

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 62, No. 5

566th Meeting

January 2013



- Guest:
William C. (Jack) Davis
Robert E. Lee:
Man in the Middle
- Cost:
Members: \$40
Non-Members: \$50
- Date:
Wednesday,
January 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 January 2nd, if you plan to attend the January meeting.

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

William C. (Jack) Davis: Robert E. Lee: Man in the Middle

Our January guest has a resume that is so long that it would take three Dispatches to describe properly all of the books he has written and all of his contributions to the Civil War world.

The short version of his accomplishments is as follows: William C. (Jack) Davis, a native of Independence, Missouri, received his BA and Master's degrees from Sonoma State University in northern California, then spent twenty years in editorial management in the magazine and book publishing industry before leaving in 1990 to spend the next decade working as a writer and consultant here and abroad. He is the author or editor of more than fifty books in the fields of Civil War and Southern history, as well as numerous documentary screenplays. Since 2000 he has been Professor of History and Director of Programs of the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. His most recent book is *Rogue Republic: How Would-Be Patriots Waged the Shortest Revolution in American History*.



BATTLEFIELD MEDICINE

One thing has changed about battlefield medicine. An easy way to find a field hospital during a Civil War battle was to look for the pile of discarded arms and legs outside. Amputations were often the default choice- they made up 75% of all surgeries during the war according to North Carolina state historians – even when the limb might have been saved. That wasn't always because the surgeons necessarily

lacked the skill to repair more of the damaged arms and legs, but there weren't nearly enough surgeons and the volume of wounded was too large. This article referred to a book by Ansley Wegner, a research historian with the State Office of Archives and History, and author of *Phantom Pain*. A book on North Carolina's Reconstruction era prosthetic limb program for veterans.

From an article in a Raleigh, N.C. Newspaper, circa early 2012

2013 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2013

• February 13th •

Barondess/Lincoln Award

• March 13th •

Brooklyn and the Civil War
Bud Livingston

• April 10th •

Fort Sumter
Rick Hatcher

President's Message

This has been an exciting season so far here at the CWRT NY, and we start this new year off with a real treat for us all. The January meeting is our annual Lee/Jackson night, and this year we welcome the return of our old friend, Jack Davis. Jack has always been one of our favorite speakers, and we are indeed lucky to lure him back for an evening on the subject of Robert E. Lee. I remember hearing him give us a lecture back at the 7th Regiment Armory almost 30 years ago. It seems just like yesterday.

Can you imagine what it was like to be Abraham Lincoln in January of 1863? On the battlefield, things were not going well. The holidays were filled with news of thousands of casualties, defeats, and stalemate. Volunteers for the cause had slowed to a crawl, and the administration was considering an unpopular draft. Politically, the Republicans had just taken a beating in the November elections. On January 1st, the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, and support for it throughout the North was mixed. Then there was the embarrassment of Burnside's Mud March, and the necessity of having to replace him with Joseph Hooker, amidst all the controversy. And through all this, the president had the responsibilities and concerns of a father and a husband. The toll on the him must have been overwhelming, and yet he always found a way to keep his focus, and to carry on. No wonder our fascination with Abraham Lincoln is endless. And if you have not yet seen Steven Spielberg's new movie, you really ought to. It's that good. Happy New Year to everyone!

— Bill Finlayson

STORMY BEN BUTLER

During the Civil War, Ben Butler was the administrator of Union-held New Orleans and earned the animosity of the people he governed. They referred to him as "Butler the Beast" and painted his picture on the bottom of their chamber pots. President Ulysses S. Grant summed up the divergence between Butler's achievements and his public image: "Butler is a great man it is fashionable to abuse, but he is a man who has done his country great service, and who is worthy of its gratitude." (From *Stormy Ben Butler* by Robert Holzman, {Holzman was president of the CWRTNY 1956-59}.

Goldwin Smith, an English reformer, wrote in his book *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, in referring to Butler's advancing the rights of freed slaves:

"This to give the Beast, as well as the devil, his due, is the work of General Butler. That man's indomitable energy and iron will (qualities written more plainly than on any face I ever beheld, unless it be the portraits of Cromwell) have crushed the obstacles that stood in the way of the great moral and social revolution."

From the CWRT of Australia's Minie News May 2012



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During business hours.

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January during the Civil War

1861

11 – Simon Cameron, whose War Department left much to be desired, is sent off to Mother Russia for his sins. He will be replaced by grouchy old Edwin McMasters Stanton.

19 – George Thomas, the loyal Virginian, shows what he is made of by defeating Felix Zollicoffer at Mill Springs, Ky, shattering Confederate forces in that neck of the woods.

1863

7 – “All persons held as slaves within said designated states, and parts of states, are and henceforth shall be free.” And a lot of dissent is heard on this within the Army of the Potomac.

10 – Fitz-John Porter, Little Mac’s lieutenant, is court marshaled and cashiered from the Federal Army. He is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery along with other generals like Henry Halleck and Robert Selden Garnett.

1864

18 – The Confederate Congress has drafted all white males between 18 and 45 (soon to be 17 and 50) into the CSA army. Whatever happened to States’ rights? Ask Zeb Vance.

22 – Major curmudgeon Braxton Bragg is called back to Richmond, possibly to prevent his being a liability elsewhere.

1865

7 – At long last, Ben Butler, king of political generals (although Dan Sickles gives him a run for his money), is relieved of duty.

10 – Fernando Wood, the Copperhead mayor of N.Y.C. warns Congress that a Constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery would destroy any possibility of making peace with the seceded states. Wood was the prototype of the party boss that Boss Tweed would soon emulate.

STITCHING TOGETHER CIVIL WAR HISTORY

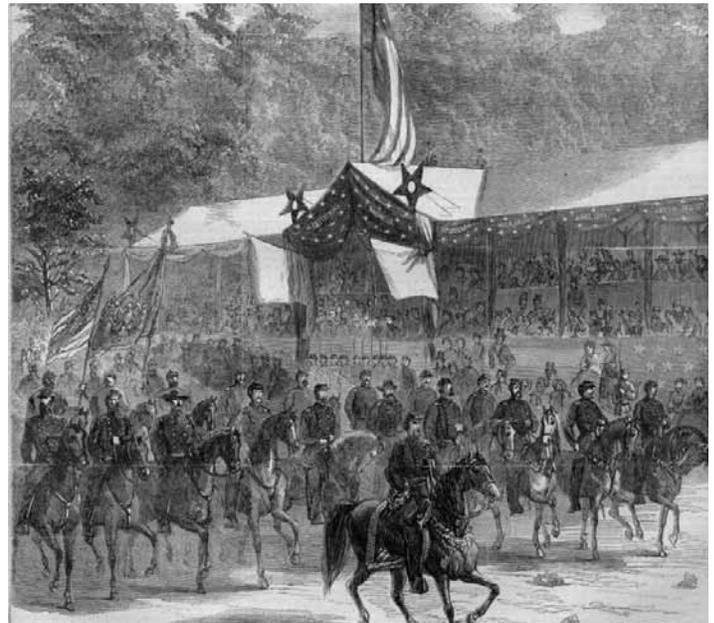
Fabric supplies were crucial for both sides in the Civil War, so the Northern soldiers invading the South would expressly set out to trash cotton fields and burn textile factories. To cut off the Confederate Army from access to new uniforms, tents and bedding, the Union troops even kidnaped female knitters, weavers and seamstresses and deported them northward. “You don’t just let them stay there so that they can move a hundred miles south and work at another mill.” said Madelyn Shaw, and her curator of the exhibition “Homefront & Battlefield: Quilts & Context in the Civil War,” which opened at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Mass. Ms. Shaw and her co-curator, Lynne Zacek Bassett, traveled to private and public collections on and off for three years. They studied all aspects on Civil War era fabrics, including abolitionist slogans on silk handkerchiefs, plantation owners’ deals with Rhode Island mills for rough goods to clothe slaves, and French exports of shirts patterned with crisscrossing Confederate flags.

Two dozen quilts and about 125 related objects are on view, and the wall texts and catalog are fully of irony and pathos. Union soldiers found family monograms stitched on Southern sandbags, which wealthy women on plantations had desperately sewn out of their costly table cloths and pillowcases. Northern department stores did a brisk business in mourning fabrics, used to make black dresses, veils, and bunting for doorways and mirrors.

Confederate and Union sympathizers on the home front would send delicate gifts of pin cushions and mittens to the battlefields, and the extras were sometimes just grew too

heavy. Troops also found weird uses for nonessential fabrics. The museum has borrowed a floral cotton bandanna that a Kentucky cavalryman used to “tie his boots together and hang them around his neck while he crept silently past the guards during his escape from Camp Douglas, Ill,” the curators wrote in the catalog.

N.Y. Times June 29, 2012



New Recruits

Karl Brun, from Westhampton, who learned about us from our Website.

AMBROSE BIERCE: THE MAN AND HIS DEMONS

Bierce enlisted in the Union Army in 1861, a week after the Civil War began. He was not quite 19 years old and would serve for four years, during which he saw action at the notably bloody battles of Shiloh and Chickamauga. The stories he wrote about the conflict form the larger, and more interesting part of his first collection, "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians," which was published in 1892.

The experience of battle clearly had a profound impression on Bierce: he continued writing about it for the rest of his life. But the way he wrote about war was, characteristically, peculiar. In story after story, he begins with minutely detailed descriptions of the hostile landscapes his soldiers – often sentries or scouts- find themselves in: terrain that must be attended to closely, and with sleepless vigilance, for signs of an enemys' movements. Each of these tales is, in its first couple of pages, marvelous; Bierce is a master of apprehension, always alert to threat. It's as if every charged moment of his military service were etched in his memory, persisting as only the most disturbing sensations can. Fear is indelible.

Terrence Rafferty the New York Times October 30, 2011



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