

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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PRESIDENT LINCOLN LEAVES WASHINGTON RUMORED TO VISIT WEST POINT



THE HUDSON RIVER FROM WEST POINT

(June 1862 AP) **Rumors in Washington indicate the President will visit West Point sometime this month. Democrats are upset that the President will leave the city at this critical time, but Republicans feel that the visit shows the President is confident that the war is going well. Undoubtedly he will confer with retired General-in-Chief Winfield Scott and visit the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring where the new 100-pound Parrott cannon are being produced. If rumors are confirmed by the President's secretary, it is unknown if he would travel by train or fast steamer. Unnamed sources at the Navy Department have expressed concern over land travel by the President, especially in the Baltimore City area. Another source reports that Mrs. Lincoln will accompany the President.**

APRIL MEETING
FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2013
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

LINCOLN'S SECRET VISIT TO WEST POINT IN 1862

ANTHONY CZARNECKI

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:15 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:15 – 8:15 p.m.**
Questions & Answers	**8:15 – 8:45 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The April meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be held on Friday, April 12, 2013. This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. Our special guest speaker will be Anthony Czarnecki, Past President of The Lincoln Society of Peekskill. His presentation is entitled, **Mr. Lincoln's Secret Visit to West Point: The Sesquicentennial of a Military Mission.**

Fourteen months after the start of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln took his longest journey away from the White House and his only trip to New York State during his entire presidency. The trip was quickly planned, and was to be secret, but soon the New York Times reported on the preparations for the secret mission.

Why did President Lincoln make this trip? Was it to consult with recently retired General-in-Chief Winfield Scott who was living near West Point? The collapse of the Peninsula Campaign of McClellan had yet to occur. Robert E. Lee had taken command over Confederate forces around Richmond after Joe Johnston's wounding, but the Seven Days Campaign was ready to start, but had not yet happened.

This little known visit will be discussed in detail by Anthony Czarnecki, whose extensive article on the visit was recently published in the Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association. It has been critically acclaimed by Harold Holzer. "….Superb journal article… It is a wonderful and much-needed addition to the literature of Lincoln and the Civil War and you've gone where no other historian has ventured – and brilliantly."

Tony J. Czarnecki is past president of The Lincoln Society in Peekskill. Founded in 1903, it is one of the oldest Lincoln groups in the Unites States. He also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Westchester County Historical Society, and is a member of the Society of Civil War Historians, the Abraham Lincoln Association and the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation.

A graduate of Iona College, Mr. Czarnecki holds a master's degree in criminal justice from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and he also earned a graduate degree in public administration from Pace University. He recently retired as Chief of Staff in the Westchester County Department of Correction and is now president of THE CHARTWELL GROUP, a criminal justice consulting firm.

Mr. Czarnecki is a past president of the New York State Probation Officers Association and the Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association. He is the recipient of numerous awards in his field before retirement. He now serves on the adjunct faculty of both Iona College and Westchester Community College.

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. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site: www.nycivilwar150.org.

On Saturday, April 20, 2013, Siena College will sponsor its annual History Day at Siena. The CDCWRT will have a table at the event to provide information about the Round Table and sell books and cachets. Any members who would like to help man the exhibit should contact Matt George.

On May 10, 2013, Wayne Mott will speak on the Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA, and will bring some fascinating artifacts.

On May 22, 2013, Wednesday, 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Empire State College Campus, Matt Farina will present "Civil War Medicine: Myth and Reality" for the Civil War Speakers Series for the Academy for Lifelong Learning.

On May 25, 2013, Saturday, 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the 7th Floor Librarians Room at the New York State Library, Matt Farina will be presenting the topic of "Civil War Medicine: Myth and Reality."

On June 8-9, 2013, Saturday and Sunday, the 21st Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend will be held in Peterboro, NY on Route 20. There will be military and domestic encampments, period music and games, period shopping and tours of sites of the Underground Railroad in Peterboro. There will be exhibits on the Emancipation Proclamation and the U.S.C.T. Info: www.civilwarweekend.sca-peteroboro.org

On June 14, 2013, Ben Dixon will talk about a photographic study of the Gettysburg Battlefield. His presentation is entitled "Remembering America's battlefield from 1863 to today." This presentation will be at Roger Bacon Hall at Siena College.

On August 16, 2013, Friday, the CDCWRT will have its annual picnic at Schuyler Flatts for members and re-enactors. The Civil War Weekend at Schuyler Flatts will take place on Saturday, August 17, 10am to 5pm, and Sunday, August 18, 10am to 4 pm. There will be an encampment, skirmishes, cannon firing, drills, school for young soldiers, music and food. The CDCWRT will have its tents set up at the event and there will be 150th Anniversary postal cachets from Gettysburg available at the event.

On September 13, 2013, Katherine Hawkins will present "We Done Our Part: The History of the 3rd U.S. Colored Troops."

On October 11, 2013, Wayne Mahood will talk about the 126th NYVI, in a presentation entitled "Fight All Day, March All Night."

On November 1-3, 2013, the CDCWRT will sponsor the 1863 Sesquicentennial Conference.

On December 13, 2013, J.J. Jennings will present a "To Be Announced" topic.

NOVEMBER CONFERENCE

The conference is shaping up nicely and will again concentrate on New Yorkers in 1863 actions. NYS Historian Bob Weible will welcome attendees at the Empire Plaza. President Lincoln will deliver the Gettysburg Address. Bud Hall will be the keynote speaker

Friday night, and will talk about Brandy Station. On Saturday Juanita Leisch will talk about 19th –Century women. Matt Farina will present Dr. Mary Walker who was awarded the Medal of Honor. R.L. Murray was a popular presenter at the last conference and will again cover New Yorkers in the war. J.D. Petruzzi will talk about NY cavalry at Gettysburg. Troy Harmon, NPS Ranger at Gettysburg will discuss New York at Gettysburg. Sunday is being arranged, but Chris Kolakowski is back and will discuss the western theater. We hope this whets your appetite and that you are already planning to attend with a friend in tow.

MARCH MEETING SUMMARY

Our March speaker was Catherine Wright, curator of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. She has spent more than three years working with the letters of Robert Parker, who was shot and killed just before news of Robert E. Lee's surrender reached the troops outside of Appomattox Court House.

Robert William Parker was born in August, 1838 in Bedford County, Virginia. His family had an agricultural farm of thousands of acres and owned between six and seventeen slaves. Parker stood to inherit the farm when he enlisted in the Bedford Southside Dragoons, which later became Company F of the Second Virginia Cavalry. He had been married for four months to his wife Rebecca before he joined to protect her and his family. Parker served in the Valley campaigns of 1862 and 1864, in the Peninsula campaign, at Gettysburg, and at Appomattox.

Wright described the nearly two hundred letters as showing the transformation of a civilian to military life. Parker wrote about the trials of cooking, saying, "I have learned to cook so we can eat it." He also wrote about paying ten cents per garment to be laundered after getting sunburned washing his own clothes.

Another topic of Parker's letters to his wife was the care of the horses. He went through three horses during his enlistment and commented on the establishment of horse infirmaries to recuperate horses rather than replace them. Parker had to provide his own horse when he joined, and he was granted a "horse furlough" when it died so he could get a replacement. His third horse cost eight hundred dollars, a staggering amount considering the average pay was thirteen dollars per month. Parker's letters illustrate the toll the war was taking on him, yet he remained dedicated to the Confederacy. In one letter he wrote, "If I should fall I think it would be for a good cause."

In early April, 1865 Parker and his unit were hoping to be resupplied. They arrived at Appomattox Courthouse on the Richmond-Lynchford Stage Road, but a brigade of Union cavalry cut off their access to the west and possibility of escape. In the fight that followed, Robert Parker was shot and killed just before the white flag appeared with news of the surrender. Stories were that men from both sides buried him and others between the lines of battle. In 1866 the Ladies' Memorial Association arranged to have the bodies re-interred and marked as unknown Confederate soldiers. News of Parker's death seemed to break his wife's heart; she died almost one year later.

Robert Parker's letters tell the story of how an ordinary man made his way

through the difficult circumstances of the war. His letters show that the South was not universally demoralized. Even at the bitter end Parker was committed to fighting for his nation. As Catherine Wright put it, "he had tremendous faith and courage".

This excellent summary was provided by board member Erin Baillargeon.

LEE'S REAL PLAN AT GETTYSBURG

Over 50,000 books and articles have been written about the Battle of Gettysburg. It may be the most studied battle in world military history. Since 1994 I have been in Gettysburg on the anniversary of the battle, and while I have sold postal cachets for my northern CWRT, I have spoken to people from all over the world who visit Gettysburg—Australia, England, Japan, the Philippines, China, Germany & the Netherlands.

Most subscribe to the traditional interpretation of how the battle was fought. The armies blunder into each other and begin to concentrate at Gettysburg. Lee wins day 1, but misses the opportunity to take the "high ground" at Cemetery Hill. On day 2, Lee attacks both flanks of the Union army but is ultimately unsuccessful. On day 3 Lee changes to a frontal attack on the middle of the Union line, but it is repulsed, forcing Lee to retreat on the evening of July 4th.

But what intrigued NPS Ranger, Troy Harman, was Lee's initial official report where he stated **"the general plan was unchanged"** for day 3. His view was unchanged in a second report 6 months later. In 2003 Harmon authored a book about his view on this. The book provided a new perspective about Lee's plan that is thoughtful and provocative. Civil War buffs should ponder these new thoughts and new perspective.

Harman has stated that most authors have used the vast source material available to write about HOW the battle occurred, but only a few have considered WHY the battle unfolded as it is reported. If the "affirmed" version is correct, then why did Lee state that the plan for day 3 was unchanged? If Pickett's attack was to be a solo operation, why did Lee want Culp's Hill assaulted at the same time? If Lee was just demonstrating at Culp's Hill, why did Lee position 6000 troops there in the early hours of July 3rd? If Little Round Top was critical, why did Lee want to bypass it? If a frontal assault was planned, why did Lee choose an insignificant landmark as several under-developed trees as the focal point of the attack? If the copse of trees was the aiming point, why would Lee commit 12,000 men to break the Union line and stop at a ridge that had no real inherent tactical value? Where were Lee's men to go if they were successful in breaking the line? So what was Lee's real plan at Gettysburg?

There were several reasons to focus on Cemetery Hill. Gettysburg was a hub with 10-12 roads radiating out in all directions. Control of the town would provide Lee's army with the greatest number of options to concentrate or disperse or maneuver. This would be an excellent defensive position in enemy territory, with offense as an option — a Napoleonic maxim Lee was taught. However the elevation of Cemetery Hill commanded the southern edge of Gettysburg and controlled the Emmitsburg and Taneytown roads and the Baltimore Pike.

At the end of day 1, Lee had gained control of Seminary Ridge, Benner Hill and had driven Union forces out of town, but had failed to close out the victory by gaining Cemetery Hill. Ewell had stopped his advance short of the hill when he felt it was "not practicable" to continue his assault. Lee did not have troops available to support Ewell, with Hill's Corps committed and Longstreet's Corps blocked by Lee's supply trains.

Early in the fighting, one division of 11th Corps had fortified the hill, and the remnants

of 1st Corps and 11th Corps had fallen back to the hill. 2nd Corps and 3rd Corps were coming up from the south. It was imperative that Lee resume the offensive quickly on July 2, before Union forces concentrated. Both sides knew the hill was the best ground.

The most important reason why Cemetery Hill appealed to Lee as the key to victory lay in its spearhead position along the curvature of the Union line. On the evening of July 1, the Union position was the fish-hook from Culp's Hill to Wolf Hill to Cemetery Hill to Cemetery Ridge. The affirmed version gives all the advantages of interior lines, but ignores the point that it was also a salient which could be assaulted on three sides simultaneously if Lee could move enough men there. The salient is also susceptible to crossfire and converging fire, while defensive fire out from the salient is diminished because neither side can support the other.

The Confederate tactical plan on day 2 had to involve converging forces on that salient. If successful, Confederate forces would control all the key roads branching out from Gettysburg. In the evening of day 1, Lee met with Ewell, Early and Rodes to discuss an attack on Cemetery Hill. The three officers felt that an attack on the hill from their positions would result in a great loss because of the steeper terrain. However an attack from the Confederate right would occur on a gradual slope. Ewell assured Lee his forces could carry Cemetery Hill as soon as Longstreet's attack had broken the lines of the Federal left.

In the early hours of July 2 when Lee and Longstreet met, it was probable that Longstreet did not endorse Ewell's suggestions. The serious discussion between Lee and Longstreet resulted in a need for the Union left to be scouted.

Capt. Samuel Johnston, a topographical engineer, went out from 4AM to 6AM. He covered the peach orchard and Houck's Ridge which were not occupied. Although Johnston felt he had reached the top of Little Round Top, much more likely he reached Big Round Top. Had he truly reached Little Round Top, he would have seen Buford's two Union cavalry brigades and Dan Sickles 9500-man 3rd Corps which were camped at the base of Little Round Top. Thus Little Round Top was not part of Lee's plan on the morning of July 2.

(To be continued next month)

DRUM BARRACKS & THE C.W.

As a volunteer docent at Drum Barracks, Ron Hyde gets the same reaction from among the approximately 9,000 people who visit the obscure site each year. This little-known but fascinating story of California in the Civil War is told at the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum, part of the City of Los Angeles museum system.

When construction of Drum Barracks was complete in 1863, Los Angeles was a town of 4,400, and Wilmington was a tiny village near the harbor (now the Port of Los Angeles). The outpost owes its existence to a chain of events in the Far West, an often overlooked theater of the Civil War.

In summer 1861, a few months into the war, Confederate forces struck out into the Arizona territory from Texas. Their long-range goal was the ports, mineral resources and open lands of the lightly defended California, which was admitted into the Union in 1850. In her 2012 book "The Golden State in the Civil War" (Cambridge University Press), the historian Glenna Matthews writes that Confederate leaders viewed California, particularly the pro-secessionist southern section, as "a land of opportunity for them."

In Southern California then was Capt. Winfield Scott Hancock, who would become a hero of the Battle of Gettysburg. He and Maj. James Henry Carleton, a cavalry officer dispatched from San Francisco to help him, chose a site a half-mile from the harbor to build a base, which

was named Camp Drum. That was in late 1861. From there, in April 1862, Major Carleton's force, the California Column, rode east to meet the Confederates. By the time the force reached the Rio Grande, the main Southern army had turned around. But the Union troops battled the rebels at Picacho Pass, about 50 miles northwest of what is now Tucson.

Back in Wilmington, an expanded base was built with the help of Phineas Banning, a local businessman who named the community he had developed after his hometown in Delaware. He donated 60 acres for what would become known as Drum Barracks.

The new base became a depot, training base and staging point for operations of the Union Army in the West. Almost 8,000 men passed through Drum Barracks during the war. In her book, Ms. Matthews cites a letter from an Army officer who called the large, well-built base "astonishing," adding that "some of the men in our company who had seen service in the East said that they had never seen anything like it."

No doubt one of the most astonishing sights was the 36 Levantine camels quartered there. The Army brought them from the Middle East in the 1850s for use in the desert. For the most part, they spent the war munching the grass around Drum Barracks. A life-size iron likeness of a camel stands in front of the museum today. "The kids love it," Ms. Ogle said.

The base was named after Richard Coulter Drum, the Union's adjutant general based in San Francisco. A shrewd move, Ms. Ogle said, adding, "Who better to name the post after than the man who signs the checks?"

The Drum Barracks Civil War Museum could use some of that largess. "I wish we had more space," Ms. Ogle said. "We need a visitors' center, a children's reading room. We can only take 15 visitors through at a time now."

Visitors find a wealth of artifacts in the 14 rooms of the U-shaped building, which was originally the junior officers' quarters. One of the most impressive is an 1875 Gatling gun, part of an extensive display of Civil War-era weapons, including a collection of 291 bullets. A battle flag was donated by the family of a veteran of the Battle of Vicksburg who received the Medal of Honor. Rooms are decorated to show the living conditions of soldiers and officers, featuring period pieces, like a rare 1869 Steinway piano. Drums Barracks also has a genuine drum from the 8th New York Volunteers, a library of 3,000 volumes and the artificial leg of a soldier, which was donated by his descendants.

After the post was decommissioned, the remaining building was variously the site of a minister's home, a high school and a boardinghouse. Threatened with demolition in the 1960s, it was saved through the efforts of local preservation groups. In the 1970s, the city renovated the building, which opened as a museum in 1987.

Ms. Ogle, who joined the museum in 2000, is Drum Barracks' second director and only full-time employee. In 2010, when her job was designated to be cut, the Civil War Trust in Washington, a national group dedicated to preservation of Civil War battlefields, wrote to the city attesting to the museum's historical significance. Her job was saved. "It's a legitimate, authentic piece of American Civil War history," said James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Trust. "And it's standing there in the middle of this Los Angeles neighborhood."

Drum Barracks Civil War Museum, at 1052 Banning Boulevard, Wilmington, Calif., is open for tours Sunday, Tuesday through Thursday and Saturday. It is closed Monday and Friday. Donation: $5. For more information: www.drumbarracks.org.