

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 64, No. 4

585th Meeting

December 2014



- Guest:
Kevin Knapp
- Cost:
Members: \$40
Non-Members: \$50
- Date:
Wednesday,
December 10th
- 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 December 3rd, if you plan to attend the December meeting.

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

Kevin Knapp

Our December guest is a retired Army officer, former professional hot air balloon pilot, Board Member of the Balloon Federation of America, and Civil War Balloon Corps enthusiast. He has owned and operated the modern “Army” Balloon since 1993 and shares oral and living history as Thaddeus S.C.Lowe, Chief Aeronaut, of the Army of the Potomac’s Balloon Corps. In 2006, Kevin was the co-pilot for the winning team of the America’s Challenge Gas Balloon Race flying from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Citra, Florida – 1,478 miles in 60 hours and 45 minutes. Most recently, Kevin operated the Command Center for Jonathan Trappe’s attempt to cross the Atlantic flying a Cluster Balloon System and provided commentary discussing Jonathan’s flight for a segment of “Weather Caught on Camera” for the Weather Channel.



A White House Dinner

Varina Davis [Jefferson’s wife] wrote the following for the New York World in 1896.

...Rice, flour, molasses, and tiny pieces of meat, most of them sent to the president’s wife anonymously to be distributed to the poor, had all been weighed and issued, and the playtime of the family began, but like a clap of thunder out of a clear blue sky came the information that the orphans of the Episcopalian home had been promised a Christmas tree and the toys, candy and cakes must be provided, as well as one pretty prize for the most orderly girl among the orphaned. The kind-hearted confectioner was interviewed by our committee of managers, and he promised a certain amount of his simpler kinds of candy,

which he sold easily a dollar and a half a pound, but he drew the line at cornucopias to hold it, or sugared fruits to hang on a tree, and all the other vestiges of Christmas creations which had lain on his hands for years. The ladies dispersed in anxious squads of toy-hunters, and each one turned over the store of her children’s treasures for a contribution to the orphan’s tree, my little ones rushed over to the great house looking up their treasure: eyeless dolls, three-legged horses, tops with the upper peg broken off, rubber tops, monkeys with all the squeak gone silent and all the ruck of children’s toys that gather in a nursery closet.

From *The Surratt Courier* December 2013

2015 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2015

• January 14th •

The Death of Stonewall Jackson
Chris Mackowski

• February 11th •

Barondess Lincoln Award

• March 11th •

4 Women Undercover
in the Civil War
Karen Abbott

President's Message

What must Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee be feeling at the end of December 1864 if not utter despair? Lincoln re-elected in November by a landslide—where is the hope now for a peace movement? ... Sherman marching through Georgia barely challenged by a Southern army—what is the military logic in that? ... Sheridan finally in complete command of the Shenandoah—was that really the best use of Jubal Early and his soldiers? ... John Bell Hood devastated by Thomas at Nashville—was he the best choice, really, for command of an army? ... And Lee and his own depleted, hungry, once-great Army of Northern Virginia forced to defend a losing, hopeless cause—how much longer, Oh Lord, can this misery go on?

First of all, thanks for making last month's "WEST POINT NIGHT" a big success! Captain Mark Ehlers and his thought-provoking presentation on "Ben Butler and his Black Battalions" should give us all hope to have such critically-thinking, dedicated young men and women in our Armed Forces. Mark, our best wishes and prayers for a peaceful future go with you.

Second, so whom do we have coming in December to try to **top all of our previous speakers** this year? Well, if you've been attending our meetings, you would have seen a new member among our group. If you had been lucky enough to sit close to him, you would have seen some amazing pictures and heard some wonderful stories about his own exploits.

That's why we are pleased to invite Kevin Knapp, one of our newest members, to tell us all about his first-hand, personal aerial experiences and "Thaddeus Lowe and The Civil War Balloon Corps!"

Please make sure you are with us on **Wednesday, December 10, 2014** to enjoy our end-of-year holiday meal and festivities. With the tree already lit at Rockefeller Center and all the avenues bejeweled with their holiday decorations, why not bring your entire family to the meeting as you combine "Christmas/Chanukah in New York" with your Civil War Round Table friends and family?

Please make sure you **reserve your seats seven days before the meeting by calling 718-341-9811** right now. Your officers and board of directors truly appreciate all of you who have renewed your memberships and contributed so generously to this great club. You make us proud to continue this 64 year-old tradition and humbled to be part of an unbroken chain of passionate, cheerful, true believers.

See you at the December meeting!

— Marty Smith

PS: To all of you who are reading this DISPATCH and are "NOT YET" CWRTNY Members, please don't let the Sesquicentennial pass you by without making a commitment to remember, honor, commemorate, and hopefully learn something more about our common history. Join the Round Table and make becoming a member, your "present" to yourself in this holiday season! Whatever holiday you celebrate...**Happy Chanukah! Happy Kwanza! And, of course, Merry Christmas To Us All!**

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

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During business hours.

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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.

December during the Civil War

1861

9 – As a result of the fiasco known as Ball’s Bluff (Leesburg), The Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War is established in order to tell the generals how to conduct themselves, and the war.

31 – New Year’s Eve already? It was one helluva year. Can 1862 be more eventful?

1862

11 – Federal engineers begin to set up pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock in order to bring on the disaster at Fredericksburg.

23 – Jefferson Davis issues a proclamation describing a certain Union general as a felon, an outlaw, a common enemy of mankind. If captured he is to be hanged at the nearest tree, no trial is necessary. Ben Butler issues a cockeyed smile.

1863

1 – In a move that saddens Western Union generals, Braxton Bragg resigns his post as commander of the Army of Tennessee. He regrets he hadn’t done this earlier. Union leaders disagree on this sentiment.

16 – Jefferson Davis thinks the unthinkable and plans to endure the unendurable as he names his least favorite general, Joseph E. Johnston, to succeed William Hardee, who succeeded Bragg.

1864

6 – The man who freed his slaves but who defended slavery, the Republican’s bête noir, Roger Taney, passes away. It sounds fishy, but President Lincoln nominates Salmon P. Chase to replace him.

23 – No Merry Christmas for the Union fleet as it is battered by heavy storms off Cape Hatteras (what else is new?). Worse still, Ben Butler, formally of New Orleans, commands troops in an effort to capture Wilmington. You can guess what happens.

The Sharpshooter from Flatlands

One of the Civil War’s celebrated characters, Hiram Berdan, creator of the First Sharpshooter Regiment, lived in pre-war Flatlands, near Kimball and Coleman Streets right off Flatbush Avenue (He married Emily Kimball). Berdan, a prolific inventor of range finders, lifeboats, cannon fuses, and trans-Atlantic cable-laying machinery, and one of America’s foremost marksmen, wrote to President Lincoln suggesting a special outfit of expert riflemen. Berdan argued that a regiment filled with men of such special skills could be devastating against the Confederates, and Lincoln gave his approval.

Berdan’s headquarters at 160 Montague Street advertised for able-bodied men of “good moral character and steady habits” who could make 10 consecutive shots with a rifle averaging five inches off the center of a target at a distance of 600 feet with a rest, or 300 feet “off hand.” Tryouts were held in Kings County at the target grounds near Tenth Avenue and 20th Street, and although the government supplied ammunition, a rifle, and a proper rest, men could use their own weapons if they wished.

Berdan’s select group, with new green uniforms and special telescopic rifle sights, fought in many battles, including the Peninsula Campaign, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Spotsylvania.

Berdan, however, was not without his faults. Highly contentious, he became enmeshed in several courts martial. His fellow officers accused him not only of behavior unbecoming a military officer, but also of cowardice. Although always exonerated, he resigned on January 2, 1864, under circumstances that to this day remain a mystery. He died suddenly in Washington, D.C. in 1894 and was buried in Arlington Cemetery.

From *Brooklyn and The Civil War* by E.A. (Bud) Livingston.

NEW Recruits

Thomas Cirone, an attorney from Manhattan.

Robert Lang, a friend of Jose and Mary Alvarado.

Kevin Sugrue from Mount Vernon,

Kevin Knapp from Nokesville, Va.

Pamela Candusso Hirsch, a friend of Allen Walberg.

Edwin Robertson who is a friend of Tom Mosely.

Howard Wagner who is interested in the Western theater.

Ben Rosenfeld from Garden City, a friend of Marty Smith, who is interested in Uncle Billy.



Maryland, My Maryland

The despot's heel is on thy shore,
Maryland My Maryland
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland, my Maryland
Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore,
And be the battle queen of yore,
Maryland , My Maryland.

Note: That despot is A. Lincoln. Believe it or not, this is Maryland's official state song.

Your dues are due!

Your dues are due. If we don't hear from you by the end of the month we will have to drop your name from our roster. Sorry about that.



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OF NEW YORK

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