

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

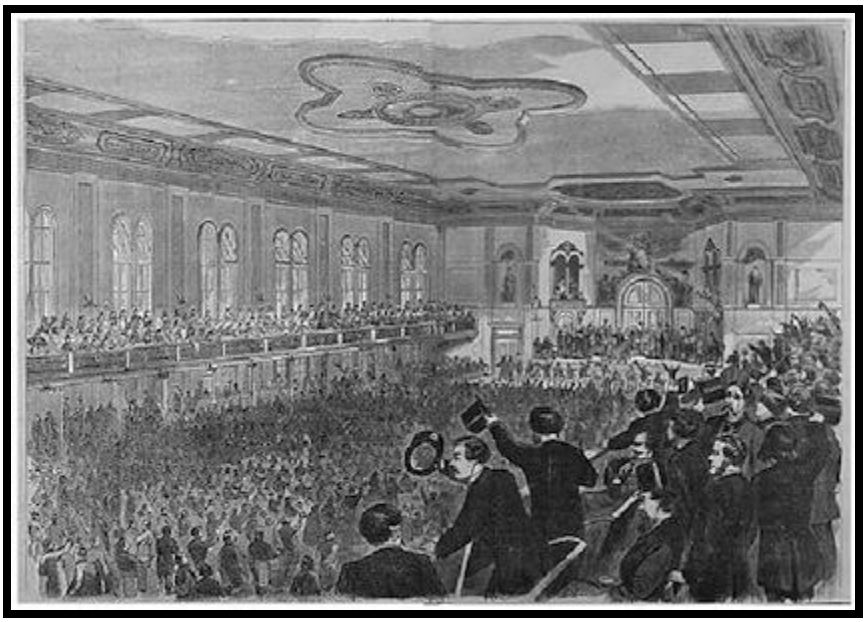
CAPITAL DISTRICT
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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



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SOUTH CAROLINA SECEDES!



(AP-Charleston, SC – Dec. 1860)

On November 10, 1860, the General Assembly of S.C. called for a convention to consider succession. The convention convened in Columbia on December 17 and voted unanimously 169 to 0 for secession from the U.S. Because of a smallpox scare, the convention reconvened in Charleston on December 19 to draft an ordinance of succession. This was adopted on December 20, and South Carolina became the first state to secede from the United States.

The primary reasons for secession were increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the Institution of Slavery and as a result of the refusal of free states to enforce the Fugitive Slave Acts and the concerns over the property of rights of slave holders.

DECEMBER MEETING
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

Myth of the Lost Cause: False Remembrance of the Civil War

Ed Bonekemper

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:00 – 8:00 p.m.**
Discussion	**8:00 - 8:30 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

***The December meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center on Friday, December 9, 2016. The Round Table's special guest speaker will be historian and author, Ed Bonekemper. The title of his presentation is* "Myth of the Lost Cause: False Remembrance of the Civil War**

The Southern-created Myth of the Lost Cause has long dominated Americans' remembrance of the Civil War, the country's watershed event. In many ways, that Myth has been America's most successful propaganda campaign.

Historian Ed Bonekemper examines the accuracy of the Myth and how it has affected our perception of slavery, states' rights, the nature of the Civil War, and the military performance of Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant and James Longstreet. He begins by discussing the nature of slavery in 1860, including whether it was a benign and dying institution.

The heart of his analysis is whether slavery was the primary cause of secession and the Confederacy's creation. He does this by examining Federal protection of slavery, slavery demographics, seceding states' conventions and declarations, their outreach to other slave states, Confederate leaders' statements, and the Confederacy's foreign policy, POW policy and rejection of black soldiers.

Drawing on decades of research, Bonekemper then discusses other controversial Myth issues, such as whether the South could have won the Civil War, whether Lee was a great general, whether Grant was a mere "butcher" who won by brute force, whether Longstreet lost Gettysburg for Lee, and whether the North won by waging "total war."

Bonekemper is the author of six Civil War books, former book review editor of the Civil War News, and former adjunct military history lecturer at Muhlenberg College. His latest book is The Myth of the Lost Cause: Why the South Fought the Civil War and Why the North Won.

Ed earned a B.A., cum laude, in American history from Muhlenberg College, an M.A. in American history from Old Dominion University, and a J.D. from Yale Law School.

UP-COMING MEETING/ EVENTS

On Friday, January 13, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will hear from several of its members in our annual Potpourri Meeting. The election of officers and the Board will be held prior to the meeting.

Richard Lalosh will talk about Charles Ellerson of the 134th NYVI. Steven Muller will speak about The Galvanized Soldier of the Civil War. Finally, Gerry Hahn will talk about Sigmund Weil of the 7th and 152nd NYV Infantries.

On Friday, February 10, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Ryan Conklin who will talk about the 18th NYVI. This is a change from the formerly scheduled speaker.

On Friday, March 10, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Steve Trimm who will talk about a visit with Gen. U.S. Grant.

On Friday, April 14, 2017, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Terri Olszowy who will talk about the Elmira Prison Camp.

On Friday, May 12, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Chris Mackowski who will talk about Spotsylvania and the fighting at the Mule Shoe.

On Friday, June 9, the regular meeting of the CDCWRT will sponsor Amy Bracewell who will talk about Battlefield Preservation at Cedar Creek and Saratoga.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At the January 2017 meeting, the membership will vote for officers and Board members of the CDCWRT. As required in our by-laws, the Nomination Committee must propose a slate of candidates that will be announced in two newsletters. This is the first announcement. The Committee proposes the following slate:

President: Erin Baillargeon
Vice-President: Mark Koziol
Secretary: Rosemary Nichols
Treasurer: Fran McCashion
At-Large: J.J. Jennings
At-Large: Steven Muller
At-Large: Art Heningson

Any member of the CDCWRT in good standing (has paid dues and is current) may be nominated from the floor at any time up to the election. The election will occur just prior to the scheduled speakers at the January meeting.

DUES ARE DUE IN JANUARY

This is a reminder that the annual dues of $30 is made in the month of January. The Treasurer will be present at the meeting to accept cash, greenbacks, real Confederate money or checks. Checks may also be mailed to the CDCWRT at the address in our letterhead.

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Matt George, Program Chair, has asked to write a monthly column for the newsletter.

Any member may submit an article or a column to the editor for consideration of publication in the newsletter. After all, it is the members' newsletter. Submissions should be made as early as possible.

BUFORD'S VIEW - DECEMBER

I just returned from Gettysburg's Remembrance Day ceremonies. The weather was beautiful. This included 70 degree temperatures and sun on Friday when Round Table member Mark Allen and I raised $115.00 for battlefield preservation. The good weather continued on Saturday morning at the traditional cemetery ceremony. Both author Scott Hartwig (longtime friend of the Round Table) and I agreed later that the speech by actor and education advocate LaVar Burton was one of the best heard at the this event.

According to Burton "recent events in America have caused my heart to be disquieted." At issue then and now, Burton said, were structures of race, class, and economics that determine "which among us" have access to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." As Scott said to me later at the Lincoln Fellowship Luncheon "he" (Burton) "was spot on."

(Editor: Burton has portrayed Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley's ***Roots****, and Geordi in the* ***Star Trek*** *series and movies. For 26 years he produced and hosted an educational show on PBS called* ***Reading Rainbows****, a show aimed at teaching young children to read. The show won 26 Emmys and Burton earned 12 personal Emmys for his work.)*

At the Lincoln Fellowship Luncheon I was fortunate to be seated at a table next to the table that included the three leading Lincoln authorities in the country: Gabor Boritt, Harold Holzer and the keynote speaker Frank Williams. While at the cemetery ceremony I was able to meet the father of our February speaker Ryan Conklin. Ryan, who will be speaking to us about the 18th New York Volunteer Infantry, is a remarkable young man.

At age 32 he has seen two tours of duty in Iraq (101st Airborne), received an advanced degree from Temple University, has experience in television, and is also a volunteer fireman in Lancaster, Pennsylvania where he lives. Ryan spent most of his youth growing up in Gettysburg and graduated from Gettysburg High School. His family still lives there and coincidently, his father is the band director of the Gettysburg High School band group which played at the cemetery that morning, and is the man I had the pleasure of meeting.

Ryan's 3rd great grandfather, Robert Conklin, served in Company D of the 18th. Companies A and E came from Schenectady. Our Round Table has another connection to the 18th New York Volunteer Infantry. Many years ago the late Sue Knost and former Round Table member (and a member of the Schenectady P.D.) Jeff Sauter were involved in the restoration and cleaning of the grave site of Captain William Horsfall of Company E in the 18th. Horsfall was killed in action at Crampton's Gap at South Mountain on September 14, 1862. The culminating ceremony, held at Vale Cemetery in Schenectady, was highly publicized and covered by the media.

Our January potpourri meeting will feature our own Steve Muller who will discuss galvanized soldiers in the Civil War and two people who have initiated their research into their ancestors who served in the Civil War. Richard Lalosh III who is a member of the 77th New York reenactment group, is investigating his ancestor Charles Ellarson. Ellarson at age 18 enlisted in the 134th New York at Gilboa. He was wounded on July 1 at Gettysburg and captured. However, the Confederates left him behind when they retreated on July 4. He was slightly wounded again at Peach tree Creek in Georgia in 1864. He was mustered out with the rest of the Regiment in 1865. By the way, Richard is just a freshman in high school.

Finally, Gerry Hahn will talk to us about ancestor Sigmund Weil. Weil a German immigrant, first served in the 7th New York and then when his enlistment ran out, transferred to the 152nd New York. Weil was mortally wounded as member of the 152nd at Gettysburg. He died in the 2nd Corps Hospital near Gettysburg. The Chaplain of the regiment sent the notice of his death in a kind letter to his father in Otterstadt near Speier in the Kingdom of Bavaria. Gerry's own life is remarkable. In 1938 as a very young boy, he escaped Hitler's concentration camps as the family fled to England. He later also survived the Blitz.

I will be representing the Round Table at the New York State Museum's Education event called "Great Places and Spaces" on Saturday, January 14 from noon to 4:00 PM. On December 14 I will be visiting old friend, Pat Falci, and the New York City Round

Table to hear author John Marszalek discuss "Sherman's March through Georgia and Carolina". In an attempt to strengthen our ties and cooperation with other Civil War round tables in New York and the east I have been in close contact with several neighboring groups such as the Onondaga Civil War Round Table and the Cortland (Andrew Grover) Civil War Round Table. Interestingly, Courtney L. Tucker is both the President of the former and Vice President of the latter. Our March speaker, Steve Trimm is the cousin of the Onondaga CWRT's newsletter editor.

Finally, I'd like to give a special thank you to Larry Weindorf the owner of the For The Historian Bookstore on York Street in Gettysburg. For several years now Larry has been kind enough to allow the Round Table to set up a table to sell our wares to raise money for battlefield preservation. In a time where bookstores in Gettysburg are disappearing and ghost tour companies are increasing, Larry's bookstore is a welcome sight for history related book lovers. In closing, I'd like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

GREAT UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT LINCOLN

The local community college gave me three scrapbooks that a Lincoln fan had kept for 50 years. He collected items in the newspapers about Lincoln, and pasted them into a scrapbook. They are fun to read, much like discovering a 50 year old newspaper in your attic. You delight in ads that tout a new Buick for $1250, or loin lamb chops for 39 cents a pound. But there were a series of articles about the expected release of hundreds of Lincoln papers. Here's the story as it unfolded in the ***New York Times*** and the ***Washington Post.***

On February 9, 1947, an article noted that the Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress, long withheld from investigators, were to be opened in July 1947. There were more than 100 cases carried away from the White House after Lincoln's death. They were owned by his son, Robert Todd Lincoln. Robert acted in keeping with the customary practice, by which, the memory and record of a great public figure is subject to proprietary guardianship by the surviving family.

In the summer of 1921, when Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Columbia University's president, visited Robert at his Vermont home, he found Robert starting to burn the Lincoln papers. Dr. Butler protested vigorously: "Good God, man! Don't you realize that anything belonging to your father now belongs to the United States?" He emphasized his words by jumping to the fireplace and pulling out the papers that were still unburned.

Robert acknowledged, "I have considered that but some of these papers touch upon matters about my father's assassination, involving among other things, men whose families still are in the public eye." He went on to explain that he planned to destroy only those papers that were connected with a conspiracy of a Cabinet member against his father's life.

Dr. Butler argued until Robert agreed not to destroy the papers. Later, Robert made arrangements to turn them over to the Library of Congress. In 1923, by formal deed of gift, he provided they be deposited "for the benefit of all the people." But they were to be held from inspection until 21 years after the donor's death. Why 21 years? Robert died on July 26, 1926. A Lincoln author spoke to Robert's secretary who told her version.

A former Indiana Senator, Albert Beveridge, had begun his book on Lincoln and went to Robert for facts in 1923.Beveridge reportedly had found evidence that convinced him that Thomas Lincoln was not the father of Abraham. He asked Robert about it. The secretary heard loud voices from the office and then Beveridge rushed out, his face purple. The secretary was instructed to write Beveridge's life insurance company, asking how long Beveridge might

live. Investigation indicated Beveridge would probably not live beyond 1943. Lincoln is said to have told his secretary, "We will add a few years to that, then my father's papers will be of no use to him." Beveridge actually died in 1927.

Robert Lincoln had allowed Nicolay and Hay, private secretaries to the President, to use them for their 1890 ten-volume life of Lincoln, and their later edition of his "Complete Works." This was largely a military history of the war. Just before his death, Robert Lincoln gave the librarian authority to have made a complete index to preserve their safety until they should be made public. Dr. John C. Fitzpatrick, late assistant chief of the manuscript division, began an inventory which has been completed by Dr. C. Percy Powell of the same division. Members of the staff working on this project had been working under strict secrecy. They had been forbidden to make any use of their knowledge or to make any notes, even from memory, for future use. Reports indicated as many as 15,000 to 20,000 documents in the collection. The papers were being indexed to facilitate their use, but leading Lincoln historians felt that most Lincoln writings had already been published.

However, the in-coming side was often missing in correspondence, and this is what was speculated to comprise the Lincoln papers. Most of the crank mail was destroyed by William Stoddard, one of Lincoln's secretaries. This included almost daily communications from the Angel Gabriel (professedly written in blood), and also expertly forged letters signed by George Washington or Ben Franklin. The papers might provide a window into the harassed president's working hours, or provide additional information about the most fateful and vexatious of Lincoln's problems --- the question of Sumter. Would the papers offer a new basis for the repeated claim that Lincoln "provoked" the Southern authorities into firing the "first shot" or would they emphasize still further his close personal attention to those aspects of the Sumter situation that promised avoidance of trouble by giving unequivocal assurance of the non-aggressive intent in the expedition to feed the Sumter garrison? Was there disloyalty in Lincoln's cabinet?

On July 13, 1947, Robert Lincoln Beckwith, great grandson of Abraham Lincoln, stated, "Frankly, I feel there probably won't be anything of very great importance in the collection." Beckwith's mother, Mrs. Jesse Lincoln Randolph, and his sister, Miss Mary Lincoln Beckwith, were living at the summer home in Manchester, Vt. at the time of the interview. Beckwith was married and had two step-children and one step-granddaughter.

In the July 19, 1947 ***Washington Post*** a group of Lincoln historians agreed the papers would probably not reveal any sensational new events in Lincoln's life. The historical importance would be to establish for the first time the accurate text of many of his letters and speeches, and to shed new light on the politics of the period.

The first of two CBS documentary broadcasts based on the unsealing of the Robert Todd Lincoln collection of Abraham Lincoln's papers was presented on Saturday at 3:30 p.m. over WTOP-CBS.

At one minute past midnight on July 26, 1947, Librarian Luther Evans opened five safes containing the collection of 18,350 documents before a group of eager historians and scholars at the Library of Congress. David Mearns, director of the Library's reference department, said, "Myth and misunderstanding have cluttered around the documents" for years. He intimated that Robert Lincoln suppressed ancestral records showing Abraham Lincoln's mother to have been illegitimate. Mearns also scoffed that the papers ever contained evidence that members of the Lincoln cabinet conspired in his assassination. Given Robert Lincoln's character and family devotion, Mearns said Robert would never have protected accomplices to assassination.

But Mearns also said that it seems certain that Robert Lincoln did destroy some Lincoln letters at some time. Mary Lincoln Beckwith, Robert's grand-daughter, once watched him as he threw papers on the fireplace grate, but whether they were private or official is unknown.

The papers were recorded on microfilm for quick distribution to educational institutions. The film was done on an assembly line to prevent workers from getting an idea of what it was all about. A set of the film is nearly two miles long – 10,300 feet. It cost $645. The Library said the microfilm was decided upon because the cost of enlarged paper copies would have been prohibitive --$5,750,000 a set.

The Lincoln papers proved a gold mine of information for Lincoln scholars but a disappointment for seekers of sensation-alism. The papers disclosed at least 80 death threats received by Lincoln before his assassination. Lincoln was somewhat fatalistic about this, and said, "What does anybody want to assassinate me for? If anybody wants to do so, he can do it day or night if he is ready to give his life for mine. It is nonsense."

One of the outstanding finds was the original manuscript of his sad farewell to the citizens of Springfield as he departed for Washington. Lincoln said, "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Devine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed."

Another outstanding find was reported as the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. *(Editor's note: But we know the first draft was given to Garrett Smith for the Sanitary Fair in Albany, and is in the NYS Archives and Record Administration.)*

Still another find in Lincoln's own handwriting was his summation of the end of one of the craziest upsets in his own Cabinet when Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase, resigned in the same hour that Secretary of State, William Seward, had resigned. Lincoln copied for his personal record the short note he sent to each of these resigned officials telling them he could not accept their resignations. Below this brief note he wrote: "P.S. Same as above sent to Gov. Chase," and: P.S. Same as above sent to Gov. Seward." On the envelope to which he filed this away for the record he wrote two words that seemed to decipher into "Cabinet Embrolio,"

Also in the collection was Gen. Sherman's letter to Lincoln dated December 22, 1864. "I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savanna with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition and also about 25,000 bales of cotton."

And of course there was a letter from Alan Pinkerton, the great detective, who sent Lincoln a private cipher code for the two of them --- a long list of words in which "man" for example was to be indicated by "sweet oil," "woman" by "olive oil," the Secretary of War as "peanuts" and the President himself as just plain "nuts."

Lincoln or his clerical staff saved not only letters from bigwigs, but also from cranks, smart alecks, job-hunters, well-wishers, humble and unselfish patriots, fools, saints and sinners. In the collection there was only one personal letter to the President's wife, Mary Todd. This dealt with the disappearance of son, Tad's nanny goat. The presumption is that Robert destroyed personal letters which he had separated from the rest. The official letters were placed in the Library of Congress in `1919.

In travelling, Robert always had a trunk brought along which he said contained personal Lincoln papers. Others had witnessed him burning letters from this trunk in addition to family members. But for those 14 Lincoln scholars in 1947, the 18,350 documents were part of a priceless treasure-trove.

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