

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 61, No. 7

558th Meeting

March 2012



- Guest:  
**Fredericksburg**  
George Rable
- Cost:  
**Members: \$40**  
**Non-Members: \$50**
- Date:  
**Wednesday,**  
**March 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 March 7<sup>th</sup>, if you plan to attend the March meeting. We need to know how many people to order food for.*

## George C. Rable

### Fredericksburg

Our March guest is the Charles G. Summersell Chair in Southern History at the University of Alabama. A native of Lima, Ohio, he received his B.A. from Bluffton College (1972), his M.A. from Louisiana State University (1973), and his Ph. D. from Louisiana State University (1978) where he studied under T. Harry Williams. He taught at Anderson University in Indiana from 1979-1998. From 2004-2008, he served as the President of the Society of Civil War Historians. His books include: *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg* (2002), *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (1994), and others. His latest book is *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (2010), which won the 2011 Jefferson Davis Award.



## 55th Annual Battlefield Tour

**October 12th–14th, 2012**  
**Fredericksburg/Chancellorsville**

Last year we used our sabers to cut our way out of Mosby's Confederacy. We now ride to join the main armies at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville October 12th–14th. Our guide will be park historian Frank O'Reilly, giving us a special sesquicentennial tour of the Battle of Fredericksburg, followed by General Lee's greatest victory—Chancellorsville. (The park has acquired new land, so you will be walking on fields you've never been on before).

So whether you wear the blue or the grey, it's time to enlist with a \$100 deposit. You can bring it to the meeting or mail it to our HQ at 139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y. 11422. For details call 718-341-9811.

## CIVIL WAR NEW YORK TOUR

Our Civil War New York tour will be held on Sunday, April 29th and will run from 10 am to 4 pm, depending on traffic.

We will visit, among other places, where Abraham Lincoln stood, and where he sat; the site of the Civil War's most unusual wedding; and the graves of some 513 Confederate and 2000 Union soldiers.

Please send a deposit of \$100 to Bud Livingston, 71-16 66th Street, Glendale, NY 11385.

Depending on attendance, the tour may cost less. If it does, you will get a refund.

## 2012 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2012

• April 11<sup>th</sup> •

Grant at Shiloh  
Ed Bearss

• May 9<sup>th</sup> •

Fletcher Pratt Award  
Amanda Foreman  
A World on Fire

• June 13<sup>th</sup> •

Year of Meteors/Fire Eaters  
Doug Egerton

## President's Message

In March of 1862, all eyes turned towards Hampton Roads in Virginia. After more than a year of construction, the old *Merrimack*, re-christened the CSS *Virginia*, sailed out on March 8th to do battle with the Union blockading fleet. The wooden warships were no match for this iron Goliath, and by days end, the *Cumberland* was sunk, the *Congress* burned, and the *Minnesota* run aground. With the tide going out, the *Virginia* broke off the battle, planning to return in the morning, and to finish off the rest of the fleet. But in a remarkable twist of fate, the little USS *Monitor* sailed into Hampton Roads that very night, after two harrowing days at sea, where she was almost lost in a storm. With no sleep, her tired crew stood by the guns all night long waiting for what the morning would bring. And when the two ships met on March 9th, it was high drama. In this natural amphitheater, thousands of soldiers and sailors, both North and South, witnessed this historic duel, the ships circling each other, shells bouncing off of iron plating, and neither one able to best the other. After almost four hours, both ironclads would fall back, and there was no clear-cut winner of the duel. But it was the *Monitor* who had prevented the *Merrimack* from destroying the rest of the fleet, and the blockade had been preserved. The story of the little *Monitor* became sensational news all throughout the North, and the South's great gamble to break the blockade had failed. But the Confederacy had yet another ace up its sleeve, and his name was Stonewall Jackson. In late March, he would begin a campaign that would turn the Northern war effort completely around, and all eyes would turn towards the Shenandoah Valley.

— *Bill Finlayson*

## Book Review

### Year of Meteors

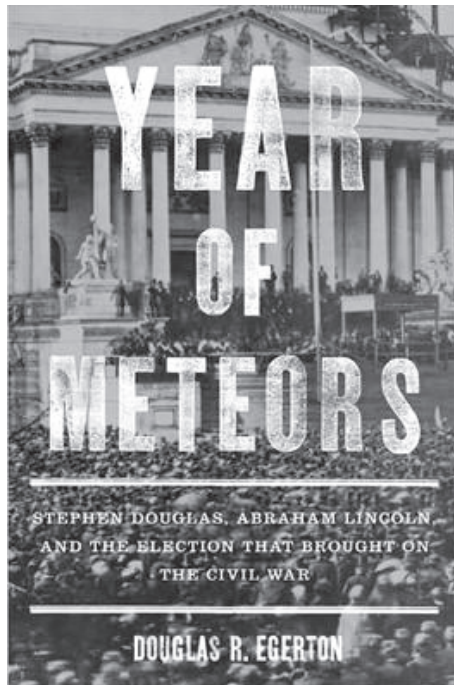
by *Douglas Egerton*

Presidential elections are frequently watersheds in American life; changes in political direction often follow in the wake of a change in presidents which ushers in a new era of American history: 1800, 1828, 1844, 1896, 1912, 1980 are just a few of these seminal moments, but 1860 perhaps is the most important "game changer" in the history of the republic.

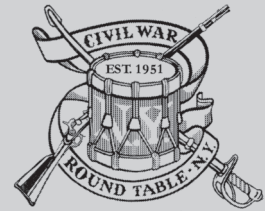
*Year of Meteors* by Douglas Egerton is the best analysis of that election. The author tries not to fall back on all the conventional and traditional explanations for the conflicts but instead brings forth a diverse approach to the breakup of the Union and the fighting that followed. He creates a multi-causal explanation that conforms to the picture of an country that has reached political maturity without adapting its constitution to the changes that had taken place.

As a narrative, *Year of Meteors* is thoroughly researched, profoundly analyzed and well written. Everyone knows the outcome, yet Egerton is able to show how so

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## March during the Civil War

### 1862

1 – Not every Southerner supports the rebellion. Former Virginia Congressman John Minor Botts, is arrested and charged with treason for his avowed neutrality in the conflict.

3 – Fighting Henry Halleck almost wrecks Grant's offensive in the West by giving his command to C.F. Smith. Halleck writes to McClellan that Grant has not been in communication with him and gratuitously adds that rumors say he is up to his old habits (read tipping).

### 1863

3 – The Enrollment Act is welcomed, at least, by the top generals, although it will prove to be a notable disappointment. It will, however, be the reason for the worst riot in American history in New York, in July.

26 – Lincoln writes to Governor Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, "the colored population is the great available and yet unavailable, force for restoring the Union. The bare sight of 50,000 armed and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi River, would end the rebellion at once."

### SOME ITEMS OF PERRYVILLE

Dr. Nemias Cole was attached to Buell's army as an assistant surgeon with the 50th Regiment Ohio volunteers. His notes, made on the scene, are a vivid reminder of the grim realities of war.

"4 P.M. And the battle still rages fiercely. Musketry is incessant & artillery is not silent. Instead, the fight grows sharper, our men outnumbered by veteran rebels fall gradually back. They are losing ground. The crossfire is severe because of their numbers, we lengthen our lines to prevent a flank attack and consequently leave no reserve to support them Just over there are 50 thousand Federal troops arriving-in sight-Buell is coming up- of course the tide must turn. Wounded dead and dying- operative surgery under difficulties-shortage of water & dressing etc, etc,"

Cole was one of a handful of doctors serving at the beginning of the conflict. When the war began, the U.S. Army medical staff consisted of fewer than 100 men, including the surgeon general. By the end of the war approximately 13,000 doctors, many of them acting only part-time, had seen service for the Union, while the South was served by about 4,000 designated medical officers and an unknown number of volunteers. They treated more than 10 million cases in the four years of the conflict; of this number approximately 620,000 died, two-thirds of them from diseases such as typhoid fever, diarrhea, dysentery, pneumonia and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, this is in many ways an incredible success story, given the state of medicine at the time.

From *American Philatelist* February 2001

### 1864

15 – Louisiana gets a new civil governor as a model for Reconstruction plans.

17 – U.S. Grant, newly in command of the Union armies, announces that headquarters will be in the field with the Army of the Potomac. George Meade will now be doing a lot of looking over his shoulder.

### 1865

4 – Lincoln generously offers "malice toward none; charity toward all."

31 – George Pickett moves his weary troops back to Five Forks. It is the beginning of the end.

### AN ITEM FROM THE MUSEUM OF THE CONFEDERACY

A good portion of the show focuses on the transformations wrought by the war, including, of course, the upheaval in the institution of slavery. In 1860, we learn, only 117 of Virginia's nearly 500,000 slaves escaped to freedom; in 1863, after the Emancipation Proclamation, almost 38,000 of the remaining slaves escaped to Union lines ... Virginia was unusual. One-fifth of all Confederate soldiers were Virginians. There were more than 2,100 military engagements in the state; more than 30,000 Virginian soldiers died. So Virginia was central to the Confederacy. But in some ways, it was a border state. It ended up with its own internal civil war; regions that later became West Virginia voted against secession (they used few slaves) and rebelled against the rebels.

From *The South Reinterprets Its "Lost Cause,"*

By Edward Rothstein, *N.Y. Times*, 12/6/11

### New Recruit

**Richard Colt and Kevin Curran**, both from Ossining.

**Janet Reid**, a literary agent who learned of us through Twitter.

### THE QUESTION IN THE DO YOU KNOW?

column in the November 2011 *North & South*, was as follows: Which Union general had a brother who was killed serving as a general in the Confederate Army?

The correct answer was John Baillie McIntosh, whose brother James was killed at Pea Ridge. The winning response drawn from the *North & South* was that of Thomas E. Moseley (of the CWRTNY) who receives his prize, Jim Stempel's *The Battle of Glendale*.

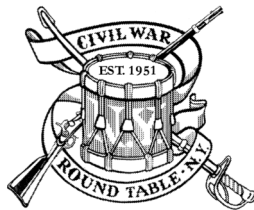
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many seemingly minor incidents contributed to the inevitable. He gives us a good picture of some of the lesser figures, such as John Bell of the Constitutional Union party, who is usually relegated to the category of an answer to a trivia question. He also spends more attention to the role of Stephen Douglas and how his death shortly after the election robbed the country of someone who might have been helpful in the political maneuvering that followed. This is not to say that there should be a movement to have Douglas placed on Mt. Rushmore but it does raise questions about the role to which he has been assigned by historians. He may have been more than the foil in Abraham Lincoln's rise to greatness whose last political act was to hold the newly elected president's hat during the inaugural.

It is hard to see anyone improving on *Year of Meteors* - it may well go down as the defining book on the election of 1860, It may well also serve as a companion to Adam Goodheart's *1861* as an introduction to the war of defining the sides, the leaders, and the strategies to be followed.

By Tom Ryley

Editor's note: Douglas Egerton will be our guest speaker in June



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OF NEW YORK

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## THE KING OF THE DIME NOVELS

From an old copy of the N.Y. *Times*, discovered by Joan Chaconas of the *Surratt Society*

Jones' historic bust of Lincoln for \$20.00 and a book ready on July 10 titled, *The Parricides; or The Doom of the Assassins*, a complete history of the conspiracy to assassinate the President, introducing all the assassins and conspirators, by E.Z.C. Judson, alias Ned Buntline....Truthful, wild, and fearfully exciting. It will be read by everybody,

### Note:

Ned Buntline, real name Edward Zane Carroll Judson, an adventurous soul, joined the Navy at 13. After his Navy stint, he dealt with the Seminole Wars and the Northwest fur trade. He was wounded several times, but always survived. He was always in trouble financially and romantically. During the Civil War, he is said to have been a member of the 1st New York Rifles. He found time amidst his many adventures to become a prolific writer of more than 400 books and to marry seven times, along with womanizing on the side. He has been dubbed the King of the dime novels, into, which category the above mentioned book falls. It is hard to tell truth from fiction in his writing, so beware! For more on this colorful man read *The Great Rascal: The Life and Times of Ned Buntline*.

From the *Surratt Courier* June 2011