

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 61, No. 1

552nd Meeting

September 2011



- Guest:  
**Jim Hessler**  
Sickles at Gettysburg
- Cost:  
**Members: \$40**  
**Non-Members: \$50**
- Date:  
**Wednesday,**  
**September 14<sup>th</sup>**
- 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**

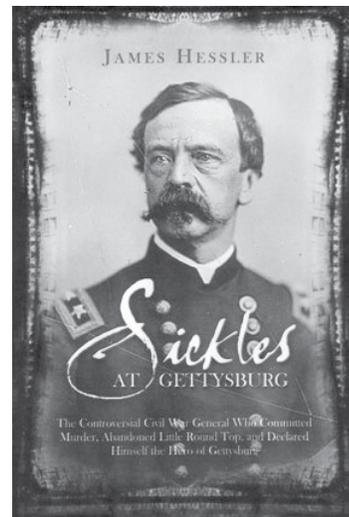
*You must call  
718-341-9811 by  
September 7<sup>th</sup>, if you  
plan to attend the  
September meeting.  
We need to know how  
many people to order  
food for.*

## Jim Hessler

### Sickles at Gettysburg

James Hessler is a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park. His book, *Sickles at Gettysburg*, won the R.E. Lee Civil War Round Table's Bachelor-Coddington Award and the Gettysburg Civil War Round Table's Distinguished Book Award as the most outstanding work on the Gettysburg Campaign.

Jim is also a past contributor to *Gettysburg Magazine*, *Gettysburg Daily.com* and *America's Civil War*. He is a frequent speaker at Civil War Round Tables, has been a guest on PCN-TV and Civil War Radio, and has taught Gettysburg-related courses for the Gettysburg Foundation and Harrisburg Area Community College.



## Quote, Unquote

"I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous"  
O.O. Howard

*From Minor Quotes from Major People*

*By Alton Blaney*

## New York City Civil War Tour

With Bud Livingston

Sunday, October 30th, 2011

Call the Round Table number if you are interested:

718-341 9811



## 2011 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2011

• **September 14<sup>th</sup>** •  
Jim Hessler  
*Sickles at Gettysburg*

• **October 12<sup>th</sup>** •  
John Quarstein  
*Battle at Big Bethel*

• **November 9<sup>th</sup>** •  
Colonel Kevin Farrell  
*Meade at Gettysburg*

## President's Message

Welcome to the new season of the Civil War Round Table of New York! It is indeed an honor to serve as your president after my now almost 32 years of membership, and what an exciting time it is for all of us with the Sesquicentennial in full swing. We have planned a fantastic year filled with great speakers. As always, we will recognize the very best in CW nonfiction and Lincoln scholarship; we will have our annual West Point and Lee-Jackson nights; we will ride to the sound of the guns with our battlefield tour this September; and we will continue to support the cause of battlefield preservation. We will keep you informed of current events, and will do our very best to make your experience at the CWRTNY knowledgeable, rewarding, and fun. So please bring a friend, and let them see for themselves just why we are New York's Civil War headquarters. And now, on with the 150th!

— *Bill Finlayson*

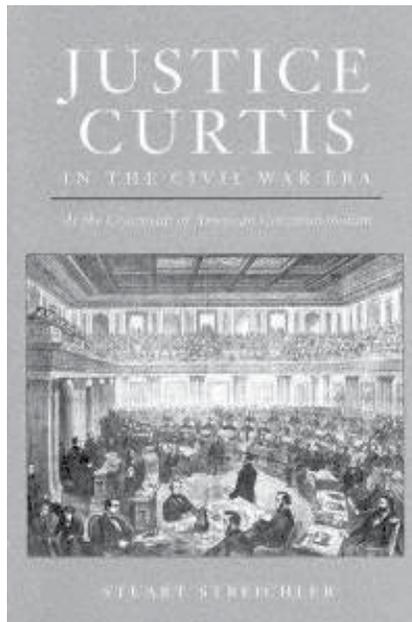
## Book Review

### Justice Curtis and the Civil War Era

by *Stuart Streichler*

When Justice David Souter decided not to resign immediately from the Supreme Court following his unhappiness with the controversial court ruling in *Bush vs. Gore*, he deprived Justice Benjamin Curtis of a return to the limelight. Curtis had left the court after his vigorous dissent in *Dred Scott*, while Souter remained for a time before ultimately stepping down.

Curtis left behind a reputation that causes him to be ranked with many of the titans of the court who are rated great or near great. His dislike of the court's verdict in 1857 is clear in his minority opinion, particularly in his disagreement with Roger Taney's politically oriented allegation that former slaves could not achieve citizenship. It was perhaps less critical than some would have liked but Curtis was no abolitionist. He supported the Fugitive Slave Act, and had serious reservations about the Emancipation Proclamation and some of President Lincoln's wartime rulings. Streichler brings out that Curtis was at odds with many of the leading and most respected citizens of Boston, the cockpit of abolitionism. But Curtis was a Constitutionalist and this consideration, not immediate political advantage, was his focal point.



*Continued on page 4*

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During business hours.

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## August/September during the Civil War

### 1861

**August 10** – Nathaniel Lyon, former captain, now general, after kicking the Rebels out of Missouri, pushes his luck and is killed at Wilson’s Creek. Trivia question. Who was once the sheriff of Greene County, site of Wilson’s Creek? See page 4 for the thrilling answer.

**September 10** – President Lincoln gets an unexpected, and unwanted visitor, from Missouri: Jesse Benton Fremont. Feathers fly as the unflappable Lincoln gets unflapped with the “wicked witch of the west.” And you thought that was Margaret Hamilton.

### 1862

**August 29** – T.J. Jackson misleads, mystifies and surprises R.E. Lee’s miscreant, John Pope, at 2nd Manassas. Union troops pray fervently that there will be no 3rd Manassas.

**September 17** – At Antietam, Ambrose Burnside has trouble with a bridge too far; George McClellan, greatly outnumbered (in his mind), refuses to send in his reserves, and casualties set a new record for a one-day engagement.

### 1863

**August 18** – Abraham Lincoln, the only president to hold a patent, loads up on Sunday and fires all week, as he tests the new Spencer Repeating Carbine on the White House lawn.

**September 20** – The Army of the Cumberland is clobbered and its leader is hit on the head like a duck as they retreat from the fiasco at Chickamauga. It could have been worse. Leonidas Polk decides his breakfast is more important than his commander’s order to attack. As an old Alabama boy used to say, “How about that?”

### 1864

**August 29** – “Four years of misrule by a sectional, fanatical, and corrupt party have brought our country to the verge of ruin.” Thus saith a speaker at the Democratic convention in the Windy City. Windy, indeed.

**September 11** – Uncle Billy issues his own edict on rent control and evicts some 446 families from Atlanta, giving the home folks a lesson in War is Hell.

## How an Apron Saved a House

Jan Sarna, of the Arkansas Civil War Round Table, tells the tale of his maternal great-great grandfather, William H. Rushing. He was serving as a Confederate scout when Union soldiers came to his house to search for food and other provisions for the army. The Rushings were able to hide their cattle and much of their food but the officer in charge of the troops said he had orders to burn the house down. Catherine Rushing and the others begged him to spare the home, which was refused. Likewise were pleas to let them first take out their personal possessions and the furniture, or at least some of their possessions. The officer agreed to let Catherine Rushing save just one item. She stepped into the house as the soldiers prepared and lit their torches. She came back outside with the chosen possession. Catherine Rushing brought out something that struck the Union officer as oddly familiar, and he asked to see it more closely. She unrolled her husband’s Masonic apron, made mostly of silk, and supposedly already somewhat old. The Union officer’s eyes widened; the next second his attitude had completely changed. In one of the curious coincidences that turn up in Civil War history, the officer was a practicing Freemason, as was great-great grandfather William Rushing. And a Mason was, and is, not to knowingly do harm to another Freemason. “Men, we’re not burning this house.” The soldiers put out their torches and climbed back onto their horses or into the wagons. The bluecoats left at once. The Rushing’s home was the only residence in the area left intact, thanks to the “intervention” of a Masonic apron.

## 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
<b>First Category</b>	<b>\$40</b>	<b>\$60</b>
<b>Second Category</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$75</b>
<b>Third Category</b>	<b>\$100</b>	<b>\$150</b>

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 2011, 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.**

*Continued from page 2*

After his 1857 resignation, Curtis returned to Boston where he assumed his former role as one of the leaders of the city bar. His dissent would eventually be enshrined in that part of the 14th Amendment which states that citizenship is nationally derived. He returned to the public arena as one of the defense lawyers in Andrew Johnson's trial, which represented the culmination of the battle over Reconstruction. Delivering what his biographer calls a "pivotal" speech in the deliberations, he emphasized the rules of law, the concept which governed his legal philosophy. Streichler notes how some of the seven Republican dissenters relied heavily on the speech in explaining their votes to acquit.

Curtis had spent the war practicing law in Boston and would later represent clients before the body on which he once served. His most notable achievements, the dissent in Dred Scott and his defense of Johnson, bracketed the war and added much to the debate over the conflict. He has, more than 100 years after his death, found a biographer whose excellent work contributes greatly to the literature of the Civil War era, and the legal issues of the period.

*By Thomas W. Ryley*



# THE DISPATCH

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
OF NEW YORK

139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y. 11422

## Answer from Page 3

Brooklyn Dodger catcher Mickey Owen

### New Recruits

**Louis Savarese** whose aunt's grandfather served in the Pennsylvania cavalry.

**Martha Jensen** from Clearwater, Florida, a volunteer at Green-Wood Cemetery.

**Stephen Swett** who is interested in Gettysburg and other major battles.

### A special Award

The Civil War News of August 2010 reports that the Gettysburg Daily has given the annual Sickles Award (celebrating dumb moves) to the National Park Service for installing portable toilets at the 20th Maine Monument between Little and Big Round Top in the Gettysburg battlefield.

From CWRT of Australia's Minie News, courtesy of Barry Crompton