph revolutionized the spread of information, speeding personal messages, news of public events, and details of stock fluctuations. During the Civil War, telegraphed intelligence and high-level directives gave the Union war effort a critical advantage. Afterward, the telegraph helped build and break fortunes and, along with the railroad, altered the way Americans thought about time and space.

David Hochfelder is an electrical engineer turned historian. He is an Associate Professor of History in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University at Albany with an expertise in the history of U.S. businesses and technology, public history, the history of information technology and the history of the telegraph. Prior to his appointment at Albany, he served as a research historian at the Thomas Edison Papers.

Dr. Hochfelder's two most recent publications are: **The Telegraph in America: A History (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012) and Two Controversies in the Early History of Telegraphy (EEE Communications Magazine, 2010).**

UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS.

NOTE THIS CHANGE!

The October meeting date of the CDCWRT has been changed to accommodate the sizeable number of round table members who will be going on the Civil War trip with Regina Daly. The meeting has been changed from October 9th to October 16, 2015.

The speaker will be member Stu Lehman.

On November 7, 2015, Saturday, the CDCWRT will sponsor the 5th Annual Sue Knost Memorial Conference at Hudson Valley Community College. This will be a one day conference with a sit down lunch. The luncheon speaker will be Patrick Schroeder, Appomattox Court House National Historical Park historian. Other speakers will include Patrick Falci and R.L. Murray. More details will follow, but mark your calendar now! There will be no regular meeting in November.

EDITORIAL

After the church shooting in Charleston, SC, there has been considerable activity to remove all traces of the Confederate battle flag from all government locations where it might be flown, including Federal, state and local sites. Demands have followed that all traces of the flag and references to the Confederacy be removed also, because it represents a shameful time in our country's history which was offensive to many, and remains offensive to this day.

This is not new; looking through old newsletters, this topic has reoccurred on a 7-10 year cycle. What has become evident in our government is a polarization of political thought that is so rigid, that any sign of compromise or cooperation is perceived as profound weakness and betrayal to one's party or affiliation. This philosophy has infiltrated everyday relationships. All too often the attitude is "if you are not with me, then you are against me." Under these circumstances, there is little or no attempt at dialog, let alone understanding.

Relative to the Confederate battle flag, I feel there are primarily two groups who support the flag. To one group, the flag is historical and they honor it because relatives fought for it or under it. The other group, and I will kindly call them Yahoos, fly the flag solely to irritate and flaunt their right to fly it. We usually can easily recognize this latter group. They are in the same category as neo-Nazis and those who burn the flag because it is their right to do so. They know these actions are inflammatory, and will get the response they seek ---- publicity and irrational anger.

I suspect some of these Yahoos have no Civil War relatives, or know little about their family histories. The ultimate irony would be to find that one's family were staunch Unionist in a border or seceded state, and that multiple relatives fought and died for the Union cause!

I feel that some of the protesters of the battle flag, who want all imagery of it removed along with any portrayal of it (including TV shows like the Dukes of Hazzard and the Civil War Journal, the History Channel and movies like Gone With the Wind and the Horse Soldiers), have little knowledge of military history and war. From the earliest armies, there has always been some symbol or icon that represented that fighting unit. While that symbol may have represented a government in the larger sense, more often the common soldier fought and died for the honor or preservation of the smaller unit symbol.

An example from the distant past occurred during the reign of Augustus when a Roman army lost 3 eagles, the symbol of a legion, to the Germanic tribes. That loss was more

humiliating than the satisfaction derived from the Pax Romana that the Roman Empire established for two centuries.

In the Civil War it was the regimental flag for which men fought and died. Medals of Honor were given for defense of the flag, not specifically the government that the flag represented. The term "honor guard" indicates the honor of defending the flag, not necessarily the principles behind the flag. I do not believe that in the heat of battle, when a soldier, Federal or Confederate, saw his regimental flag fall, that he thought of Union or Abolition or States Rights or Slavery when he rushed forward to save the flag. Likewise after the war, many memorials were erected in the north and south, not to honor the government for which the soldiers fought, but to honor the soldiers who fought.

We cannot change history. The best we can do is try to interpret it as accurately and unbiased as possible, and realize how history has affected us today. We must try to understand how history has affected different segments of our society. I agree that the battle flag should be removed from public government sites whether they be buildings, courts or license plates. Exceptions would include historical sites, battle fields, and cemeteries. Relative to monuments and names of bridges, highways, buildings, counties, etc. we can either accept them in their historical context, or change or move them to meet society's new sensitivities.

If we do the latter, then Britain needs to rescind those Victoria Crosses awarded for the defense of Rourke's Drift, since the Zulu were only defending their lands from an imperialistic nation. Also, we need to return Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and most of Texas to Mexico since Santa Ana was just quelling illegal protests by Texans who were not citizens of Mexico. Also, we should close the Holocaust Museum in Washington, because it's a reminder of a shameful time, and close the preserved concentration camps in Germany because they too remind us of shameful practices during World War II. Then we also need to close all Toyota, Honda, Nissan, etc. dealerships because they represented an imperialistic Japan that many Pacific veterans from WWII still have not forgiven. And we need to junk all BMWs, Mercedes and Volkswagens because they made weapons for Hitler and the Nazis. And let's not forget that First American slave owner, George Washington and his city and monument! The Edmund Pettus Bridge in Montgomery, AL would then become the Route 80 Bridge over the Alabama River.

These are just a few examples that can be advocated if we adopt the philosophy of soothing everyone's sensitivities. Do you think I am exaggerating this a bit? Read on.

A recent item in ***The Wall Street Journal*** highlighted a concern of a number of colleges and universities. It has been suggested that some of the classical works of Homer be removed from the teaching curriculum, or at least have warnings announced to students before taking the literature course. Why? Some of Homer's works have the rape of women in them. The fear of re-traumatizing a student rape victim, or precipitating a PTSD event in those students has resulted in these recommendations.

I understand the concern, but it is a slippery slope to censorship, such as banning Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn for use of the N-word for example. If we want to protect our children from the reality of hate and violence in the world, then we should also ban all violent or suggestive computer games, movies, music, etc. Or do we want to teach them that these realities exist, and teach them how to recognize hatred, how to cope with violence in the world, and how to change the factors that cause hate and violence in the first place?

And while I am on the subject of offensive flags, let me make this point also. Most Americans I feel ***honor*** the American flag, what may be called patriotism. But there are

some, who under the guise of patriotism, dishonor the flag and the concepts it represents. These individuals wave the flag to antagonize those who do not conform to their concept of Americanism. In an interesting dichotomy, they may wave both the American flag and the Confederate battle flag simultaneously, believing both flags represent their view of America. They often shout "Love it or leave it!" if one does not prescribe to their beliefs. Their venom is directed towards all the rest of us, black, Hispanic, white, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Polish, Irish, Italian, oriental, etc., etc., etc.

So where do we go from here?

The motive of the Charleston killer was to murder a group of innocent blacks in church. The black community response to this would be so violent and this would precipitate a race war. Fortunately the people of Charleston and many other cities did not fall for that ploy. There were no riots in Charleston like the riots in Ferguson a year earlier. And don't forget that Charleston was considered the birthplace of the Confederacy by Billy Sherman!

But leave it up to our politicians to pick up the ball and carry on to inflame people on both sides of the issue to ban this and that, to desecrate monuments, to have KKK rallies, etc. Seems like the killer is getting his wish after all.

Individuals from both sides need to talk AND listen. If there is an audience, it should LISTEN, and not yell and applaud the comments of their advocates. When you clap for the comments of your advocate, you cannot hear. We truly need to try to understand the opposite side. Then there may be a pathway for compromise and agreement that is acceptable and reflects a true change in attitude.

We need to embrace our past with all its imperfections. We need to teach our children the truth about our past imperfections to help them understand who we are and why we are that way today. Armed with knowledge, we can move toward the goal our forefathers --- a more perfect government and society.

THE GETTYSBURG SKULL

The story began in 2014 when a Pennsylvania auctioneer placed a skull along with several other supposed Civil War artifacts, in an auction that was to take place in June at a hotel in Hagerstown. A hand-written label with the skull stated: "Found at the Benner Farm Gettysburg 1949." There was also a more specific notarized document stating it had been found near a barn about two miles north of Gettysburg.

The document also stated the barn had served as a field hospital and was the scene of fighting on July 1, 1863. The skull had turned up while someone was tilling a garden. The auctioneer believed the skull to be "the ultimate Civil War item" and believed it might fetch $100,000 or more. When word of the auction got out to the public, the reaction was so negative that he pulled the skull from the sale.

There was no evidence to indicate that the auction was some kind of fraudulent activity or false claim. After the outcry, the skull was donated to the Gettysburg Foundation. The plan was that once the skull was authenticated, it would be buried with full military honors in the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg.

The skull was delivered by the Park Service to a laboratory at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History on June 26, 2014. The lower jaw was missing, as were four front teeth and some nasal bones. Otherwise it was in remarkable condition, considering it had been in the ground at Gettysburg since 1863.

The moment veteran anthropologist, Douglas Owsley, set eyes on it, he knew it wasn't as advertised. It didn't date from 1863; it was far older. Owsley had examined thousands of

skulls during his career, including 15 sets of remains in a 19th-century cemetery in Gettysburg during a building project. He said the skull should have been in multiple pieces because of the moist soil of southern Pennsylvania. It should have been far more deteriorated. Preservation and condition did not fit with the type of weathering expected.

The skull had a relatively flat face and a wide, robust structure that wouldn't be that of a white or black person in Pennsylvania. These were more Indian characteristics said Owsley. The teeth were too worn for a young 19th-century person. In addition, at some point, someone had coated the skull with shellac, perhaps to preserve it, giving it a mottled dark brown color.

In order to determine the age of the skull, a small piece of tooth was sent to the Applied Isotope Lab at the University of Georgia. Radiocarbon dating reported the skull was about seven centuries old. Other tests suggested the individual's diet was mainly corn and that he probably originated in southwestern Mexico or southeastern Arizona. Owsley said he could be a person in his early twenties and a member of a tribe such as the Zuni. How the skull got to Pennsylvania is unknown. It is also unclear what will now happen to the skull. It is not a soldier but is still human remains.

BROOKLYN TRIP

The Brooklyn Historical Society is offering three Civil War related exhibits. Your Round Table Board is planning a day trip down to Brooklyn on **Wednesday, September 30, 2015**. As in the past, the anticipated cost for this one day event, including travel by van, tolls, and Museum admission, will not be more than $75.00.

We will leave Albany area to arrive in the BHS neighborhood by 11 a.m. for lunch at any neighborhood restaurant. After the museum tour starting at noon, we will take a walking tour of some of the Civil War Brooklyn sites that were described to us by E. A. Livingston last October. Some of the sites include the home church of Henry Ward Beecher (Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims), Grace Church and Church of the Pilgrims (constructed by Richard Upjohn). We will plan to be home before 8 p.m. in the evening.

The exhibits are:

Personal Correspondents: Photography and Letter Writing in Civil War Brooklyn
Between 1861 and 1865, over 30,000 men departed Brooklyn to fight in the American Civil War. They left behind spouses, sweethearts, parents, children, siblings, and friends. Personal Correspondents: Photography and Letter Writing in Civil War Brooklyn examines how these Brooklynites remembered and com-municated with each other, and how they chronicled the war on the home front and the battlefield. Featuring evocative letters and photographs from Brooklyn Historical Society's collection, this exhibition brings to life Brooklynites' everyday experiences during one of the nation's most transformative times.

Brooklyn Abolitionists/In Pursuit of Freedom
This major exhibit explores the unsung heroes of Brooklyn's anti-slavery movement -- ordinary residents, black and white -- who shaped their neighborhoods, city and nation with a revolutionary vision of freedom and equality. The exhibit features new research on Brooklyn's abolition movement.

The Emancipation Proclamation
View a replica of Brooklyn Historical Society's rare copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, signed by Lincoln in 1863.

If you are interested in the trip [we can accommodate up to 14], please state your interest by Friday, September 11, 2015, to CDCWRT Treasurer Fran McCashion [telephone 459-4209] or President Rosemary

Nichols [telephone 273-8746, email: rosemarygailnichols@gmail.com].

YOU ARE THERE

LIVE RADIO PLAY "YOU ARE THERE"
APRIL 9, 1865 – LEE & GRANT at APPOMATTOX

Adapted from history-based dramatizations by the CBS Documentary Unit (1947-1950)

VISITORS CENTER, SATURDAY 12th SEPTEMBER – SHOW TIMES 3 & 7 PM

Inspired by the iconic "YOU ARE THERE" nationwide broadcasts of the 1940s that brought key moments in American history to life, the U.S. Grant Cottage Historic Site will re-enact what the live "YOU ARE THERE" November 1948 production may have been like through a "radio theatre" format.

The audience will be transported back in time at the WUSGC studio and be invited to immerse themselves completely in this unique radio theatre experience. A small group of actors and musicians supported by on-the scene reports, multi-media portraits, music selections, period commercials and sound effects will bring to life the characters and events that brought an end to four years of civil war and began the healing of a nation.

In the 1940s, radio was the leading form of popular entertainment. In the spirit of such popular programs as "The Shadow", "Lights Out" and documentary dramas such as "YOU ARE THERE" the 77th NY Regimental Balladeers and Company will perform a live 1940s style radio show on the stage at the Visitors Center. Radio was truly the "Theatre of the Mind."

The CBS summer of 1947 broadcasts were another in a long line of experiments in documentary radio. In this case, it was posited that it might be both instructive as well as compelling radio drama to dramatize historic events as they might have been covered by a modern News Bureau and its far-flung resources. The play employs on-the-scene reporters, correspondents and man-in-the-street types of interviews.

During its on air run the YOU ARE THERE series stood at the side of Christopher Columbus as he planted the flag of Spain on America's shore, attended a witch hunt in Salem and went to Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865 and became a witness to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. CBS went on to create a total of sixty-four unique docu-dramas during the program's three-year run. Many of the scripts were so accurate and realistic that were used verbatim for the television series that aired from 1953-1958.

The play's producer, John Quinn directed the highly successful "Sunset at Mt. McGregor" production in 2014 at the cottage. That immersion play told the story of the friendship between U.S. Grant and Mark Twain. Tickets to the live theatre radio play are $15. Early reservations are encouraged as seating is limited for each show. For more information call 518-584-4353 or visit the U.S. Grant Historic Site website www.grantcottage.org.

FLAG IDENTITIES

Top Row: 1st version of Confederate national flag (Stars & Bars); the Republic of West Florida (later adopted as the Bonnie Blue Flag); flag of North Vietnam and now all of Vietnam.

Middle Row: Federal Republic of Somalia (lighter blue); battle flag of the Army of Tennessee (Northern Virginia if flag is square); the Naval Ensign of Japan (national flag of Japan is centered red ball without sun rays)

Bottom Row: flag of the Governor of Northern Ireland; flag of the 8th Alabama Regiment; flag of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (the harp on a field of green was the unofficial flag of Ireland in 18th & 19th Centuries; modern flag is green, white & orange vertical bars)