

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 66, No. 8

609th Meeting

April 2017



- Guest:  
Guest Ed Bearss  
*Grierson's Raid*
- Cost:  
Members: **\$50**  
Non-Members: **\$60**
- Date:  
**Wednesday,  
April 12<sup>th</sup>**
- Place:  
**The Three West Club,  
3 West 51st Street**
- Time:  
**Dinner at 6:00 pm,  
Doors open 5:30 pm,  
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm**

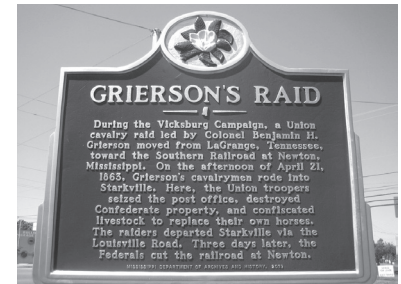
**You must call  
718-341-9811 by  
April 5<sup>th</sup> if you  
plan to attend the  
April meeting.**

**We need to know how  
many people to order  
food for.**

## Guest Ed Bearss Grierson's Raid

What more can we possibly say about our April guest, the winner of our prestigious Fletcher Pratt Award for *The Petersburg Campaign*? He is indeed a legend in his own

lifetime and at 90+ is still leading tours and lecturing without a note. After his wartime service in the South Pacific and recovery from serious wounds, Ed used the G.I. Bill to gain a degree in Foreign Service studies at Georgetown University in 1949. He received his M.A. in history from Indiana University in 1955, writing his thesis on Confederate General Pat Cleburne. Ed is the Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service and his books include: *Forrest at Brice's Crossroads* (1975), *Fields of Honor* (2006), and *Receding Tide: Vicksburg and Gettysburg* (2010).



## A Slave is Missing From A Well Known Owner

Run away from his subscriber in Albemarle, a Mulatto slave called Sandy, about 35 years of age, his stature is rather low, inclining to corpulence, and his complexion light; he is a shoemaker by trade, in which he uses his left hand principally, can do coarse carpenters work, and is something of a horse jockey; he is greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk he is insolent and disorderly, in his conversation he swears much, and in his behavior he is artful and knavish. He took with him a white horse, much scarred with traces, of which it is expected he will endeavor to dispose; he also carried his shoemakers tools, and will probably endeavor to get employment that way. Whoever conveys the said slave to me, in Albemarle, shall have 40 s. reward, if taken up within the county, 4 l. if elsewhere within the colony, and 10 l. if in any other colony, from

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

From <http://freedomonthemove.org>.

[editor's note: All s's were written in the old way as f's.]

## A Case of Identity

Treasurer Bud Livingston finally got around to attending the Civil War Symposium in Lido Beach, Florida, in January, something he had been meaning to do for years.

He went to the welcome desk, paid for his admittance, took an I.D. card, and pinned it to his shirt.

After chatting with several people, including an old member of the CWRTNY, someone said to him "You're not Bud Robertson, are you?"

Obviously, he wasn't.

He had just picked up the wrong I.D.

When he located the 86-year-old historian, Bud Robertson, the 86-year-old amateur historian, Bud Livingston, gave him the right pin.

Just a case of mistaken identity!

## 2017 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2017

• May 10<sup>th</sup> •

Fletcher Pratt Award  
John Strausbaugh for  
*City of Sedition*

• June 14<sup>th</sup> •

Chris Bryce  
*Petersburg*

• September 13<sup>th</sup> •

TBA

## President's Message

We are once again privileged to have a living American National Treasure, Ed Bearss, as our featured speaker. All of us who are students of the Civil War, of course, know of Ed Bearss, but, how well do we really "know" him?

Edwin Cole Bearss will be celebrating his 94th birthday this summer, and has spent more than two thirds of it dedicated to learning, exploring, and teaching about what Mr. Lincoln labeled the "Great Civil War." He grew up in Montana and became fascinated by the Civil War at an early age. As his father before him had done in WWI, Ed enlisted in the Marine Corps a few months after Pearl Harbor. He fought with the 1st Marine Division ("The Old Breed") on Guadalcanal, and later (in 1944), was badly wounded during the New Britain Campaign. Ed spent more than two years in various military and VA hospitals recovering from his injuries.

After being released from the service, he used his GI Bill benefits to finance his higher education, first at Georgetown, then at Indiana University, where he received his MA in history (his thesis was on General Patrick Cleburne, "The Stonewall of the West"). During his research on Cleburne, he visited (and revisited) the major battlefields of the Western Theater, telling friends "You can't describe a battlefield without walking it."

He 1954, he joined the Army Office of Military History, but soon after, began his life's work by becoming an historian at the Vicksburg National Park. Among other accomplishments, he found the long lost Union gunboat, USS *Cairo*, and two forgotten forts at Grand Gulf, MS. As national interest in the Civil War increased with the upcoming Centennial Commemoration, Ed was soon recognized for his unmatched knowledge of Civil War Battlefields and was employed to develop several new parks, including Pea Ridge and Wilson's Creek. He later also helped develop new national parks at Ft. Smith, Stones River, Ft. Donaldson, the battlefields around Richmond, the Eisenhower Farm at Gettysburg, and many others across the country.

In 1981 Ed was appointed Chief Historian of the National Park Service, a position he held until 1994. After retiring (a word we should probably not use when referring to Mr. Bearss), he was named Chief Historian, Emeritus of the Park Service, a title he still holds today.

Besides writing or editing a couple of dozen books, frequently appearing on TV documentaries, and lecturing at Round Tables and other venues, Ed is best known as a battlefield tour guide for the Civil War, or just about any other major conflict of which you may have heard. National Park Historian Dennis Frye probably said it best when he declared, "A battlefield tour with Ed Bearss is a transcendental experience!"

Whether transcendental or not, insure you reserve for place for the "Ed Bearss Experience" by calling (718) 341-9811 RIGHT NOW! Hope to see you there!

*Paul Weiss*

## CWRTNY 60TH ANNUAL BATTLEFIELD TOUR

**"Petersburg...And The Start Of The Appomattox Campaign"**

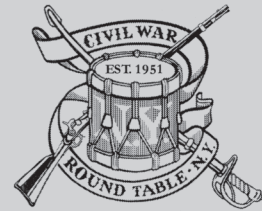
**Thursday to Sunday | October 12-15, 2017**

For the past two years, we've traveled the "Bloody Roads South" with the valiant Army of the Potomac. This year we will continue with the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia as they face each other for 10 long months at Petersburg and City Point. We have added an extra day so our tour will cover the Battles of the Crater and Forts Steadman, Gregg, Whitworth, and Mahone...we will travel to Dinwiddie, the White Oak Road, and Five Forks... plus we will break through the lines with the Federals at Petersburg...visit A.P. Hill's death site...and follow Lincoln into Petersburg as Grant and Meade begin their pursuit of Lee on his final retreat!

### TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE:

Send your \$100 check (Made out to "CWRTNY") and your complete contact information with your phone number, cell phone and email address to: Martin Smith/CWRTNY Tour, 158 West 81 Street #24, New York, NY 10024.

## THE DISPATCH



Founded January 24, 1951

The Dispatch is published monthly, except July and August, by

**The Civil War Round Table  
of New York, Inc.,**

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Rosedale, N.Y. 11422  
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## April During the Civil War

### 1861

12 – From an old map of Charleston, S.C....Fort Sumter lies in the water...it is one of the strongest works in the world...2 men at cannons could defend it against 500. Not quite prescient.

19 – The Anaconda is let out of its cage and plans to strangle the CSA.

### 1862

16 – Slavery in Washington, D.C. is abolished. Union slave holders will be compensated \$300 for each slave freed.

25 – New Orleans surrenders. Loyal restaurant owners offer free gumbo soup to Union sailors.

### 1863

10 – President Lincoln explains the ABCs of warfare to Fighting Joe Hooker. Defeating Lee's army is your goal not capturing Richmond.

17 – Ben Grierson and his cavalry set out to demonstrate that the CSA cannot defend itself as he rides from LaGrange, Tn. through to Baton Rouge, La. They ride unharmed, setting the stage for John Wayne to win the war in *The Horse Soldiers*.

### 1864

4 – Phil Sheridan switches from infantry to become commander of cavalry in the Army of the Potomac. Watch out Jubal Early.

12 – The Fort Pillow Massacre. Forrest's soldiers shoot down black soldiers who try to surrender.

### 1865

1 – The disaster at Five Forks leads to the evacuation of Petersburg, which gets us to Appomattox and, for all purposes, the end of our long, long, national nightmare.

## An Old Book Review From an Even Older Unidentified Magazine, circa 1989

Many Civil war enthusiasts show little interest in the naval aspect of their favorite war. The average buff prefers to read of a Fort Pillow "massacre" rather than an account of a Confederate cruiser burning Yankee merchantmen. A debate on Jeb Stuart's alleged guilt at Gettysburg sets new attendance records at Civil War Round Table meetings, but mention of the historic 1864 confrontation of Raphael Semmes and John Winslow in the English Channel engenders many a quizzical look.

In a 38-year period, one well-known Round Table had a mere dozen talks on Naval topics, and since 1973 only two such subjects have been programmed. The reasons for this neglect of naval history are not easily explained, but the recent discovery of the wreck of the C.S.S. *Alabama* off the French coast may stimulate renewed concern for the nation's naval heritage, especially for those chapters written by Union and Confederate seamen of the 1860s.

The reappearance of Arthur Sinclair's *Two Years on the Alabama* could not be more timely, considering the current controversy over the ownership of that ship's remains and arguments about the disposition of its artifacts. Although he served on the cruiser throughout his career, Sinclair wrote his account many years after the war, and its publication, in 1895, reopened many unhealed wounds. Surviving fellow officers accused him of fabrication and of disrespect for the memory of Captain Raphael Semmes. These criticisms and Sinclair's veracity are analyzed in an excellent introduction by William N. Still, Jr., one of the foremost authorities on American naval history in the 1860s. His first-rate, comprehensive commentary on both the book and its author constitutes a singular asset of the reprint edition.

Sinclair recreates life on one of these Confederacy's most intrepid warships and complements the more famous memoirs of that ship's captain. All of the *Alabama*'s tricks are recounted: false flags, fast chases, boarding parties, quarterdeck trials, on-spot condemnations, and the all-too-frequent torching of enemy

vessels. Besides his exciting description of the relentless pursuit of Northern commerce across the world's waters, the author also depicts the routine of shipboard life and the nitty-gritty details experienced by "Jack," the average sailor of the predominantly English crew. Sinclair explains Jack's motives for signing on (double wages, prize money and daily grog); he outlines the dull, repetitive routines of sea life; and he paints a perhaps too rosy picture of Jack at work and play. The portrait seems somewhat contrived, for too little is made of the wilder nature of Jack's character. Nineteenth-century sailors could be difficult to control – some forty-two deserted during the *Alabama*'s cruise – and the captain recorded in his Memoirs that he had a "precious set of rascals on board...liars, thieves, and drunkards."

After 22 months at sea, the war-weary vessel entered the harbour of Cherbourg, France, for a much needed overhaul. Soon after her arrival, however, and before any repairs could be made, an old enemy pursuer steamed into view and waited. Here then is Sinclair's liveliest writing. The *Alabama-Kearsarge* battle took place off the French coast on a cloudless Sunday, the 19th of June 1864. Both ships carefully cleared French territorial waters and began a series of circles that closed the distance between them. Their decks were sanded; their athletic men were ready for combat. The *Alabama*, though not in fighting trim, almost won. One of the shells from her 100-pounder lodged in the enemy ship but failed to explode. Within the hour, the *Kearsarge*'s heavy Dahlgren guns did their work and the South's most feared raider struck her colors and sank. Many of the rebels became prisoners aboard the *Kearsarge*, but Semmes and forty others, picked up by the British yacht, *Deerhound*, made it to Southampton, England. One chapter of the Confederate vessel's history remains to be written. Just before his ship sank, Semmes tried to reach the safety of shore. He failed but in her last minutes the great ship apparently recrossed into French territorial waters. There she stayed until her remains were discovered in 1984 by French naval divers and identified by Captain Max Guerout and his team of international archeological experts. That discovery promises to set off a new *Alabama* claims controversy to rival the one that followed the American Civil War. Those who would understand the present contretemps would do well to read Sinclair's account of his service on the rebel cruiser.

## Some Civil War Familiar Quotations

It is called the Army of the Potomac but it is only McClellan's bodyguard. If McClellan is not using the army I should like to borrow it for a while.

It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic laws for its own termination. (1st inaugural 3/4/61)

**Abraham Lincoln**

Wherever the enemy goes let our troops go also.  
The war is over. The rebels are our countrymen again.

**U.S. Grant**

Get there first with the most men

**N.B. Forrest** as reported by **Basil Duke and Richard Taylor**

[editor's note: Forrest may be the least educated quotee in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations]

All quiet along the Potomac

**George B. McClellan** (who else?)

## DRESS CODE

**Ladies and gentlemen: PLEASE**  
No sneakers, no jeans, no tee shirts. Gentlemen, please wear a collared shirt. Let's dress like we are attending a business meeting.

**Thanks, The Management**

## SUGGESTIONS

**The Dispatch welcomes articles, book reviews (non-fiction only) and suggestions.**

**Just send them in to our mailing address.**

## NEW RECRUITS

**Michael Vizard** from Mamaroneck who is an editor.

**Bill Smith**, a former member from Bayside, who had rejoined us.



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OF NEW YORK

139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y. 11422