

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 60, No. 5

546th Meeting

January 2011



• Guest:
**Lee and Jackson at
Chancellorsville**
Steve Laird

• Cost:
Members: \$35
Non-Members: \$45

• Date:
**Wednesday,
January 12th**

• Place:
**The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street,**

• Time:
**Dinner at 6 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm**

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

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

54th Annual Battlefield Tour

“For A Good Time, Jine The Cavalry”

This year’s tour will focus on the battle of Cedar Mountain, and the two largest cavalry battles fought during the Civil War – Brandy Station and Trevilian Station. We will also tour Mosby’s Confederacy. Our tour guide will be cavalry expert Bud Hall. So saddle up with Stuart or Custer and ride to the sound of the guns on May 20th–22nd, 2011.

Call the Round Table for details: 718-341-9811.

A \$100 deposit to reserve your place can be mailed to our HQ at 139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y., 11422.

Lee and Jackson at Chancellorsville

Steve Laird

Our January guest speaker is one of the mainstays of Civil War Round Table of Fairfield County in Connecticut. He has delivered numerous talks on a variety of Civil War topics all over the Northeast and has visited every major Civil War battlefield, fort and historic site in the country and most of the minor ones as well.

Steve was graduated from the University of California at Berkeley where he majored in history. His interest in the Civil War developed at Berkeley under the influence of Professor Kenneth Stampp, noted scholar of Civil War causes, slavery and Reconstruction.

Since his retirement as a research analyst and portfolio manager with JP Morgan and Hathaway Associates, he now has the opportunity to devote even more time to his study of the Civil War.

In Memoriam

We are very saddened to announce the death of former Round Table president and Barondess Lincoln Committee Chairman Len Rehner. He died suddenly on December 1st after a brief illness. He was an always enthusiastic and dynamic force in the club, helping to arrange meeting places, suggesting speakers, recommending new books – he was also part of the Fletcher Pratt Committee – and thinking of new ways to promote the club.

Up to the end, he was planning the February meeting and was so excited to have obtained the presence of Sam Waterston as the 2011 award winner (although it meant changing the meeting date from Feb. 9th to Feb. 16th to accommodate Sam’s schedule.) He also brought us the invaluable presence of Rochelle Schumer, his loving companion of many years, who has been secretary and facilities coordinator for the Round Table, and who cared devotedly for Lenny to the last.

We will miss him very much. We’ll think of him in February and whenever we hear the music Lenny, a producer/promoter in his other life, adored or we hear about Abraham Lincoln or the latest in Civil War news or literature.

2011 • MEETING SCHEDULE

• February 16th •
Barondess Lincoln Award
Sam Waterston
Dr. Thomas Lowry

• March 9th •
Catherine Wright
Lee’s Last Casualty

**Don’t forget the 60th Anniversary
festivities! May 11th, 2011**

President's Message

Happy New Year to all. 2011 is here and with it our 60th Anniversary. I hope all can attend, it should be a blast. More about the party elsewhere in the Dispatch. Also, our yearly tour will be a ride with the cavalry. Don't worry, it's by bus, not on horse.

On a somber note, last month Len Rehner passed away. Len was a friend and held many offices in this Round Table. He will be sorely missed.

— Charles Mander



Book Review

Robert E. Lee and the Fall of the Confederacy 1863-1865

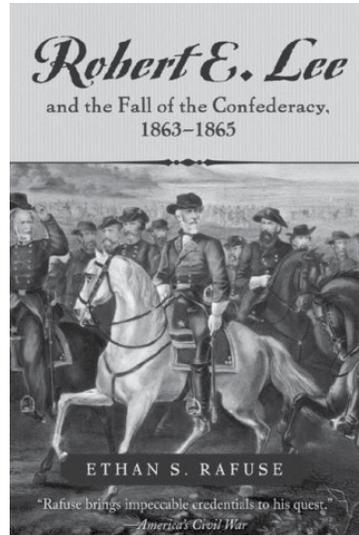
by Ethan S. Rafuse

I like this book a lot, for several reasons. First, it's a good read. Although you know exactly what happens next you often don't understand why and what Lee (or Grant or Meade or Lincoln) was thinking before he did it.

Second, Rafuse explains all of it clearly for the non-experts – like me. There are several recurring themes in his narrative: that Lee needed to move aggressively and opportunistically all the time; that Lee's best hope was to wage a "war of exhaustion" rather than a "war of annihilation," which he couldn't do anyway, for carefully explained reasons; that the Army of the Potomac needed to base its operations on the James River, not on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad; and that the Lincoln administration did Lee a huge favor by its "incessant meddling" and "headquarters doctrine" which prevented McClellan and Grant (at first) from doing what competent West Point trained officers want to do in the first place.

In discussing Lee's sending Jubal Early to the Shenandoah Valley in June 1864, Rafuse quotes Confederate Colonel E.P. Alexander as hoping that Early could arouse "the well known but very absurd apprehensions of the federal executive and the War Department for the safety of Washington," and that Confederate success in the Valley would cause Lincoln to, "as he had two years earlier,

Continued on page 4



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Telephone CWRT/NY at (718) 341-9811

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January during the Civil War

1862

10 – George Craig’s favorite general, George Thomas, wins an important victory at Mill Springs, Ky. He will never lose a battle when he is in command.

11 – The highly efficient (not) Secretary of War Simon Cameron gets an invitation he cannot refuse and is deported east as President Lincoln appoints him minister to Russia. A host of angry letters arrive from the Kremlin.

1863

9 – Confederate General Roger A. Pryor is defeated at Suffolk, Va. He has his brigade taken from him and he reenlists as a private (do you know anyone who did this?). He lives in Brooklyn Heights post war and ends his career as a justice on New York State’s Supreme Court.

10 – Fitz-John Porter is cashiered from the federal army. He is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery along with 40 other Union generals. And two Confederates. One, Robert Garnett now has a headstone, courtesy of Jeff Richman, the cemetery historian.

1864

18 – North Carolina’s state rights doctrine is violated with a Confederate draft and its citizens take to the streets to protest. The draftable ages are now 17 through 50. To quote an old song, “the pickins are poor and the crop is lean.”

27 – The dyspeptic Braxton Bragg is called to Richmond. Many feel he should have stood in bed rather than lead Confederate troops. Why did they name a major fort in N.C. after him?

1865

4 – Alfred Terry and his men leave for an assault on Fort Fisher (named after singer Eddie Fisher’s great grandfather). He will do the work left undone by Fighting Ben Butler.

21 – Uncle Billy Sherman moves his HQ out of Savannah toward Beaufort (Is it Bow Fort or Be You Fort?) S.C.

A little-known Confederate Hero

The Stuart Horse Artillery produced an amazing array of leaders, spearheaded by its first commander, John Pelham. Others, lesser known, included James Breathed.

On May 11, 1864, at the Battle of Yellow Tavern, the Confederate cavalry began losing all semblance of order. In desperation Stuart shouted: “Breathed! Take command of all the mounted men in the road and hold it against whatever comes. If this road is lost we are gone.” Breathed saluted and immediately called for the men to follow him while charging against the Federal column. Far in advance of his troopers, Breathed was immediately surrounded and a hot saber fight ensued between himself and a swarm of Yankees. A saber blow nearly cut him out of the saddle and he received a pistol shot in his side, but he cut down one Federal officer and killed another with his revolver. A nasty saber slash to the head that gushed blood and a glancing blow from a pistol knocked Breathed from his saddle. Eyeing a nearby Federal officer, Breathed saw the substitute horse he needed. Catching the Union man by the leg, Breathed pulled him off the horse, mounted, and rode through enemy lines. Confederates who had witnessed Breathed’s disappearance believed him dead. Soon, however, the intrepid officer, with blood streaming down upon his shoulders rode out of the fracas. One of his gunners heard Breathed cry out, “Boys, I’m not dead yet,” as he galloped back to the safety of the Rebel lines, Confederate John Esten Cooke, summed up Breathed’s career when he wrote, “Napoleon would have made him a marshal.”

Excerpted from the Michigan Regimental CWRT (one of the best around)

A special 19th-century necklace with Mary Todd Lincoln Provenance shown on the Antique Road Show

On November 3, 2008, in Albuquerque, N.M., Berj Zavian of the Antique Road Show appraised a necklace inscribed: From Mary Lincoln to Laura B. Sickles. It was worth, he said, \$2,500 to \$3,500. Baby Laura’s mother was Teresa Bagioli and her dad was no other than Dan Sickles. When Congressman Dan Sickles came to Washington he brought his teen-aged bride, Teresa, with him, and then paid little attention to her. She went on to have a well-known affair with U.S. District Attorney Philip Barton Key and on learning of this Sickles shot Key dead in broad daylight. Dan’s attorney’s wrangled a new verdict from the jury: not guilty by reason of temporary insanity, the first time this plea was successful in American jurisprudence. Perhaps you are familiar with Philip Barton’s dad: Francis Scott. After his success at the trial Sickles did something no one would ever have suspected of him. He took his wife back. Washington society could accept the murder of a man who cuckolded another but it wouldn’t accept Sickle’s latest action and Dan was ostracized in Congress. He needed some deus ex machina to straighten his life out and he got it; The Civil War. Sickles, with the help of friends of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, raised a brigade and well, you know the rest. He was quite a character. If you don’t believe me, ask George Gordon Meade.

This highly unusual information has been supplied by John Shaud of the Nassau County CWRT. He is a descendant of Dan Sickles.

Continued from page 2

weaken the forces on the James in order to secure Washington from threats real and imagined.”

An important assertion by Rafuse is that Grant’s “bending to the will of the administration” and Lincoln’s forcing him to “begin his main campaign north of Richmond” in May 1864 (instead of landing in Suffolk, which he wanted to) “condemned Grant and the Army of the Potomac to a bloodletting so horrific that it inspired hope in the Confederacy that Union will might be broken, and continues to unnecessarily stain Grant’s reputation as a general.”

Rafuse spends considerable efforts on describing the Confederacy’s main hope for independence: that the north would lose the will to continue the war. But “the ultimate problem for the Confederates was that the terms it demanded for ending the war were never acceptable to the North ... for all the success it armies achieved tactically and operationally, at no point did the South ever come close to punish the North to the point where it was willing to consent to the destruction of the Union and accept the existence of an Independent Confederacy.”

By Michael Wolf

60/150

This year marks the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, and May 11th will mark the 60th anniversary of the Civil War Round Table of New York.

And we’re going to celebrate in style.

We’ve already ensured the presence of Bud (James I.) Robertson, Harold Holzer, and noted Civil War artist Mort Kunstler. The Fletcher Pratt winner will also be invited, of course. There’ll be other surprises, fun and music, so we need you to make your reservation as soon as possible, and to pay in advance (you needn’t pay as soon as you make your reservation – payment will be due by March 31st.) We want to be able to give an accurate count for the evening (the program will be 6:00 to 10:00 that night) and avoid having to collect money then. We’ll have a cash bar as usual, and we’ll be charging \$50 for members, \$60 for non-members to cover a special menu. You may, of course, reserve for guests as well as yourselves, but be aware that we will open this event to the general public as of January 2011, and we’re giving our members priority notice. So call the Round Table number (be sure to specify if it’s for the 60th anniversary), or come up to Joan at the meeting to get your name down. **It’ll be a blast.**



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