



The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

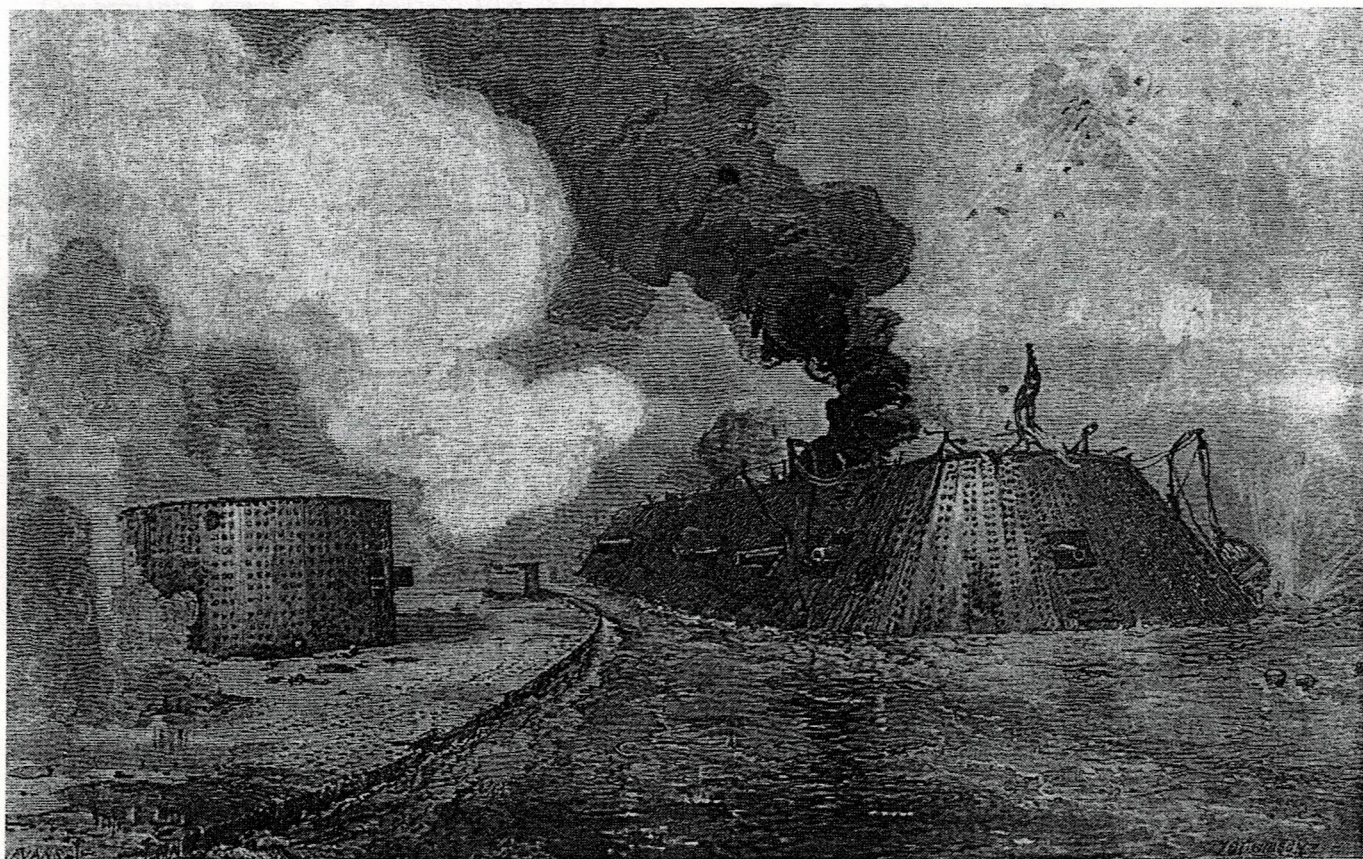
Capital District Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 14871, Albany, NY 12212-4871

CDCWRT's web site: timesunion.com/communities/cdcwrt

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THE ENCOUNTER AT SHORT RANGE

**March Meeting
Friday 03/08/02
Guilderland Library
Western Ave.
Guilderland, NY**

**SOCIAL HOUR 6:30 PM
BUSINESS MEETING 7:00 PM
PROGRAM 7:30 PM**

CDCWRT MEETING

The March meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Guilderland Library on Friday, March 8th at 7:30 pm.

*Our speaker will be an old friend, Tom Carroll, Executive Director of the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway and the Burden Iron Works Museum in Troy, NY. His topic will be, **THE HISTORY AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE MONITOR. The Monitor was the first all metal 'battleship' and forever changed the nature of naval warfare. The plates and brackets for the Monitor were made in Troy.***

Tom received his BA from the California Institute of Technology, and his MA and PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. He was professor of history at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute for more than 154 years. He has authored numerous scientific monographs and articles, and has received many honors from the academic community.

We are scheduled for the smaller meeting room, so come early for a seat.

*Also available at the meeting will be the January 2002 issue of **GETTYSBURG MAGAZINE** with an excellent article on Longstreet's attack on July 2nd, and a*

companion article about what Lee had hoped his attack plan on July 2nd would evolve. There will also be for sale, numerous "pre-owned" issues of Civil War magazines at the unheard of price of "4 FOR A DOLLAR." Stock up on some CW reading material for the cold March nights!

FEBRUARY MEETING

Tony O'Connor presented a fast-paced, entertaining and educational presentation on "The Assassination of President Lincoln," to a full house at the library. Tony is a good friend of Ed Bearss, has uncovered sequestered-away tidbits on the assassination and the people connected with it, and has led tours of Booth's escape route. His presentation was loaded with facts and anecdotes.

"If you remember nothing else from today's presentation, make it this point. Booth did NOT injure his leg by catching it on the flag while leaping to the stage." Tony presented his points. Booth leapt that distance in a number of plays. Multiple eyewitnesses noted "he ran like a deer" across the stage, and out ran pursuers. He mounted his horse, stood in the stirrups, and kicked in the face the stagehand who was holding the reins. When he was stopped at the bridge over the Potomac, he carried on a casual conversation with several Union soldiers without any evidence of pain. Booth, himself, wrote in his diary that he broke his leg jumping.

Tony speculated that sometime after crossing the Potomac, Booth jumped an obstacle with his horse, and received a compound fracture at that time. Union soldiers of the cavalry patrol that ultimately captured Booth, noted that his horse was so badly injured in the shoulder, that the animal would need to be destroyed. All of these points, and others, indicate that Booth was injured during his flight after he crossed the Potomac and before he arrived at Dr. Mudd's house. If correct, and Tony assured us that it is, this will try to lay to rest yet another Civil War myth as deeply-rooted as the one about that shoe warehouse that started the Battle of Gettysburg!

After his presentation, Tony was kept busy with questions and a book signing. He sold all his copies of Clara Laughlin's 1909 epic book, *The Death of Lincoln*. He said however, that anyone interested in a copy of this book, or any other book he had reprinted, can place an order for 20% off list price at the March meeting. The Lincoln book is on sale for \$24.00.

BOARD MEETING

The February Board Meeting was held on Thursday, the 21st. The treasurer reported a balance of \$2590.10 in the general account, and \$9338.28 in the Hennessy Preservation account. The RT grossed \$190 at the Covermania event. We learned that postal rates will increase to 37 cents after June 30th. The RT was able to acquire at face value, smaller denomination historical stamps, that can be used as 'make-up' postage on Civil War cachets for future events. The results of the questionnaire were discussed (see later editorial). There was a 16% response rate, which is better than average for many questionnaires. Up-coming programs were discussed. A \$5000 donation was made to the Civil War Preservation Trust in the memory of Norm Sebastian. Norm had donated this money via the Round Table to CWPT. He indicated in a final wish that it be used at the Shiloh National Battlefield Park. The next meeting of the Board will be Thursday, March 14th.

UP-COMING EVENTS

On Saturday, March 16th, at West Point, a new West Point stamp will be issued by the U.S. Postal Service. There **will** be a bus trip to the Academy for the event. There are no Round Table organized tours, but the museum will be open and can entertain anyone for the entire day. The cost

is \$25, and some seats are still available. Call or write Treasurer, Paul Rivenburgh (273-7563) to confirm your reservation. **Final date for reservations is Saturday, March 9th**. The bus will leave Albany at 7:00am and leave West Point at 5:30pm.

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Friday, March 22nd, will be Wellness Day at Farnsworth Middle School. Members of the CDCWRT will again talk about the life of the soldier during the Civil War. Anyone interested in working on this presentation should contact Matt Farina, Matt George or Joe Stracuzzi.

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On Sunday, March 24th there will be a lecture on the Underground Railroad in Albany. The presenters are Mary Liz and Paul Stewart. The location will be the Town of Colonie Public Library at 2:00 pm. This program is sponsored by the Town of Colonie Historical Society. Those RT members who missed the UGRR exhibit last year, should find this presentation very interesting. This was a suggested topic in the recent questionnaire.

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The Spring bus trip to Antietam is scheduled for Friday, April 5th to Sunday April 7th. Our tour guides will be Tom Clemens, President of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation, and Dana Shoaf, Editor of *America's Civil War Magazine*. The cost is **\$239**. **The trip is a definite GO! The balance will be due in full by Friday, March 15th for those who made a deposit. Some seats are still available, and if you are interested, the entire amount is due by March 15th. Contact Paul Rivenburgh via RT mailbox or**

phone (273-7563) for details and reservations.

The bus will leave 7:30am Friday morning and return 10:00pm Sunday evening. The cost also covers 2 nights at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Hagerstown, 2 continental breakfasts, 2 box lunches, a guide orientation Friday night dinner, and a banquet at the historic Stone Mountain Inn on Saturday night. John Brown captured the inn in 1859 as part of his raid on Harper's Ferry, and D.H. Hill used the inn as his headquarters in the Battle of South Mountain. All tour guide expenses are included. Bus driver tip is **NOT** included, but \$10 per person is recommended.

The itinerary will include Harper's Ferry, with emphasis on the 125th NYVI, South Mountain, and the Battle of Antietam. A group picture will be taken in front of Ron Tunison's "Forgotten Irish" Monument. Additional stops will be at Burkittsville (to be discussed by Dana Shoaf), and a special tour of the signal tower site that the CDCWRT helped SHAF to preserve. There will also be time to see the Visitor Center, exhibits, and bookstore.

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The Spring Banquet will be held on Saturday April 13th at the Sovereign Best Western on Western Ave. in Albany. Noted author, William Davis, will be our guest speaker. The topic will be "The End of the Confederacy." A number of comments in the questionnaire asked for more Confederate topics, so here is a great one!

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On April 25th, the George Washington exhibit will open in the Guilderland

Library. This exhibit will be there for several weeks, and will include Washington's ceremonial sword and the Mason Bible upon which the oath of office was first taken. The CDCWRT has been asked to participate in this exhibit. If any member has Revolutionary War memorabilia they would like to display, please contact Sue Knost or Matt Farina. The exhibit cases are secured, and night-time security is available in the library.

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On June 8-9, Saturday and Sunday, Civil War Days will be held in Petersboro, NY. This small town on route 20 between Utica and Syracuse was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Each year reenactors, historians and vendors gather to celebrate the regions Civil War heritage. This has been a cancellation event for the CDCWRT for several years now.

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The American Battlefield Protection Conference will be held in Albany in August of 2002. This conference will attract nationally known historians and preservationists to Albany. The CDCWRT has been asked to participate in this event which will be held at the New York State Museum Conference Center in Albany. More details will follow as they become available.

IN MEMORIAM

James C. Sole, 61, husband of CDCWRT member Maryllis Sole, passed away at his home on February 18, 2002. He had served in the 101st Airborne. He was the brother-in-law of Mark Bodnar and William Bodnar, also members of CDCWRT.

EDITORIAL

The Membership Speaks

At the time of this writing, 33 of 200 (16%) questionnaires have been returned. I had hoped for about 30%, but I am very grateful to those who returned their questionnaires. Many had additional comments and suggestions, which were greatly appreciated. Each section's results are presented, along with some comments from the membership and the Board.

MEETINGS

82% were satisfied with the Guilderland Library site, 12% were not, and 6% were undecided. A similar breakdown favored Friday night as the preferred day of the week. 24% preferred to rotate locations, while 55% wanted to stay in one location, while 21% were undecided. Several suggested Thursday, Saturday or Sunday as alternate dates, or requested a more centralized location. Last month, I inquired at Bethlehem about availability of the library for several meetings. I was informed that the library now closes Friday nights in addition to Saturday nights. Colonie is also closed Fridays.

A meeting site is best if it is centrally located, can sit up to 100 people, has ample free parking, costs the RT nothing, is acoustically good, has projection equipment and a kitchen, and will allow us to stay beyond 9PM. Time was often a problem at Bethlehem, and the RT did receive several warnings about the room still being open at 9PM. Guilderland best, but not completely, meets our needs at present. An occasional different location or date can be tried, such as last month's meeting.

94% were satisfied in general by the topics presented. 52% wanted more on battles, while 21% did not. Equal numbers (33%) wanted to hear more or less about

specific campaigns. It was the same for specific regiments. Again 52% wanted to hear more about specific individuals, while 21% did not. Finally, 39% wanted more on non-military topics, while 33% wanted less. In all categories, 27% were undecided.

A host of other topic suggestions were made, and included politics, the economy, Reconstruction, naval battles, the early lives of the major players, NYS flag preservation, the Hunley, prisons, Civil War music, more Confederate-topic programs, a Lincoln impersonator, the home front, and NY at Gettysburg. Some topics have been or are already being presented, such as the Underground Railroad and tours of Albany Rural Cemetery.

Everyone was satisfied with speakers in general, and return requests were directed at Bearss, Barrett, Campbell, Dyer, McEnaney, O'Connor, Scoturro and West. 64% were interested in a debate format, while only 18% were not interested. 64% attended more than 7 meetings a year, 33% attended 4-6 meetings, and 3% less than 3 meetings. One member drives 60 miles to attend, and another had a 90 minute round trip drive to attend. That is dedication and passion!

CONFERENCE & BANQUETS

73% of those responding have attended a banquet in the past two years. Conflict in schedules was the primary reason why members did not attend. The speakers and good fellowship were the main items attendees enjoyed the most. The items attendees enjoyed the least were the food, too long an evening, cheap wine and too much RT business talk. No one seemed to feel that the cost of the banquet was excessive.

Similar reasons were listed for not attending a conference: 6 date conflict, 3 too expensive, 3 too long, 1 too intense, 1 not intense enough.

TRIPS

61% have been on a RT trip in the past two years. All felt that the value was worth the cost. The most enjoyed features were the guides, the sites, the museums, and even the food and lodgings. Least enjoyed items included weather, banquet, long bus trips, bus lectures, and too much minutiae. One responder said he enjoyed going home the least. 75% of those who took a trip did not feel there was too much material, sights, or distance covered. There was a 50/50 split on more free time on the battlefield. One dozen responders did not go on trips. Reasons included time conflicts, walking handicap(1), too hectic(1) and too expensive(1). Three did not like to fly. There were several additional comments made about the “extremely reasonable” cost.

Where would you like to go next? I gave points to the top three on everyone’s list, weighting them 3 for first, 2 for second and 1 for third. Here is the breakdown.

- 44 Civil War Washington
- 30 The Road to Appomattox
- 22 Charleston
- 20 Jackson’s Valley Campaign
- 20 Vicksburg

DUES AND FUND RAISING

All but one thought our dues were not expensive. One suggested raising them to \$25. 79% book raffle tickets at meetings, 55% bought big tickets at banquets, and 50% bought a cachet. 65% do not like silent auctions. 50% would pledge money for a long-term goal. A number of suggestions were made for fund raising, including bake sales, barbeques, concerts, and yearly donations.

PERSONAL COMMENTS

The major focus of the questionnaire (which I just noticed I spelled wrong!) was to determine if we are meeting the needs and expectations of the membership. From the responses, it is apparent that we are.

However, the responders are only 1/6 of the membership, and we can only guess at the concerns of the majority. But first, some facts, to put things in context.

Dues at other round table include Philadelphia (\$25 single, \$35 family), Westchester (\$25 single, \$27 family), New York City (\$40 single, \$60 family), and Utica (\$12). We have a mailing list of 300, which includes about 240 members and the rest as complimentary or other round tables. We distribute newsletters to Bethlehem, Colonie, Guilderland and Schenectady libraries, among others. Sometimes our printing is free; other times we pay \$150 for 300-two sheet pages. Postage is \$102. The costs of newsletters, mailing, travel expenses and honoraria for guest speakers, stationary, snacks and drinks, etc. are supported by dues only (240x25 = \$6000).

Banquets, trips and conferences therefore must be self-supporting, since it would be unfair to have everyone’s dues finance trips for only some. Hence, there is a minimum number necessary to cover all the expenses for a trip. Banquets are similar. The \$28 per person covers the meal, tip, speaker’s costs (including travel, motel, food, and honorarium), AND the intangibles such as fellowship. Sometimes we make a little if the speaker refuses an honorarium or we split travel expenses with another round table. This bonus and raffle monies are returned to the general fund.

The reputation this group has on the national level is due to sizeable donations made to national preservation projects. Ed Bearss calls us *the premier round table in the country*. Dues are NOT the source of those contributions, but rather the sale of the commemorative stamp cachets at various re-enactments. The monies raised in this manner are deposited separately into our preservation account, and do NOT support regular monthly programs or trips. Those RT members who go to various events to

sell cachets, do so at their own expense. For the large events, such as the 140th anniversary events, rooms may be provided.

Why do we take on this responsibility? The answer to that question is very complex and multifactorial. For some, it's a sense of responsibility to our ancestors. For others, it's a belief that this period in time was one of profound military, social and political issues, and that the artifacts and locations of these events must be preserved and taught to future generations. And the list goes on and on. Whatever your reason, it usually takes financial support to carry on and accomplish your goals.

Several years ago in an editorial, I speculated on what we could accomplish if each of the 700 or more round tables in the United States could raise on average \$200 per year for preservation activities. That would be \$140,000/year or one million dollars every 7.2 years as additional monies already raised by other organizations such as the Civil War Preservation Trust. CDCWRT has averaged about \$10,000/year for the past 10 years as donations to support Civil War preservation activities. Look at the list on our website. However, with recognition as top gun, comes responsibility and leadership as top gun.

Last month Mike Russert spoke to the Board about a \$5000/year commitment for five years for New York State flag preservation. The Board cannot act on this request until we know what revenues can be raised at events this summer and fall. We can try to organize other NYS round tables in a joint proposal, but ultimately it will come down to commitment from our round table. You can help now by joining the New York State Military Heritage Institute for \$20/year as noted on the enclosed flyer.

I am proud of our round table, as you are too. Your comments on the questionnaire show that, and the Board thanks you very much. We have accomplished much, and

with your continued support, we can do much more. Thank you.

AN OPEN EDITORIAL TO MICHELLE KWAN

As I watched the figure skating competition this past week, I had a number of thoughts as I responded to some inane remark by a sports commentator. I can't quote the remark, but the gist of it was that Michelle had once again been beaten out of a gold medal at the Olympics by a teenager, and that would be her legacy instead of her many other victories. Humbug!

I want to thank Sara Hughes for skating the best of her ability at the time it counted the most. She skated relaxed and confident, and her program set the mark for the following skaters. I want to thank Michelle Kwan for her dedication and grace on and off the ice. She serves as a role model for her perseverance, and for not yielding to frustration. She skated on her own terms. She was magnanimous in victories in the past, and has always been gracious in defeat.

But how does all this tie in with the Civil War you may ask? My wife has always accused me of seeing the Civil War in many things. She is right. And this is the message I want to convey to Michelle Kwan.

Robert E. Lee won some stunning victories; Chancellorsville is probably his most successful campaign in that respect. At Antietam and even Gettysburg, he was able to extricate his army from annihilation. Grant defeated him, but Lee still remains one of our most popular generals, and is remembered more than Grant, himself. Lee is not remembered for his defeats.

The message to ALL athletes is the same. Be true to yourself and your sport, and compete to the best of your ability. That is all that counts in the final analysis in the cosmos.

