

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 62, No. 4

565th Meeting

December 2012



- Guest:
Allen Guelzo
Who Was George G. Meade?
- Cost:
Members: \$40
Non-Members: \$50
- Date:
Wednesday,
December 12th
- 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

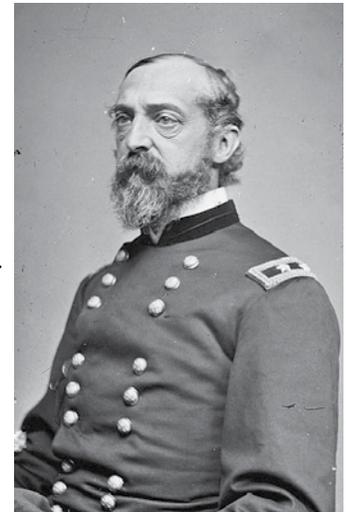
You must call 718-341-9811 by December 5th, if you plan to attend the December meeting.

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

Allen Guelzo:

Who Was George G. Meade?

Dr. Allen C. Guelzo is the Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era, and Director of Civil War Era Studios, at Gettysburg College. He is the author of *Abraham Lincoln - Redeemer President*, which won the Lincoln prize for 2000, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, which won the Lincoln prize for 2005, and *Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates That Defined America*, which won the Abraham Lincoln Institute Prize for 2008. His most recent work is *Abraham Lincoln As a Man of Ideas* (a collection of essays) and *Lincoln*, a volume in Oxford University Press's very short introduction series. His articles and essays have appeared in scholarly journals, and also in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, and he has been featured on *NPR*, the *Discovery Channel*, the *National Geographic Channel*, and *Brian Lamb's BookNotes*.



THE CORWIN AMENDMENT

The Corwin amendment is a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution passed by the 36th Congress, 2nd Session, on March 2 1861, in the form of House (joint) Resolution No. 90. It would forbid subsequent attempts to amend the Constitution to empower the Congress to "abolish or interfere" with the "domestic institutions" of the states, including "persons held to labor of service" (slavery).

Ohio Republican Representative Thomas Corwin offered the amendment in an attempt to forestall the secession of Southern states. Corwin's resolution emerged as the House of Representative's version of an earlier, identical proposal in the Senate offered by N.Y. Republican Senator William H. Seward. However, the newly formed Confederate States of America were committed to independence and so it ignored the Corwin Amendment.

From Wikipedia

2012 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2013

• January 9th •

Lee/Jackson Night
William C. Davis

• February 13th •

Barondess/Lincoln Award

• March 13th •

Brooklyn and the Civil War
Bud Livingston

President's Message

December once again. Always a time with family and friends, carols and decorations, roaring fires and warm hearthstones. But the holidays in 1862 were anything but happy for our divided nation. As the second year of the war drew to a close, little seemed to be going right for the North. Despite a year filled with aggressive prosecution of its military might, the Northern war effort seemed to be at a standstill. Defeats, blunders, incompetent commanders, and missed opportunities left the country mourning thousands of casualties. There were some bright spots, of course, with a few critical victories, and the capture of some major Confederate cities and ports. The blockade was finally tightening, and out in the West, a handful of Federal commanders had risen to the top, most notably Grant, Sherman, and Farragut. And after the victory at Antietam, the President had issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, but it was met with controversy, and was not popular with many in the North. In November, the elections had gone very badly for the Republican administration, and a general war weariness was setting in.

And then came December of 1862. Three major battles, two outright defeats, thousands more casualties, and still nothing decided. The disaster at Fredericksburg cast a blanket of gloom over the holidays for all Northerners. Right after Christmas, the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou in Mississippi was fought. And on New Year's Eve came Stones River in Tennessee, and although not a defeat, it showed that the only thing decided in 1862 was that there would be more of all this in 1863, and that the new year promised just as much sacrifice and misery. For the South, too, the casualty lists just kept on growing, and the losses were felt in every home. For both sides now, they would have to find a way to just keep on going. Following their incredible victory at Fredericksburg, Southern soldiers gazed up at the Northern Lights in the December sky, and they took it as an omen of the bright future that must lay ahead for their Confederacy. But if it was an omen, who was it really for? Northern soldiers gazed at those lights, too, after all. As both sides shivered in the cold, they could only imagine what was yet to come.

As the Holidays approach once again, let us all remember the sacrifices of those who went before us. Let us be thankful for the many blessings that we all share. And I wish everyone here at the CWRTNY happiness and the very best for the new year to come.

— Bill Finlayson

THE GREAT COMPROMISE OF 1850

There have been several books on the subject of the Compromise of 1850 - one of the most recent being Robert Remini's *At the Edge of the Precipice*. The most recent is Fergus Bordewich's *America's Great Debate*, an impressive study which captures the tension of the event and which also analyzes its personalities and strategies. It was a highly complex issue that invited many possible solutions and it took a while for one of them to work out. As one reviewer has observed, had no solutions come forth, secession might have come earlier and been successful, as the lines had not yet been drawn too sharply. Perhaps there would not have been an appetite in the North to respond as it would ten years later.

Then again, Millard Fillmore was president, not Abraham Lincoln. There are reasons why Fillmore is not on Mr. Rushmore and ranks among our poorest presidents. He was typical of most post-revolutionary leaders between Andrew Jackson and Theodore Roosevelt. He would let Congress take the initiative in policy making and agree to whatever they came up with.

While reading this book, I was reminded of another work that has nothing to do with the Civil War, *The Greatest Senate*, which tells how the upper chamber in the late 70s and early 80s resolved many issues in spite of the complexity of the situation and the potential for stalemate due to polarization: compare it with the Congress of today. In 1850, the Senate had figures who could resolve a difficult situation owing to statesmanship and courage.

The Senate in that period included Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun, all of whom would pass from the scene shortly after. It also included William Henry Seward, Stephen Douglas and Jefferson Davis, as well as a few others whose fame has not survived as well as theirs. The compromise was the work of statesmen who represented their constituencies well but who also understood their larger constituency. Even being familiar with the history of this period the reader will be impressed by the way in which the author integrates the personalities into the plot. There will be other books on this topic, but for the moment, this is the one to read. The title, *America's Great Debate*, is accurate and the subject matter invites efforts at analysis, placing it in the pageant of American history.

Thomas W. Ryley

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December during the Civil War

1861

4 – John Breckenridge, former vice president, and newly minted Confederate general, is expelled, in absentia, from the Senate.

10 – The Confederate Congress admits Kentucky as their 13th state. This didn't last long as the rebels had to evacuate the Blue Grass state in a hurry soon afterward.

1862

7 – The battle of Prairie Grove, Thomas Hindman vs. James Blunt and Francis Herron. Winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valor at Pea Ridge, Herron died in poverty and is buried in Calvary Cemetery right off the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

17 – President Lincoln has trouble with Salmon P. Chase, who has troubles with William Henry Seward. Both offer to resign and the president rejects both offers. For the moment, at least.

1863

2 – Braxton Bragg has had enough and he resigns as commander of the Army of Tennessee. W.H. Hardee, one of the famous Hardee boys of literature, takes his place.

9 – In this season of resignation, Ambrose (check out my whiskers) Burnside, quits at Knoxville. A rare bird in self-evaluation, Burnside knows he is a poor commander.

1864

6-14 – Grant wires, cajoles, begs, threatens, browbeats, warns, menaces, admonishes, and puts a flea in the ear of George Thomas, in order to get him to attack J.B. Hood and his army at Nashville. The solid, stolid, Thomas, refuses to move, citing the icy weather. Grant sends John Logan to replace him and gets set to head for Nashville, too, when on the 15th, Thomas unleashes a crushing blow on the Army of the Tennessee, wrecking it forever.

21 – President Lincoln gets the sweetest Christmas present of all from Cump Sherman-the city of Savannah.

New Recruits

Tom Bernhard who rejoins us.

Paul Bretzger who also rejoins us. He is writing a book on Hancock.

Jeffrey Bluestein who is a Green-Wood Cemetery buff.

Donna Lieberman, a friend of Tom Moseley.

Karen Abbott who is interested in espionage, women's roles and the Eastern theater.

Paul Stryker Barrett from N.J. whose ancestor fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

Bill Forrester who heard about us on Michael Connor's radio interview program.

Dues are due

If you haven't already paid your dues, please send your checks in now. After October, the price rises to \$50. 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
First Category	\$40	\$60
Second Category	\$50	\$75
Third Category	\$100	\$150

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. Out-of-towners (75 miles or more) and students (full or part time and under 25) pay \$15.00 unless you are covered by your parent's payment. If you joined up between January and March 2012, you owe only \$15.00. If you joined up in April, May, or June, you get a freebie.

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.



LEMMON v. NEW YORK

In November 1852, Jonathan Lemmon and his wife Juliet, who were residents of Virginia, took the steamer *City of Richmond* from Norfolk, Virginia to New York with eight slaves belonging to Mrs Lemmon, for the purpose of catching a follow-on boat to Texas, where they planned to reside. While waiting for the boat, the slaves were placed in a boarding house at 3 Carlisle Street, where they were discovered by a black, Louis Napoleon. On November 6, 1852, Napoleon presented a petition to one of the justices of the Superior Court of N.Y.C., Elijah Paine, for a writ of habeas corpus, in order to produce the slaves, based on an 1817 New York law that stated:

No person held as a slave shall be imported, introduced, or brought into this state on any pretense whatever. Every such person shall be free.

Lemmon's attorneys relied on the Supreme Court's ruling in *Gibbons v. Ogden* (1824) to argue to the N.Y. Court of Appeals that states had no right to regulate interstate commerce as that power lay in the hands of the federal government. The state of N.Y. argued that the U.S. Constitution granted limited powers to the federal government, and those powers not granted were reserved for the state. Under the provision of the Fugitive Slave

Act of 1850 that required states to return fugitive slaves, the state argued that any requirement for states to return non-fugitive slaves was excluded, *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*, meaning "the express mention of one thing excludes all others."

On November 13, 1852, Judge Paine, of the Superior Court of N.Y., held that necessity did not require the Lemmons to travel to Texas via New York. Thus, the slaves were free according to the N.Y. State law. Paine relied on the English precedent set in *Somerset v. Stewart* (1772) where the Court of King's Bench declared that only positive law could uphold slavery and that since England had no laws upholding slavery, slaves entering English territory became free.

This item comes from Wikipedia:

In the description of the end of this case, in History Engine, the following item is found

"Then in September 1862 President Lincoln made the Emancipation Proclamation which freed all slaves in the United States."

Really? Just ask those slaves in Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky and Delaware if that was true.

Morale of the story: **Beware of things you read on the Internet.**



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