

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 65, No. 1

592nd Meeting

August/September 2015



• Guest:
Colonel Ralph Peters
Phil Sheridan

• Cost: *See page 2
Members: \$50
Non-Members: \$60

• Date:
Wednesday,
September 9th

• 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
September 2nd if you
plan to attend the
September meeting.*

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

Colonel Ralph Peters Phil Sheridan

Our September guest is a retired U.S. Army Lt. Colonel, author, and media commentator, who is perhaps best known for his appearances on Fox News. He enlisted in the U.S. Army after attending Pennsylvania State University and his first assignment was in Germany, after which he attended Officer Candidate School receiving a commission in 1980. Subsequently, he served with the 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry Regiment, then part of the 1st Armored Division. He spent ten years in Germany working in military intelligence. He later became a Foreign Area Officer specializing in the Soviet Union. His last assignment was with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence.



The Other Hannibal

Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, like Lincoln, expected to be renominated in Baltimore.

He had been nominated to run with Lincoln in 1860 because he was a representative Republican fresh from the Democratic party and from a state, Maine, where an election in September was considered the “finger-board” of victory or defeat in that presidential canvass.

Hamlin had been a congressman, governor, and senator from his state. He was about five feet ten inches tall, with an olive complexion, deep-set eyes, a broad, full forehead, and stooping shoulders. He invariably wore a rust-colored suit of broadcloth, a swallowtail coat, a low vest, and black trousers with side pockets into which his hands were everlastingly thrust. He seldom, if ever, wore an overcoat, no matter how bitter the weather.

After the election in 1860, Hamlin had drifted away from Lincoln, Zionwards, into the radical wing of the party. However, he expected to be renominated in Baltimore.

But even as he entertained this comforting notion, the stars were realigning themselves. It was being reported by some that Lincoln himself wished to trade Hamlin in for another - for Governor Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, a strong War Democrat. Lincoln had nothing against Hamlin, even though his vice president held strong positions opposed to his - Lincoln seldom held anything against anybody. It was suggested that Lincoln simply believed, as many did, that a War Democrat would help the ticket in what looked like a very close election. It was a matter of practical politics.

From *Reelecting Lincoln* by John C. Waugh

2015 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2015

• **October 14th** •
Tom Fleming
Origins of the Civil War

• **November 11th** •
West Point Night

• **December 9th** •
TBA

President's Message

The Sesquicentennial is over, but we're still here!

Why? Because the "Great Civil War" (as Lincoln called it) is still the most important event experienced by this country, the consequences of which we are still living with today (as recent headlines will attest).

On behalf of your recently elected Round Table officers and board members, we are eager to bring you another year (our 65th!) of fascinating after-dinner speakers to make the War, and the people (both great and small) who orchestrated its most significant events, come alive to us, living today, a century and a half after they occurred.

We will continue to honor our tradition as the second oldest Round Table by presenting the prestigious Fletcher Pratt Award to the best non-fiction Civil War book of the year, the Baroness Lincoln Award for the best Lincoln related work, along with special speakers we will have for "West Point Night" (November) and "Lee-Jackson Night" (January). We also hope to have a surprise or two for you along the way. Our goal, as it has been since 1951, is to "promote the social, educational, literary, and other historically related activities ... of the people and events associated with the American Civil War."

So, do yourself (and any friends and family you may wish to bring) a favor, and mark your calendar for the second Wednesday of each month so you may share with us a great meal, convivial company, and the wonderful experience of having the Civil War brought to life by the finest and most knowledgeable speakers in the business.

Paul Weiss

* Important

Please forgive us but as our expenses have risen we had to increase the cost of dinner. Beginning in September the price will be \$50 for members and \$60 for guests. Basic dues remain the same. Since we are forced to increase the tariff for dinner we will be handing out free raffle tickets for a special door prize.

Dues are due

If you haven't already paid your dues, please send your checks in now. After October, the price rises to \$60. If we don't hear from you by January 1, we will be obliged to drop your name from our mailing lists. Sorry about that.

We now have three yearly dues categories:

	Individual	Family	
Basic	\$50	\$70	
Silver	\$60	\$85	
Gold	\$110	\$160	
Out of Town	\$25	\$35	(75 miles or more)
Student	\$25		

New members please add \$10 initiation fee

You may choose any appropriate amount to send in, but it will be greatly appreciated if you are able to remit the amounts in the second or third categories.

Send dues to Treasurer Bud Livingston
71-16 66th Street, Glendale, NY 11385

Do not include your dues and dinner payment on the same check.

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Founded January 24, 1951

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

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

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

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August/September during the Civil War

1861

August 8 – Secretary of War Cameron gives Ben Butler instructions to honor the fugitive slave law for loyal states but not for states in insurrection. Ben, the “Beast,” then keeps runaway slaves, calls them “contraband,” and puts them to work for the Union.

September 11 – A certain General R.E. Lee fights vainly against the Federals, the tropical downpours, and the rugged mountains in Western Virginia. And all for nought.

1862

August 18 – John Pope and his Army of Virginia, pressed by Confederate troops, awaits reinforcements from McClellan’s unsuccessful Peninsular army. And he waits and he waits.

September 9 – In “A Meditation on Divine Will,” President Lincoln writes, “In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with God’s will. Both *may* be, but one *must* be wrong. God can not be *for* and *against* the same thing at the same time.”

1863

August 19 – Weeks after the worst riot in American history (The NYC Draft Riots), the Draft resumes peacefully. Federal troops stand by to make sure that it does.

September 10 – Nellie Forbush’s home town is evacuated by Confederate forces as the Union captures yet another Rebel capital: Little Rock, Ark.

1864

August 21 – Forrest embarrasses Union forces once again as he occupies Memphis for part of the day and almost captures Generals Hurlbut and Washburn.

September 1 – Unable to hold out against the mighty Federal onslaught, J.B. Hood leaves a burning and beat-up Atlanta to Uncle Billy Sherman and his bummers. Unbeknownst to the Confederates the loss of this key city allows President Lincoln to be reelected.

Sunday in the Field With George

With the outbreak of the Civil War, he (McClellan) took a commission first as General of Ohio Volunteers then as Major General in the Regular Army in command of the Department of Ohio. In his first campaign, McClellan advocated battlefield turning maneuvers in combination with a tactical outlook that would have pleased his old professor, Dennis Hart Mahan, one which was consistent with his own Crimean War observations. Assigned to drive a Confederate force of some 10,000 from strategic positions in the Kanawha Valley in Virginia, McClellan found General Robert Garnett – a former West Point commandant and tactics instructor – entrenched in well-chosen defensive positions.

McClellan pronounced that:

No prospect of a brilliant victory shall induce me to depart from my intention of gaining success by maneuvering rather than by fighting. I will not throw these raw men of mine into the teeth of artillery and entrenchments if it is possible to avoid it. A direct assault would result in a heavy and unnecessary loss of life.

McClellan entrenched a holding force in front of Garnett’s main position and, with a little luck and the leadership ability of a fellow officer from the corps of engineers, General W.S. Rosecrans, in command of the turning maneuver, pushed the Confederates out of their positions.

But McClellan was commanding a small maneuverable army. His first experience with mass citizen armies under conditions of total warfare came when he took command of the Union forces before Washington six days after the defeat at Manassas. He faced the unique task of organizing, moving, maneuvering and fighting a mass army in excess of 100,000 men in the first extended total war that realized the full impact of the Industrial Revolution.

...McClellan was appalled by the resistance of politicians and military men alike to fortify the defenses of Washington. From his perspective this was a fundamental question of both tactical and strategic organization. The Union defeat at Manassas removed some political indecision about the need to entrench as the Union army was so weak and demoralized it could be expected to fight effectively only from entrenched defense positions. But McClellan arrived, six days after Manassas, to find defensive field works almost totally lacking. On the Maryland side of the Potomac there were no more than a few breastworks in a single location. The problem remained as late as his departure for the Peninsula. When he left to conduct the campaign against Richmond, McClellan ordered Lieutenant Colonel B.S. Alexander of the corps of engineers to visit Manassas Junction and its vicinity to determine the defensive works necessary to hold that location with a small force. Lincoln ignored Alexander’s recommendations.

Edward Hagerman

From *Conflict and Command* edited by John T. Hubbell

A Get Well Wish

Old-time members will remember Betty Zinn, who was our secretary many years ago. She is currently in a rehab facility and if you wish to send her a get-well message here is her address:

Elizabeth Zinn c/o Dry Harbor
61-35 Dry Harbor Road, (519A)
Middle Village, N.Y. 11379

NEW Recruits

Alex Pellitteri, a student from Brooklyn.

Steve Aronson, from that same neck of the woods. He has rejoined us at the CWRTNY.

Richard Dupuis from Stamford, who heard of us on the Internet.

Book Review

Edwin Stanton- Lincoln's Autocrat

There are three matters which place the subject of William Marvell's *Edwin Stanton-Lincoln's Autocrat* at the center of American history during the period of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath. Perhaps the best known of these is the legend that as he stood by Lincoln's deathbed he uttered the words, "Now he belongs to the ages." Every movie about Lincoln's last years features some bearded elder statesman speaking these words as the film rolls to the end.

A second is the story that allegedly occurred when the two of them practiced law in the days before the war, with Stanton, a well-placed practitioner and Lincoln, then a less-famous country lawyer. The incident is referred to as the "Cincinnati Snub," which supposedly influenced the relationship between them.

Finally, Stanton was one of the "cabal" that tried to frustrate Andrew Johnson's version of Reconstruction. And it was Johnson's dismissal of him as secretary of war on the basis of the questionable Constitutional "tenure of office act" that gave the radicals the opener they needed to start impeachment proceedings.

As for the matter of his "immortal" utterance, Marvell casts doubt on the question of Stanton ever

having said it, although he does give him credit for maintaining a sense of balance and strength on a most fateful night. He also offers a well-reasoned explanation about the "insult" that suggests that it never took place and represents a post-Civil War anecdote fabricated by people who "heard" about it.

Stanton's dismissal and the subsequent impeachment are a matter of record. This squares with the view, emphasized by most presidential historians, to the effect that the president controls policy and other members of the administration dissent silently – or not at all. Harry Truman's removal of General Douglas MacArthur can be cited as an example. The difference lies in the fact that Truman was on the side of history in asserting civilian control of the military whereas Johnson, opposing measures to assert black people's equal status in society, was not.

Marvell has written an excellent and comprehensive book which will probably be the standard on Stanton for some time. He does not try to elevate him but rather paints a picture of a somewhat unpleasant and vindictive man whose imperious manner and policies served the Union well. He did not leave behind many worshippers and acolytes but there were some people who were glad to have him on their side.

By Tom Ryley



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