



The Dispatch

Newsletter of the

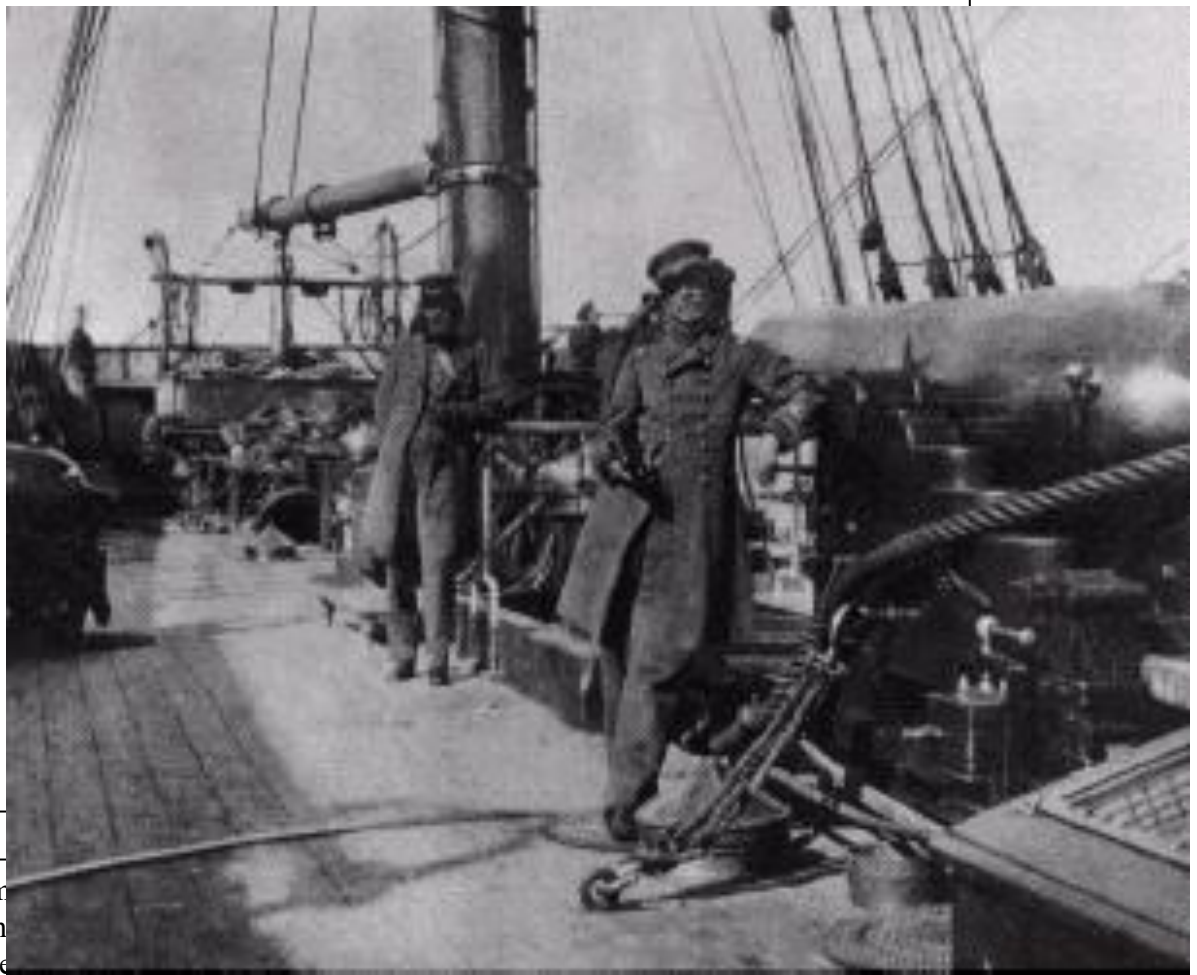
Capital District Civil War Round Table

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

CDCWRT's web site: www.cdcwrt.org

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Rafael Sem
in 1864 in
romanticize

was sunk by the **USS Kearsarge**. The naval duel was watched by some 15,000 people who lined the bluffs near Cherbourg. Painter, Edouard Manet, watched the battle and painted **Alabama's** death. In recent years, have recovered many artifacts from the ship, ranging from the Blakely cannon to porcelain flush commodes to bone buttons. Come hear about ocean archeology.

**DECEMBER MEETING
FRIDAY DECEMBER 9TH**

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

**SOCIAL HOUR 6:00-7:00
ELECTIONS 7:00-7:30
PRESENTATION 7:30-8:30
HOLIDAY PARTY 8:30-10:00**

CDCWRT MEETING

The next meeting of this new season will be held on Friday, December 9th, at the Guilderland Public Library. Our guest speaker will be Joseph W. Zarzynski. His presentation is entitled "Underwater Archeology of Civil War Shipwrecks."

Joseph Zarzynski is an underwater archeologist and the Executive Director of Bateaux Below, Inc., a not-for-profit educational corporation that studies historic shipwrecks and other submerged cultural resources in the 32-mile long Lake George. He has a B.A. in History from Ithaca College, a M.A.T. degree in Social Sciences from Binghamton University, and a M.A. degree in Archeology and Heritage from the University of Leicester.

Zarzynski has been involved in numerous underwater archeological projects. He was Project Director for mapping the seven British bateau shipwrecks from 1758, for side scan sonar mapping of Lake George, and for the creation and management of Lake George's three shipwreck preserves for NYS. He has also participated in the

Rhode Island Marine Archeological Project, and the searches for various vessels including Land Tortoise, Alligator, Gem (slave ship), and HMB Endeavour. Mr. Zarzynski is the author of two books on underwater mysteries: Champ—Beyond the Legend and Monster Wrecks of Loch Ness and Lake Champlain.

This presentation will examine the archeological studies of several Civil War shipwrecks. Included in the presentation are Union vessels USS Monitor, the submarine USS Alligator, and the river ironclad USS Cairo. Zarzynski will then review the underwater archeological surveys of the Confederate submarine HL Hunley, the raider CSS Alabama, ironclads CSS Virginia, CSS Neuse, CSS Georgia, and several other significant warships from the Civil War. Part of the presentation will compare the results of early salvage projects of Civil War vessels that generally had limited success, to those of recent underwater archeological endeavors.

UP-COMING EVENTS

Sunday, December 4th, is the day for the Victorian Stroll in Troy. This 19th-Century event features merchants, street vendors, entertainment, carriage rides, readings, and songfests. The CDCWRT has been a long-time supporter of the event, and will have display tables in the Troy Post Office and the Atrium. There will be a special postal cancellation in addition. Volunteers are needed to man the two stations, and greet the public. If you come as a tourist, stop by, and perhaps purchase some unique gifts, which will support the Round Table. Please contact Sue Knost, Mike Spaulding, or Joe Stracuzzi for details if you would like to help.

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Friday the 13th, December, is also our Holiday Party. If you have a special holiday dessert or snack you would like to bring, it would be GREATFULLY APPRECIATED BY ALL! There will also be a number of items for sale as gifts. These will include postal art, cachets, T-shirts, sweatshirts, jewelry, and books. The July 2005 and the January 2006 issues of *GETTYSBURG MAGAZINE* will also be available for \$5.00 an issue.

The *IRISH IN THE CIVIL WAR* raffle drawing will also take place at this meeting. Tickets are on the back page of this newsletter. Support your Round Table and perhaps you take home one of the great prizes.

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December 31st, First Night in Saratoga, marks the second year that the CDCWRT will be present at the NYS Military Museum in downtown Saratoga. A special postal cancellation will be available. The Museum is open and its two new exhibits will be opened to the public. Again volunteers are needed for this event at the busiest time of the year.

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Friday, January 13, 2006 will be the Round Table's annual Potpourri Night and T-Shirt Night at the Guilderland Library. Two or three brief presentations will be made by members of the Round Table. Display tables will also be available for anyone who would like to bring in items for the audience to see. There are already several volunteers who do not fear the Friday the 13th spell. Nancy Farina will talk about, "William H. Seward - A Man for All Seasons." If you have items you would like to display, please contact Matt

George, Sue Knost or Lew Warner, so that your table needs can be met.

This is also T-SHIRT NIGHT, an ideal time to legitimately wear that Civil War t-shirt your spouse will only let you wear outside while mowing the lawn. This is also OLD CIVIL WAR MAGAZINE EXCHANGE NIGHT. If you have old magazine you would like to donate to the Round Table, we will try to sell them for \$0.50 apiece. There will also be a selection of Civil War books that will be priced to move----so I can get them out of my cellar.

BOARD MEETING

The November Board Meeting was held on November 14th, 2005. The Treasurer reported \$1,922.42 in the regular account, and \$14,899.89 in the Preservation Account. Usually donations are decided at the December and January Board Meetings

The Board had an extended discussion on RT trips. The rising costs of trips has resulted in cancellation of our Columbus Day Weekend trips these past two years. If we are to sponsor a trip to Charleston, or the Shenandoah Valley, for example, we will need to develop long range planning to allow members to make trip deposits well in advance. There will be more discussion of this at the next Board Meeting, before it is presented formally to the membership.

ELECTIONS

At the December meeting we will elect new officers and board members for the next year. This is the proposed slate:

President	Matt George
V-President	Lew Warner
Treasurer	Mike Spaulding

Secretary	Rosemary Nichols
At-Large	Mary Ellen Johnson
At-Large	Fran McCashion
At-Large	J.J. Jennings

Nominations for any position can be made from the floor at the December meeting. Nominees must be members in good standing, with dues paid. Likewise, those proposing nominations must also be member in good standing.

PAST EVENTS

At Remembrance Day at Gettysburg November 18-19, the RT was set up in the Cyclorama Building. The painting is being removed for conservation and cleaning. Many of the staff were let go, since the building will be razed and the site restored to its appearance at the time of the battle. For 10 years the RT has been at that location twice a year. A new visitor center is being constructed.

ODDS AND ENDS

In November the Round Table registered its first sale from the web site with payment made through the checkout at PayPal. The items sold were two of our special silk-screened commemorative cachets. We hope this will be the first of numerous sales of our items for a much larger market. In the meantime you should go to the web site and see what is available.

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I heard a commentary on how charitable donations are down these past few months because of people being "tapped out," that is, they have donated to the many natural disaster relief funds early in the year, and now have little left to give. Even CWPT noted a drop in donations, and the

organization held back on new preservation ventures.

There are other 'things' we can donate however. One can donate blood, or plasma, or platelets to the Red Cross. One can donate surplus canned food to food pantries, churches, and even the Post Office by putting items in your mailbox these next few weeks. One can donate clothing, shoes, coats and hats to churches or the Capital City Rescue Mission. One can donate furniture to the Salvation Army or other groups for the inevitable winter fires that destroy people's homes.

Sometimes you can be innovative at support two organizations with one donation. My office supports the Down Syndrome Resource Center, which has a fund-raiser every October that in part involves a silent auction. I know there is an interest in framed postal art. My office purchases these items from the Round Table, and donates them to the auction. This year we purchased eight items that involved Civil War cachets, Revolutionary War cachets, WWII cachets, baseball cachets, and stamps honoring women from the RT for \$300. The donated items were bought at auction and made \$410 for the Resource Center. If you are involved with similar activities, you too can be innovative AND support preservation.

LINCOLN MEN AND SONS OF DIXIE

This is a new feature of *The Dispatch*, which was started earlier this year. If you have a relative, or your significant other has a relative, or if your friend has a relative, or if you have just found someone on your own but claim no relative ties, AND you would like to share some history about this person, we would like to highlight it. Please send details to the editor.

John Emery Parsons

DATES: 12/23/1837 – 7/13/1914

ALLEGIANCE: Union

UNIT: 150TH PAVI & 187PAVI

John Parsons was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the son of Williams Parsons and Catharine Leebrich. He married Georgianna Parke, his first cousin. Her parents were Benjamin Parke and Elizabeth Leebrich, Catharine's sister. Benjamin owned a large farm in Cambridge on the Charles River. Harvard College was later built on this land. Little is recorded of John's early life.

When the Civil War started, John enlisted on August 30, 1862, possibly in response to General Lee's planned invasion of the North. His early military history is unclear, but he eventually was promoted to Captain and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers with the 150th Pennsylvania Regiment. This regiment was in the 5th Corps of the Army of the Potomac, and was later commanded by Lt. Colonel Thomas Chamberlain in 1864. His older brother, Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, was given command of the First Brigade, First Division of the Fifth Corps when General Warren reorganized the Corps in early June 1864. The First Brigade consisted of the 143rd, 149th and the 150th Pennsylvania Volunteers and the 4th Delaware. The new, full strength, 187th Pennsylvania replaced the Delaware regiment on June 5th, 1864, and the Brigade thenceforth was known as the Keystone Brigade. This was the unit that Chamberlain led at Petersburg in June 1864, when he was critically wounded.

We have yet to obtain a *History of the 150th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry*, but a hand written note in the history of the 187th Regiment relates a significant story. On May 2nd, 1864 a shell



landed among Col. Wister, Adjutant Ashhurst, John Parsons, and Lt. Col. Thomas Chamberlain. Fortunately it was a dud, for had it exploded, they all would have been wounded or killed.

The 187th Regiment was formed in part from 180-day volunteers who enlisted when General Lee invaded Pennsylvania in 1863. In January 1864, most re-enlisted for three years in the newly formed 187th Regiment. In May the regiment was transported to Washington and on to its first camp in Virginia on Arlington Heights, near Fort Albany. By early June they had marched to Cold Harbor with the 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery and the 10th New York Heavy Artillery. They were not engaged at Cold Harbor, and on June 5th, joined the Keystone Brigade.

The regiment suffered about 20% casualties in Chamberlain's unsuccessful assault on Fort Mahone at Rives' Salient at Petersburg on June 18th. Praise for the unit's performance under fire was penned by Joshua Chamberlain. "It was with this magnificent command that I made the now

famous charge at Petersburg, June 18, 1864." A marching song entitled, *Keystone Brigade*, will be on display at the January meeting of the Round Table.

In August 1864 the Brigade went on to tearing up the Weldon Railroad. In September, the 187th was transferred to the Department of Pennsylvania, and was sent to Camp Cadwallader. On January 21st, 1865, Captain John E. Parsons of the 150th P.V. was made Lieutenant Colonel of the 187th at the request of the Company officers. Now far removed from the fighting in Petersburg, the regimental duties were mostly guard and provost duty. Parsons was strict with his troops. Upon several occasions the Regiment was called upon to perform escort duty at the funeral of some prominent soldier, such as Major General David B. Birney. Fate was grooming them for another task however.

On April 22nd, the Lincoln funeral train pulled into Philadelphia. The 187th led the elaborate catafalque, bearing Lincoln's body, to Independence Square and Independence Hall where the remains laid in state. The 187th guarded the body and preserved order as 187,000 people passed through the hall. On the 23rd, the Regiment escorted the casket back to the train depot. The Parsons family history states that John Parsons was one of the pallbearers. It may have been true for he was promoted to Colonel on May 6th, 1865. On August 3rd, 1865, the Regiment was disbanded.

On April 15, 1865, the day Lincoln died, three men met in an office in Philadelphia, and decided to form an honor guard for Lincoln's body. They were Thomas Zell, a former Lt. Col. in a Pennsylvania regiment, Samuel Mitchell, 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry surgeon, and Peter Keyser, 91st Pennsylvania Infantry surgeon. This

organization subsequently went on to become the first Union veterans' group to form, and ultimately grew to become the second largest veterans' organization after the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Zell's organization was the **Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS)**.

Following the funeral, the three founders met regularly and decided they wanted the organization to continue to exist. The first public meeting was held in late May 1865. Unlike the GAR, only honorably discharged officers could join. The purpose was fraternal, and members wanted to continue to bond with fellows of similar achievement and status. The constitution allowed for primogeniture, the principle whereby the first-born sons of the officers could belong as "Second Class" members. It also allowed for "First Class Hereditary Companions," who were direct male descendants of deceased veterans. Thus membership exists down to today.

Mitchell's membership number was 1, Zell's was #2, and Keyser's was #3. John Parsons probably knew these officers, because he was # 54. Joshua Chamberlain was #62, Phil Sheridan was #750, and U.S. Grant was #2006.

John E. Parsons sired three children after the war, Catharine Elizabeth, Hannah, and John Emery, Jr. John Sr. became a banker in Toledo, Ohio, and died as the result of an elevator accident in his office building in 1914. Catharine married William Ehlers Taylor in 1905 and had three children --- John, Alice, and William, Jr. In 1938 Alice married Tom Jay Gorham. They had three daughters --- Nancy, Barbara and Patricia. In 1965, Nancy married a young medical student, Matthew Farina. And that is my only connection to the American Civil War!