

# The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

# CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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



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## THOMAS NAST'S CHRISTMAS 1863




**Dear wife I will send you a few lines stating how we are I have bin down with the diarier for about a weak it has bin the most sevear that I hav ever ha but I feel better to day & I hav washed all of my cloaths & I borrowed some cloathes while mine are drying I cant write you mutch this time but if I keep wel I will try and write you a interesting leter some of those days we hav got houses built up wonce more but Christmas was a very dul day hear we hav not had it yet but the war news is good we hav had a dispatch from G Shairman he has done more than we could of asked of him I send my love to all from you ever true and loving Husband** ***Levi McCormick, Dec 27th 1864***

## DECEMBER MEETING
**Friday, December 5, 2008**

## "WE WERE MARCHING CHRISTMAS DAY"

**GUILDERLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY**
**WESTERN AVENUE**
**GUILDERLAND, NY**

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| **SOCIAL HOUR** | **6:00-7:00 PM** |
| **BUSINESS MEETING** | **7:00-7:30 PM** |
| **PRESENTATION** | **7:30-8:30 PM** |
| **Q&A AND SOCIAL** | **8:30-9:30 PM** |

## CDCWRT MEETING

***The next meeting of the CDCWRT will be on Friday, December 5, 2008 at the Guilderland Public Library. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE DUE TO A SCHEDULING CONFLICT AT THE LIBRARY! Our guest speaker will be Chris Kelly, who will speak on the topic of Christmas during the Civil War. His presentation is entitled,*** **"We Were Marching Christmas Day."**

***Tis the season, but how did the Christmas season evolve? Chris will briefly cover winter solstice celebrations and pagan holdovers in Christian celebrations. He will discuss Christmas in the colonies, and how and why traditions, like the Christmas tree, appeared during the Civil War. He will cover the role of Clement Clarke Moore and Thomas Nast in forming Christmas imagery. How did soldiers celebrate Christmas in camp and in the field during the war? What did they eat; what did they sing; what did they write? Chris will try to put you in the mood of Christmas 1863!***

***Chris Kelly was born in Sydney, Australia, grew up in Chappaqua, NY, and graduated from Princeton University in 1963. From 1967-72 he was Associate Professor of Slavic and Eastern Languages at Boston College. He then changed his career and became an Episcopalian Priest for thirty years in Florida. He retired in 2002 and reverse migrated to New York. He has had a longtime interest in the Civil War and was a member of the Palm Beach CWRT. He is also a re-enactor. He was with the 7th Conn. VI in Florida, and now is with the 125th NYVI of Troy. We are proud to have him as a member of the CDCWRT in addition.***

**MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO BRING A SMALL SELECTION OF COOKIES OR PASTRIES OR SNACKS OR FRUIT TO THE YEAR END CELEBRATION.**

One of Rus Denegar's framed prints will be raffled-off at the December meeting of the CDCWRT. Ten tickets have been mailed to each member of the Round Table with the December newsletter. Tickets will be $1.00 apiece. Ticket stubs and money can be mailed to the CDCWRT or brought to the meeting. Do not mail cash. You may bring cash and your tickets to the meeting in December.

The name of the print is:
**We Have Got Them Started. Come On! Come On!**
**The Union breakthrough at Kernstown on the 23rd March,1862**
**By Keith Rocco, signed and numbered 256/500**
**Valued at $425**

## NOVEMBER MEETING

Howie Young, CDCWRT's own movie actor, enthralled the audience at our November meeting as he shared his experiences playing a Union soldier in the 1992 filming of *Killer Angels,* eventually released as *Gettysburg.* Howie, a long time reenactor with the NY 125th Rgt., not only found great satisfaction acting out a pivotal moment in American history, but was fascinated with the actual process of bringing a novel to the big screen.

After reading an announcement in *Civil War News* of the approaching filming of the best seller, members of the 125th applied to be included and were invited by Ted Turner's production company to participate. Production had already begun in June with a permanent group of 3-400 reenactors on location in Gettysburg. However, since the recreation of Pickett's charge required thousands of extras, the men of the 125th were instructed to report for a seven day stint in August. Joining other reenactors to set up their tents in a huge encampment and putting on their uniforms, they lived as authentically as possible with one exception – they chipped in to rent a room at the "Home Sweet Home" motel, now long gone, to have

access to a hot shower!

The reenactors' usual routine was to be up at 5:30 a.m., except for the morning when a sunrise scene was to be filmed and then it was up at 4:30 a.m., breakfast, and then out to the field for a 12 hour day. "Back to position one," were the cruelest words of all, meaning a scene had to be redone, often resulting in long periods of inactivity with the men waiting around for hours in August heat. Some of the more fortunate reenactors were "galvanized." Having brought two uniforms and sets of equipment, they could play Confederate as well as Union Soldiers, appearing in additional scenes with less boring downtime on their hands. At the time Howie was only prepared to do Union scenes; now he's galvanized as well!

The mechanics of capturing scenes showing huge numbers of men in action required more than just a stationary cameraman. To catch the vivid panorama of Pickett's charge a camera mounted remote control helicopter device and a moving cameraman and camera on a dolly pushed along a two railed track were used. The effect of exploding shells was set off electronically and any soldiers in nearby proximity were professional stunt men. Soldiers "hit," flying into the air, were also stuntmen who stepped on a springboard that flipped them up. To prevent injuries reenactors were issued rubber bayonets, while to determine which soldiers would "die" during the battle, the director read out birth months. If you happened to be born during any of those months you were "killed." The cannons were firing 2 ½ pound charges of black powder, giving a realistic experience to reenactors who were on the ground nearby.

Ted Turner, having the right connections with the NPS, was allowed to film the Confederates coming out of the woods and Chamberlain and the 20th Maine on Little Round Top on the actual battlefield, necessitating covering and disguising monuments in those areas before filming could begin. With 95% of the movie shot in another Gettysburg location, replicas of Meade's headquarters and the stone wall had to be constructed.

There was interaction with some of the movie's stars. Martin Sheen, more aristocratic than Lee whom he portrayed, didn't condescend to ever socialize with the grunts, nor did Tom Beringer. On the other hand, Jeff Daniels, Richard Jordan and Sam Elliot occasionally mingled with the reenactors.

Howie recounted emotional moments which served to make his involvement in the filming a special experience. The Confederate reenactors, swept up in the emotion of the moment, spontaneously swarmed around Robert E. Lee, realistically portrayed by Martin Sheen, just as the original loyal Confederates must have done to their respected and beloved General Lee in 1863, impressing and affecting everyone who witnessed it. By the end of 7 days of hard work and camaraderie, the reenactors had made lasting bonds and were indeed, a band of brothers.

Our CDCWRT movie star was paid the princely sum of $25 for his week's work!

# 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.***

**Friday, January 9th, 2009 will be the Potpourri Meeting of the CDCWRT.** This meeting features presentations from our membership. If you have a story you would like to tell, or an item that you would like to show, or a Civil War relative that you would like to talk about, or a period letter that you would like to read, this is your opportunity. Presentations generally are 5-20 minutes. Please talk to Sue Knost if you would like to present. If you have items that you would just like to display, talk to Sue to have a table available for the meeting.

# ELECTION 2008

The nominating committee has proposed the following slate:

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| **President** | **Matt George** |
| **Vice-President** | **A. Howard Young** |
| **Secretary** | **Mary Ellen Johnson** |
| **Treasurer** | **Fran McCashion** |
| **At-Large** | **Art Henningson** |
| **At-Large** | **Lew Warner** |
| **At-Large** | **Walt Williams** |

This is a proposed slate. Nominations for ANY position are also open from the floor at the December meeting. Candidates must be members in good standing and with dues paid to date. Likewise, a nomination from the floor and its seconding must also come from members in good standing and with dues paid to date.