

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 64, No. 6

587th Meeting

February 2015



- Guest:  
**Barondess Lincoln Award Winner Harold Holzer**
- Cost:  
**Members: \$40**  
**Non-Members: \$50**
- Date:  
**Wednesday,**  
**February 11<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 February 4<sup>th</sup>, if you plan to attend the February meeting.*

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

## Barondess Lincoln Award winner Harold Holzer for *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*

Our February guest won his first Barondess Lincoln Award in 1980 for Portraits, Prints, and Sculptures of Lincoln, and has been winning them ever since. He was the recipient of our award in 1991 (*Lincoln on Democracy*, with Mario Cuomo), 1994 (*The Lincoln/Douglas Debates*), 2004 (*Lincoln at Cooper Union*), and 2008 (a special Barondess Lincoln award for his work in the Lincoln field). No other historian has won our prestigious prize more often.

Harold is *the* pre-eminent Lincoln scholar in America and it does us proud to say that he is a long time member of the CWRTNY. He has authored, co-authored, and edited 47 books on our favorite president and *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* is a tour de force, arguably overshadowing his other great works. It is practically a PhD thesis on Civil War newspapers and Lincoln's experiences with them, especially the three leading papers of our city, the *Times*, the *Tribune*, and the *Herald*, and their idiosyncratic publishers.

## A Painful Trip

McGuire [Hunter] asked the officer in charge of the ambulance corps to provide "one of his most careful drivers" to handle the wagon for the ride to Guiney Station, and the detail was given to a 21-year-old Georgian named John J. Carson. After enlisting in the 12th Georgia Regiment in the beginning of the war, Carson had been wounded in 1861 and was serving time in the ambulance corps until he was well enough to return to the front line. A mattress was placed in the back of Carson's ambulance to make the general's ride more comfortable and by 6 a.m. all was ready for the trip to Fairfield.

Under a small cavalry escort, the ambulance left Wilderness Tavern at a slow pace, with McGuire sitting in the

wagon next to Jackson. A party of pioneers – the Civil War equivalent of modern-day combat engineers– traveled ahead of the ambulance. Led by Jed Hotchkiss, these men cleared the road of obstacles and asked other wagons along the way to move out to make room for the ambulance. The callous teamsters they met along the road would initially refuse to make way for the ambulance until Hotchkiss told them it contained Jackson. Then, with hats in hand, the drivers would stand on the side of the road as the wagons passed, some weeping, and others commenting, "I wish it was me, sir."

From *Calamity at Chancellorsville* by Mathew W. Lively

## 2015 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2015

• **March 11<sup>th</sup>** •  
4 Women Undercover  
in the Civil War  
*Karen Abbott*

• **April 8<sup>th</sup>** •  
The Funeral of President Lincoln  
*Richard Sloan*

• **May 13<sup>th</sup>** •  
Fletcher Pratt Award

## President's Message

*Oh, you cruel, cold Winter—February 1865! What do the Richmond newspapers have to report? February 1<sup>st</sup>...The House of Representatives in Washington, DC passed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolishing slavery yesterday. February 8<sup>th</sup>...Sheridan is on the march again with his cavalry destroying railroads and canals around Lynchburg. February 17<sup>th</sup>...Columbia, South Carolina is burned to the ground by Sherman! February 18<sup>th</sup>...beloved Charleston—the heart of the insurrection—is evacuated and now occupied by National forces! February 22<sup>nd</sup>...Wilmington, North Carolina, the last open Atlantic port, is lost. Yes, the well-fed, well-supplied, well-supported Union Armies are on their way.*

It's so hard to believe that we are half way through the Round Table's 2014-2015 Season. If you've been with us for the first five meetings, just think of the wonderful speakers we've enjoyed hosting.

- **Ed Bonekemper** setting the record straight on "Ulysses S. Grant" and comparing Grant vs. Lee to the delight of the crowd
- **Peter Cozzens** sharing his special insights and touching stories about "Cahaba, Confederate Prisoner of War Camp"
- **Captain Mark Ehlers** challenging us on the difficult "Ben Butler and his Black Battalions" on **WEST POINT NIGHT**
- **Kevin Knapp**, one of our newest members, elevating us to new heights with "Thaddeus Lowe and the Civil War Balloon Corps"
- **Chris Mackowski** illuminating the "The Death of Stonewall Jackson" on another wonderful **LEE/JACKSON NIGHT**

But guess what? It may sound impossible, but the rest of the year just might be better than the fantastic start we've already had. Just look who's coming to our **AWARD DINNERS—and more!**

- February is the presentation of the **53rd BARONDESS/LINCOLN AWARD**, and our winner is, perhaps, the greatest, most prolific Lincoln scholar and author of our time—the incredible Harold Holzer for his stimulating book: "Lincoln And The Power Of The Press."
- March is **Karen Abbott**, again one of our own members, who will talk about her book, "Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy." (Dare I say: "Everything you wanted to know about the art of seduction in the Civil War?")
- April brings us one of our good friends from The Lincoln Group of New York, **Richard Sloan**, who will transport us back in time both with sights and sounds as he recreates "Lincoln's Funeral in New York City."
- May is the presentation of the **59th FLETCHER PRATT LITERARY AWARD** for best Civil War non-fiction book, and this year's award winner is the dean of all National Park Service Historians, the legendary Ed Bearss for his great work, "The Petersburg Campaign."
- Finally, June is our **58th BATTLEFIELD TOUR** presentation on "Grant's Overland Campaign—Part 1" from one of the Round Table's favorites, another National Park Service historian and author, the fantastic **Frank O'Reilly**.

Please join us on February 11, 2015 for the presentation of the **BARONDESS/LINCOLN AWARD** for the seventh time to one of our own members, the incomparable **Harold Holzer**. See you there!

— Marty Smith

## President Lincoln's Frock Coat

After the president's untimely death, the distraught Mrs. Lincoln gave away many of her husband's garments to those who revered him. To Alphonso Donn (often spelled Dunn), a doorkeeper at the Executive Mansion and a kind friend to young Tad Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln's largesse included the president's frock coat, trousers, waistcoat, stock (tie), and Brooks Brothers greatcoat, all worn on the fateful night of April 14, 1865. "For your devoted attentions to President Lincoln, I gave you those clothes," the grieving widow would later write. "Retain them always, in memory of the best and noblest man that ever lived."

Alphonso (later known as Alphonse) Donn stored the treasured garments, stained with the martyred president's blood, in an old army chest. "The precautions taken by both Mrs. Lincoln and my grandfather regarding these clothes were greater than would have been taken in an ordinary suit belonging to the president," wrote Mr. Donn's granddaughter in 1933.

Even P.T. Barnum and his handsome offer of \$20,000 could not sway the devoted doorman to sell the sentimental clothing. Nor could Donn be tempted with the lure of a large brick house in exchange for the relics. "Nothing," observed a family friend, "could induce him to part with them."

Alphonso Donn cherished the relics for the rest of his life; upon his death in 1886, the garments were placed under the watchful eye of son and daughter-in-law, Frank and Katherine Donn. [After years of negotiations, related in the full article in the Surratt Courier, Lincoln's clothing gained a new and permanent home]

On the momentous winter day of January 23, 1968, Congressman Fred Schwengel, of Iowa, on behalf of the United States Capitol Historical Society, proudly presented the Donn Collection of Lincolniana to the Department of Interior during a ceremony in the new Lincoln Museum at Ford's Theater... a century after the president's fateful demise, the symbolic clothing — President Lincoln's frock coat, trousers, waistcoat, stock, and Brooks Brothers' greatcoat — had found its final and most appropriate resting place. The clothing had come home.

The *Surratt Courier* March 2014

# 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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## February during the Civil War

### 1862

**1** – The warrior, born Hiram Ulysses Grant, prepares to head south to take Fort Henry on the Tennessee river.

**16** – President Lincoln now has a man who fights (George McC. take notice). Fort Donelson surrenders unconditionally and Grant prepares to move on Nashville.

### 1863

**19** – Jefferson Davis continues to agonize over the situation at Vicksburg (You can't blame him) especially when a Pennsylvania man is in command there.

**25** – Setting the stage for the July riots in NYC, Congress passes the infamous Conscription Act. Despite what PBS said in one of its programs, it is not the first draft call in American history. The CSA had one the year before.

### 1864

**20** – Union General Truman Seymour, brother of Copperhead Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, fights with Rebel General Joseph Finegan in Florida's one major battle, at Olustee. The Federal force gets clobbered.

**22** – The born-again Union government in Louisiana gets a new, loyal governor, Michael Hahn.

### 1865

**6** – John C. Breckinridge trades his combat infantryman's badge for a desk job as he becomes the latest secretary of war for the Confederacy.

**17** – Columbia, in the state where it all began, howls, as major fires destroy much of the city. And the South gains a major bogeyman named Sherman.

## Preparing the Gettysburg Address

Take the myth of its creation on board the train from Washington. The legend originated with newspaperman Ben Perley Poore, who contended that the address was "written in the car on the way from Washington to the battlefield, upon a piece of pasteboard held on his knee."

...The fact is, Lincoln had been "giving the matter some thought" since at least November 8, 1863, eleven days before Dedication Day at Gettysburg. On the 8th, newspaperman Noah Brooks asked the president if he had written his remarks. "Not yet," Lincoln replied – quickly adding: "Not finished anyway." This means that he had already started writing. According to Brooks, Lincoln further explained, "I have written it over, two or three times, and I shall have to give it another lick before I am satisfied."

In the week-and-a-half that followed, Lincoln anguished over Tod's (his son) precarious health, worked on his correspondence, held a cabinet meeting, watched a parade, met with Italian sea captains, and took time to see a play starring – of all people – John Wilkes Booth. Yet by November 17th he was able to tell his attorney general that fully half his address was in its final form. Not long afterward, former Secretary of War Simon Cameron got a copy, written, he remembered, "with a lead pencil on commercial notepaper." Ward Hill Lamon, the Marshall of the District of Columbia who would travel to the event with the president, claimed that Lincoln read him the entire speech before they left together for Gettysburg on the 18th. But the notoriously self-serving Lamon could not help adding froth to the legend by claiming that the president confided, "It does not suit me, but I have not time for any more." By this time, of course, he had devoted a good deal of time, as well as thought, to his Gettysburg Address.

*The Lincoln Forum Bulletin* 12, Fall 2013

## The Travels of John Hay

The Union-occupied landscape that Hay traveled in 1863 afforded him an intimate gaze at American slavery. Though he had encountered blacks, both free and slave, during boyhood sojourns in St. Louis, in Springfield, and more recently in Washington, his time with [David] Hunter's army offered a stark introduction to the system of plantation slavery that most Northerners knew only through the prism of Uncle Tom's Cabin. What's more the system was crumbling under the pressure of war and occupation. Hay had been present when Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Now he was on hand to view its profound aftershocks. Everywhere he went he

took note of the unfamiliar surroundings, both animate and inanimate. He encountered soldiers from the First South Carolina, one of the first all-black regiments in the Union army, and spoke with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the white Cambridge-born abolitionist who commanded their unit. He marveled at the lowly appearance of war-weary Secesh women and recorded without commentary seeing thirteen hundred contrabands – slaves who fled behind Union lines – working under the watch of white Union soldiers.

From *Lincoln's Boys* by Joshua Zeitz

## The USCT

By war's end the army had raised 178,975 enlisted men for the USCT. The War Department's Bureau of Colored Troops organized the soldiers in 133 infantry regiments, four independent companies, seven cavalry regiments, twelve regiments of heavy artillery, and ten batteries of light artillery. Roughly 19 per cent of the troops came from the eighteen Northern states, 24 per cent from the four Union slave states, and 57% from the eleven Confederate states. The 1860 Federal census reported around 750,000 male slaves, mostly residing in the Rebel states, of arms-bearing age and, accordingly, the majority of the men of the USCT were ex-slaves. Not only did slaves recruited in the South bolster Union armies, but they also denied the Rebels a sizable work force, around eight thousand bonded laborers. Overall 21 per cent of the nation's adult male black population between ages eighteen and forty-five joined the USCT, including almost three-quarters of all men in the free states of military age.

Altogether, blacks accounted for between 9 and 12 per cent of all Union troops who served in the war. The USCT signified the first systematic, large-scale effort by the US government to arm blacks to aid in the nation's defense.

From *Lincoln and the U.S. Colored Troops* by John David Smith.

## 58th Annual Battlefield Tour

*Join Us As We Cross The Rapidan For...*

### Grant's Overland Campaign 1864 -- Part 1!

October 16-18, 2015

This year the Round Table will continue its tradition and travel South by bus as we follow Ulysses S. Grant, George Gordon Meade and the mighty Army of the Potomac with almost 120,000 Union soldiers as they encounter Robert E. Lee and over 60,000 members of the valiant Army of Northern Virginia. Oh, what a dark and deadly wrestling match this clash of arms will bring! Our Tour Guide will be the incomparable **FRANK O'REILLY** who will lead us into the Wilderness, challenge us at Spotsylvania, and guide us to North Anna.

#### To Reserve Your Place:

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



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OF NEW YORK

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