

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 65, No. 2

593rd Meeting

October 2015



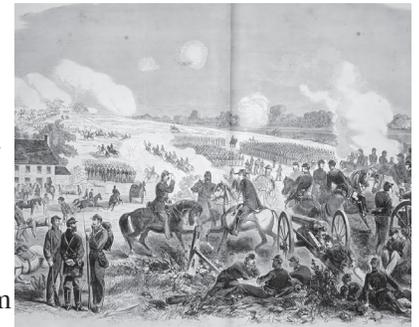
- Guest:
Origins of the Civil War
Tom Fleming
- Cost:
Members: \$50
Non-Members: \$60
- Date:
Wednesday,
October 14th
- Place:
The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street
- Time:
Dinner at 6:00 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm

You must call 718-341-9811 by October 7th if you plan to attend the October meeting.

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

Origins of the Civil War Tom Fleming

Our October guest is an American military historian and historical novelist, with a special interest in the American Revolution. He was born in Jersey City, the son of an Irish-American World War I hero who was a leader in Jersey City politics for three decades, beginning in the 1920s. At the time, the city was dominated by an Irish-American political machine. “Irish politics was the be all and end all.”



After graduating from St. Peter’s Preparatory School in Jersey City in 1945, he spent a year in the U.S. Navy. He received his B.A., with honors, from Fordham University in 1950. He was admitted as an honorary member of the The Society of the Cincinnati in 1975.

He has published acclaimed biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.

New Ordnance

As 1864 dawned, it was clear to most forward-thinking officers that the future of firearms lay with sturdy, weatherproof, self-contained metallic cartridges and breech-loading rifles in which to fire them. On December 5, 1864, Chief of Ordnance B.G. Alexander B. Dyer advised Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton that “the experience of war has shown that breech-loading arms are greatly superior to muzzle-loaders for infantry as well as cavalry.” Dyer advocated instituting a program at Springfield Armory as soon as possible to develop a breech-loading replacement for the rifle-musket, as well as a “repeater or magazine carbine” for cavalymen. Dyer preferred a single-shot for the infantry, as he, and most other officers, believed that foot soldiers needed an arm that fired a longer range and thus more

powerful round than the shorter cartridges used in the actions of existing repeaters.

Despite Dyer’s conclusions, the army in the field had been issuing Spencer cavalry carbines to select infantry units for some time. The 7th Connecticut and the 7th New Hampshire infantries used their carbines to good effect in a losing cause at Olustee, Fla., and then again at Drewry’s Bluff, Va., in 1864. In January 1865 those two regiments, plus the 13th Indiana Infantry, also armed with Spencer carbines, were assigned to M.G. Alfred H. Terry’s amphibious task force charged with capturing Fort Fisher, and thus closing access to Wilmington, N.C., one of the last open ports in the Confederacy.

From *American Rifleman* March 2015 courtesy of Ron Fish

2015 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2016

• November 11th •
West Point Night

• December 9th •
Edward Bonekemper
The Myth of the Lost Cause

• January 13th •
Jonathan Horn
The Man Who Would Not
be Washington

President's Message

Due to the sterling efforts of our speaker, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Ralph Peters, distinguished author and commentator, and the enthusiasm of our members and guests, we are most pleased to report the first meeting of our 2015-16 season was a resounding success.

LTC Peters' wide knowledge and deep passion for the Civil War was most evident as he discussed some of the events and participants of the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign, the subject of his most recent novel, "Valley of the Shadow." The rapt attention and hearty applause of the ninety-plus enthusiasts in attendance in response to his talk was certainly well deserved.

Coincidentally, it was just this time of year that the 1864 Valley Campaign reached its climax. The Battle of Third Winchester (or Opequon), where General Phil Sheridan's forces drove General Jubal Early's Confederates out of that area and further south (or "up" the Valley), occurred in late September. Sheridan then began his controversial scorched-earth campaign (ending around October 8), burning crops, barns, mills, and factories throughout the northern ("lower") half of the once verdant Valley, to deprive the South of the Shenandoah's sustenance. Little Phil's most notable victory, at Cedar Creek, when he made his famous ride south from Winchester (on the great black horse, Rienzi) to rally his routed troops and lead them to a great turnaround triumph, was fought on October 19.

So, please join us on October 14 at the 3 West Club when the festivities will continue with our featured speaker, renowned historian Thomas Fleming, author of some forty books, both fiction and non-fiction, on various aspects of American history, who will discuss the origins of "our" War. Hope to see you there!

Paul Weiss

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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.

October During the Civil War

1861

8 – W.T. Sherman takes over in Kentucky from a frazzled Robert Anderson, the Union's first hero. Within a short time, Uncle Billy will be considered a nut case by the reporters he loathes.

21 – The fiasco of Ball's Bluff with Federal troops leaping into the Potomac River to escape, and Lincoln's friend, Edward Baker, losing his life.

1862

8 – A new commander, the feisty Phil Sheridan, shines at Perryville.

20 – President Lincoln orders John McClernand to organize troops for an expedition against Vicksburg that Mac will lead. U.S. Grant doesn't think so and it never happens.

1863

17 – William Rosecrans finally gets some relief at Chattanooga where he is relieved by his boss, Grant. Rosecrans had been taking large doses of Tylenol after being hit on the head like a duck.

19 – Judson "Kill Cavalry" is routed by James Ewell Brown Stuart at Brickland Mills in old Virginny. The action is referred to as the Brickland Races.

1864

3 – At Columbia, S.C., Jefferson Davis says of his Viking-like general Hood, "If ¼ of his men give him their strength, I see no chances for Sherman to escape from defeat or a disgraceful retreat." Sure.

12 – Taps for Roger Taney (pronounced Tawney). Although some of his decisions are Dredful, he is still regarded as an excellent Supreme Court justice.

The Election News

Now, in the autumn of 1863, Lincoln was waiting in the telegraph office again for election news – this time from two "October states," Ohio and Pennsylvania. They would tell the story. How they went would tell Lincoln if there was a realistic hope for his own nomination and reelection in 1864. At about 10 o'clock in the evening he wired Columbus, Ohio: "Where is John Brough?"

Brough was the candidate for governor of Ohio on the Union Party ticket. And he was in the telegram office in Columbus when Lincoln's wire arrived. So Lincoln inquired, "Brough, what is your majority this time?" Brough wired back, "Over 30,000." Lincoln asked him to remain at the telegram office through the night, and a little past midnight he wired him again, "Brough, what is your majority this time?" Brough replied, "Over 50,000."

At about 5 o'clock in the morning, Brough's next answer came back: "Over 100,000." Lincoln wired him, "Glory be to God in the highest. Ohio has saved the Nation."

Ohio had been crucial. The governor's race in that state had been the most clear-cut contest yet between the war and the peace parties in the country, between conservative, pro-Union War Democrats and Republicans on the one hand and the Peace Democrats – called "copperheads" – on the other.

In Ohio the Democratic party had nominated the man known as "the king of the copperheads," Clement Vallandigham, to run against Brough. No line could have been cleaner drawn. Vallandigham was a former congressman, a tireless critic of the Lincoln war policy, an emotional searcher for peace at any price. His seditious public tirades against the administration had landed him in arrest under a military edict against such talk earlier in the year, fueling to white heat the charges of arbitrary arrests. Lincoln would not have sanctioned the arrest had his approval been sought beforehand, but it hadn't been. And now he had to support the general who had done it. Rather than sending Vallandigham to prison, however, Lincoln, in an act not without humor, sent him instead to the Confederacy, which really didn't want him either. By the summer of 1863, Vallandigham, now a martyr to the anti-war, pro-peace cause, was nominated for governor of Ohio by the Democratic party, and was running in absentia from Canada against John Brough.

From *Reelecting Lincoln* by John C. Waugh

A Special Tombstone

In perusing the September 1997 *Dispatch*, the very first issue under a new editor (Bud), we came across the interesting item:

An unusual tombstone in a St. Alban's, Vt. Cemetery has the following inscription:

Joseph Partridge Brainerd, son of Joseph Brainerd and his wife, Fanny, conscientious, brave Union soldier, was born on the 27th day of June 1840, graduated from

the University of Vermont in August 1862, enlisted in Company L of the Vermont Cavalry, was wounded and taken prisoner by the Rebels in the Wilderness, May 5, 1864, was sent to Andersonville Prison pen in Georgia, where he died on the 11th day of September 1864 entirely and wholly neglected by President Lincoln and murdered with impunity by the Rebels with thousands of our loyal soldiers by starvation, privation, exposure, and abuse.

Comments on *Conflict and Command* Articles by editor John T. Hubbell

Grady McWhiney's article "The Confederacy's First Shot" remains pertinent for the professional historian and illuminating for the general reader, the latter long bombarded by the works of Confederate apologists. Charles Ramsdell's 1937 article charged that Abraham Lincoln "tricked" Jefferson Davis into firing the first shot at Fort Sumter. In the years of debate that followed, historians overlooked the place of Fort Pickens. Specifically, Davis and Braxton Bragg discussed plans to reduce Fort Pickens, even if it meant initiating military action. Davis pondered the alternative, gave Bragg permission to attack, and Bragg dithered. "Thus the war came at Fort Sumter only because the Confederates were neither subtle enough nor strong enough to begin at Fort Pickens." This passage is vintage McWhiney and, sobering thought, derives from his close reading of published and manuscript articles, none of them particularly obscure. His essay is a splendid counter to argument by assertion, which occurs too often in Civil War historiography.

Edward Hagerman's article stresses the growth of professionalism that affected and influenced most of the Civil War generals. Unfortunately, professionalism could become a mechanistic doctrine, a pervasive danger in military education. George B. McClellan, one of the

"intellectuals" in the Old Army, seemed to exemplify both the virtues and the drawbacks of the trend. Hagerman also notes that McClellan suffered by "being first" in command of a major army, was undervalued by Lincoln, and poorly advised on battlefield intelligence. Writes Hagerman, "inaccurate intelligence... led him to overestimate (emphasis mine) the enemy's numbers in the Richmond fortifications as being greater than his own."

Less sympathetic to McClellan is Edwin C. Fishel, who declares that the "best known intelligence failure of the Civil War is Allen Pinkerton's severe overestimating of Confederate numbers." Yet McClellan was not deceived by the figures Pinkerton gave him. "It was the general who exaggerated the numbers sent to Washington." Interestingly, General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck, another Army intellectual, never questioned the numbers; that was left to the president and the secretary of war. It was a neurotic general and a sycophantic intelligence agent who combined to distort the record. For all this, we must question whether intelligence gathering is of great consequence when a general suffers from undue fear of the enemy. (McClellan and Hooker), from bureaucratic inertia (Hallock) or from arrogance or carelessness (Grant and Sherman at Shiloh).

From the introduction of *Conflict and Command* (2010)



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