

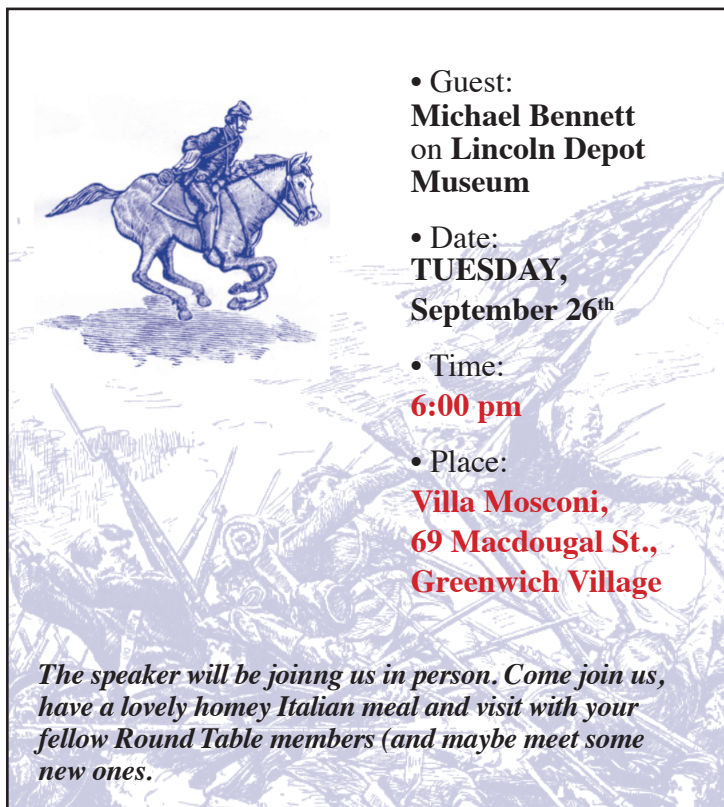
# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 71 No. 6

660th Meeting

September 2023



- Guest:  
**Michael Bennett**  
on **Lincoln Depot Museum**
- Date:  
**TUESDAY,**  
**September 26<sup>th</sup>**
- Time:  
**6:00 pm**
- Place:  
**Villa Mosconi,**  
**69 Macdougall St.,**  
**Greenwich Village**

*The speaker will be joining us in person. Come join us, have a lovely homey Italian meal and visit with your fellow Round Table members (and maybe meet some new ones).*

## Michael Bennett Lincoln Depot Museum

Michael Bennett's lifetime passion for the study of history was fired not only by movies like Gettysburg, (1993), and the Ken Burns' documentary The Civil War, but also the discovery of a Bennett family ancestor, John Richmond of the 128th NYVI (others would follow). This discovery led to his interest in the 19th century and the American Civil War. Bennett became an active member and eventually a local, state and national officer in the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, founded the Dan Sickles Civil War Round Table, and worked with a variety of historical groups including, the Westchester Veterans Museum and the USS Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.



His career and extra-curricular activities include politics, litigation support, radio broadcasting, film and television production, and audiobook narration. He holds a BA in Communications and an MA in Media Studies.

Bennett lives in Putnam Valley, NY, where he currently serves as **President of the Friends of the Putnam Valley Library, Treasurer of the Putnam Valley Historical Society, President of the Putnam Valley Grange, Treasurer of the Lincoln Society in Peekskill, and an active riding-member of the Putnam Valley Volunteer Ambulance Corps. He recently joined the Board of Directors of the Lincoln Depot Museum in Peekskill.** where his efforts have expanded programming and outreach, while also creating a Volunteer Docent Corps to help staff the museum and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Michael lives on a small farm with his wife Gail, son Jon – a recent college graduate and documentary filmmaker, along with three cats, two turkeys, nine goats, two peacocks and an Emu named Eugene.



## 2023 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2023

• **Tuesday, September 26<sup>th</sup>** •  
**Michael Bennett**  
Lincoln Depot Museum

• **Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup>** •  
**Bruce Brager**  
Grant's Victory

• **Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup>** •  
**TBD**

## President's Message

Welcome to the new and exciting 2023 - 2024 season of your Civil War Round Table. This year we have a lot to look forward to: exciting guest speakers, our October trip to the Lincoln Depot Museum Peekskill, and of course, our monthly meetings with fellow members and good food. But now, quite frankly, we need your help.



Like many CWRTs memberships are declining. Why? Good question. Lack of interest by those in their 20s, 30s & 40s, who are too busy raising kids, working and have little time for outside activities. Whatever the reason, our membership, along with other round tables, is declining.

So how can you help? First, please pay your dues promptly. The club, like any entity has bills to pay - phone, website and the Dispatch. Also, if you know someone interested in the Civil War, invite them to a meeting, maybe, just maybe they will like what they see and become members. And, more importantly, we are really hoping to hear your ideas and suggestions on ways we can improve.

I look forward to seeing you at Villa Mosconi on September 26.

Pat Holohan



## SUGGESTIONS

The Dispatch welcomes articles, book reviews (non-fiction only) and suggestions. Just send them in to our mailing address.

# THE DISPATCH



Founded January 24, 1951

The Dispatch is published monthly, except June, July, August, and December, by

### The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.,

139-33 250th Street,  
Rosedale, N.Y. 11422  
Telephone CWRT/NY at (718) 341-9811

During business hours.

#### OFFICERS

President Pat Holohan  
V.P. Programs Patrick Falci  
V.P. Operations Joan McDonough  
Secretary Michael N. Connors  
Treasurer Michael Connors

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Term Expiring 2024*

Beth Connors  
William Finlayson

*Term Expiring 2025*

Dan McCarthy  
Carolyn Roxon

*Term Expiring 2026*

Paul Weiss

Editor Pat Holohan

Copy Editor/

Club Liaison Joan McDonough

P.R. Martin Smith

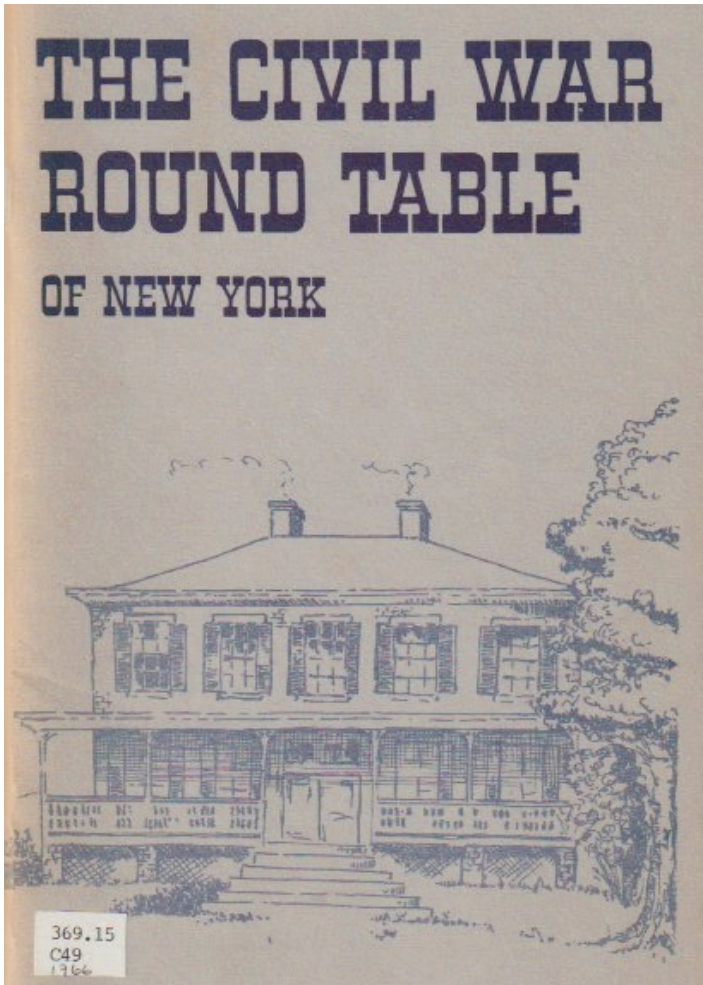
Merchandise Paul Weiss

Email: [cwrtnyc1@gmail.com](mailto:cwrtnyc1@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.cwrtnyc.org>

## OUR HISTORY

THIS ARTICLE WAS TAKEN FROM 'THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF NEW YORK' ITS HISTORY, PROGRAMS AND MEMBERSHIP 1965 1966



The history of the Civil War Round Table of New York spans sixteen stimulating and interesting years. It was one of the early Round Tables, coming into being in the course of an “informal” meeting at the Ritz Bar in New York one pleasant fall evening in 1950. Present at that memorable occasion was Carl Haverlin (who headed the discussion), Charles Godwin, Roy Meredith, Allan Nevins, Dr. Frederick Hill Meserve, John Pemberton, Ralph Newman and the late Robert Kincaid.

Following that initial “meeting” of minds an organizational meeting was set for April 25, 1951, at which time fifty people attended. Dr. Meserve was invited to serve as the organization’s first president but declined because he felt he was no longer up to the tasks which would go with the office. Carl Haverlin (the founder and prime mover of the organization) was then unanimously selected as the first President and served for two years. John C. Pemberton, 3rd was asked to serve as Vice President. The late Lewis Cott assumed the duties of Secretary-Treasurer. The Board

of Directors consisted of Charles Godwin, Roy Meredith, Allan Nevins, Fletcher Pratt and Boyd B. Stutler. Dr. Meserve was elected as the Round Table’s first Honorary President.

John Pemberton prepared the papers of incorporation and the Civil War Round Table added “Inc.” to its title before the month drew to a close.

The first meetings of the Round Table were held at the Columbia University Faculty Club on Morningside Heights. From there we moved to the Columbia University Club on 43rd Street. Our next move was to Washington Square and the New York University Faculty Club. We then moved to midtown again and met at The Lambs from September 1958 to February 1966. In March 1966 we started meeting at the Park 100 Restaurant on Park Avenue.

Our roster of distinguished Round Table presidents represents a great deal of individual dedication. From the first meeting the membership has been well informed on all matters pertaining to the dramatic and seemingly endless theme of the Civil War.

On June 14, 1966 the Civil War Round Table of New York held its 150th meeting. Guest speaker for the evening was Ralph G. Newman, one of that early group of “founding fathers” who had made his contribution to making the Round Table a reality. His address was a brilliant one and received a warm response from everyone present. In grateful appreciation for his many services to this and to many other Round Tables in the country a token of high regard was presented to him. It saluted the man as a friend of all Round Tables.

In the course of the year the membership did another thing for which it could feel justly proud—it designated Desiree I. Franklin as a “Distinguished Member”. This honor was conferred on only one other active member since the organization was founded and that was on the late General Russell C. Langdon.

To be continued ...

### Mission Statement:

**Our mission is to promote the study, research and social aspects of the American Civil War. People with all levels of interest and knowledge are welcome here.**

# HOW THE TELEGRAPH HELPED LINCOLN WIN THE CIVIL WAR

by Tom Wheeler

*Mr. Wheeler is the author of Mr. Lincoln's T-Mails: The Untold Story of How Abraham Lincoln Used the Telegraph to Win the Civil War (HarperCollins, 2006)*

“What became of our forces which held the bridge till twenty minutes ago...? The President of the United States telegraphed a colonel in the field during the Civil War Battle of Second Manassas (Bull Run) in 1862. Abraham Lincoln was using the new medium of electronic communications in an unprecedented manner to revolutionize the nature of national leadership.

When Lincoln arrived for his inauguration in 1861 there was not even a telegraph line to the War Department, much less the White House. Storm clouds were brewing, but when the US Army wanted to send a telegram they did like everyone else: sending a clerk with a hand written message to stand in line at Washington’s central telegraph office. That unwieldy situation changed rapidly, however, as wires were strung to the War Department and other key installations. The White House, however, remained without any outside connection.

The national leaders were like their constituents in their understanding of electronic communications. While an interesting and growing technology, the telegraph’s potential was still widely underappreciated and it certainly had never been tested in a time of crisis. This reality makes Lincoln’s subsequent embrace of the new technology even more remarkable. Without the guidance of precedent, and in the middle of a battle for the nation’s survival, Abraham Lincoln used the new electronic communications to transform the nature of the presidency. The telegraph became a tool of his leadership and, thus, helped to win the Civil War



Four months into his presidency Lincoln sat with his generals and waited while the thunder of cannon could be heard from the battlefield at Manassas, just 30 miles outside the capital. Their lack of activity was almost surreal. The General-in-Chief, Winfield Scott, was so accepting of the tradition of being unable to communicate rapidly with the front that he took a nap during the battle. The president found it necessary to awaken his top commander as the battle raged.

A young Pennsylvania Railroad supervisor named Andrew Carnegie had been given the responsibility of extending a telegraph line into Northern Virginia. The task was incomplete by the time the two armies clashed; the line stopped ten miles short of the battlefield. In a hybrid of the old and new, messengers from the field galloped to the end of the telegraph line. “Lincoln hardly left his seat in our office and waited with deep anxiety for each succeeding despatch [sic],” recorded the manager of the War Department’s new telegraph office.

The telegraph was beginning to change the executive’s relationship with his forces in the field. While General Scott napped, the new president consumed the electronically delivered updates. Thirteen months later, when the armies battled again along Bull Run, it was a different story in the telegraph office. No longer was Lincoln content to sit idly by and await information, he was actively in communication with the front.

During Second Manassas (Bull Run) the Confederates cut the telegraph connections with Washington. Unable to communicate with his key generals, Lincoln opened a telegraphic dialog with a subordinate officer that continued

## Question of the month:

**Who was the source of Union strategy at the beginning of the war to hold Fort Monroe, extend the blockade, guard Washington, and take Charleston, South Carolina?**

for several days. The telegrams between the president and Colonel Herman Haupt were at one point the national leadership's best source of information. The telegraph office became, as Eliot Cohen identified, the first White House Situation Room where the president could be in almost real time communication with his forces while at the same time participating in strategic discussions with his advisors.

Throughout the entire history of armed conflict, the ability to have a virtually instantaneous exchange between a national leader at the seat of government and his forces in the field had been impossible. As a result, field commanders had been the closest things to living gods. Cut off from the national leadership, the unilateral decisions of the generals determined not only the fate of individuals' lives, but also the future of nations. It was for this reason that heads of government, such as Henry V at Agincourt or Bonaparte in Russia, had remained with their troops to combine both national and military leadership.

The American democratic experiment was different, however. American wars had always been fought with the head of government removed from the scene of battle. When General Scott decided to march on Mexico City in 1847, for instance, the nation's leaders learned of the attack days after the event.

Had the traditional model of generals divorced from speedy interaction with the national leadership persisted during the Civil War the results could have been quite different. Lincoln used the telegraph to put starch in the spine of his often all too timid generals and to propel his leadership vision to the front. Most importantly, he used the telegraph as an information gathering tool to understand what was going on in the headquarters of his military leadership.

When General Joseph Hooker floated a trial balloon at the start of the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863, Lincoln used the telegraph to reinforce his strategic redirection away from the acquisition of real estate to the destruction of the enemy. Hooker saw the Confederates' move north as an opportunity to move against their capital. Lincoln responded succinctly, reminding Hooker of his objective, "If left to me, I would not go South of the Rappahannock, upon Lee's moving North of it...I think Lee's army, and not Richmond, is your true objective point." Of course couriers could have carried these messages back and forth, but the immediacy of electronic messages put the president in his general's tent, capable of a rapid-fire back-and-forth exchange almost as if he were physically present.

The year before his exchange with Hooker, during Confederate General Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Lincoln had done more than simply counsel on strategy; he used the telegraph to take command. As Jackson threatened Washington, the president telegraphed direct orders to generals in the field, moving men around

as though on a chessboard. That the orders did not produce the desired result is more of a reflection on their poor implementation than on the president's strategy and tactics.

When Lincoln and the nation finally found the general they deserved in Ulysses Grant the president continued to evolve his use of electronic messages. The wire became a way for the president to stay informed and assert himself.

After reading a message from Grant to Chief-of-Staff Halleck which fretted that quelling the draft riots of 1864 might deplete the force at the front and thus affect his operations, Lincoln intervened directly. "Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew and choke, as much as possible" he wired Grant. It was as good as walking into Grant's headquarters, sizing up the general's state of mind, and responding through conversation. As he put down the president's telegram, Grant laughed out loud and exclaimed to those around him, "The President has more nerve than any of his advisers." Grant was, of course, correct in his observation. More important, however, he had just held in his hands the tool Lincoln used for reinforcing his resolve and making sure that neither distance nor intermediaries diffused his leadership.

The slightly fewer than 1000 telegrams Abraham Lincoln sent during his presidency also provide us with an insight that his other writings cannot. Because Lincoln kept no diary we must rely on his correspondence and speeches for insights into the workings of his mind and the nature of his interactions with others. In this regard, however, Lincoln's telegrams can be the next best thing to a transcript.

Whereas Lincoln's letters were well thought out *précis* designed to stand on their own, many of his telegrams are spontaneous responses to a specific stimulus. Thus they constitute the closest we will ever get to a tape recording of Lincoln's interaction with his generals. Read in tandem with the messages he received, these telegrams are like eavesdropping on a conversation with Abraham Lincoln.

The story of Abraham Lincoln and the telegraph is perhaps the greatest untold story about this great man. Through these messages it is possible to watch Lincoln's confidence grow and in turn to observe his growth as a leader. What is most remarkable, however, is that Abraham Lincoln applied the new telegraph technology in an absence of precedent. Without the guidance of text, tutor, or training Lincoln instinctively discerned the transformational nature of the new technology and applied its dots and dashes as an essential tool for winning the Civil War.

©2006 Tom Wheeler

*From: historynewsnetwork.org*

*Colombian College of Arts & Sciences, The George Washington University*

## TRIP IN FALL

We have something special lined up for you in October. Since there was not much interest in a 2- or 3-day tour, we thought about a one-day trip upstate to a Civil War Museum you've probably never visited. On Saturday, October 21st, we're planning a train trip to the Lincoln Depot Museum in Peekskill, NY. The plan is to meet at Grand Central, get our round-trip tickets, and travel for about an hour up to Peekskill (admiring the fall foliage along the Hudson on the way). Once we get there, we'll walk a couple of blocks to have lunch at a nice little Italian restaurant and then mosey over for a short walk to the museum, where we'll get a tour of their interesting and somewhat unusual collection. If there's still time, feel free to walk in the nearby park and/or pick up a pastry or some ice cream in the bakery next door. Then we head back on the train to Grand Central. Of course, if you live in the area, you can drive over and meet us there, either for lunch or afterward.

What do you say? Just let us know if you plan to join us so we can give the restaurant an idea of how many tables to hold for us. Round trip train tickets are @\$17 for seniors, lunch is an individual order (the restaurant is pretty reasonable), and the museum will charge us about \$5 each (we will also make a donation from the club.) Call the number – 718-341-9811 or email [cwrtnyc1@gmail.com](mailto:cwrtnyc1@gmail.com).

## Answer:

**Abraham Lincoln**

**From:** *Civil War Trivia and Fact Book*  
by Webb Garrison

## WEEP

BY GEORGE MOSES HORTON

Weep for the country in its present state,  
 And of the gloom which still the future waits;  
 The proud confederate eagle heard the sound,  
 And with her flight fell prostrate to the ground!  
 Weep for the loss the country has sustained,  
 By which her now dependent is in jail;  
 The grief of him who now the war survived,  
 The conscript husbands and the weeping wives!  
 Weep for the seas of blood the battle cost,  
 And souls that ever hope forever lost!  
 The ravage of the field with no recruit,  
 Trees by the vengeance blasted to the root!  
 Weep for the downfall o'er your heads and chief,  
 Who sunk without a medium of relief;  
 Who fell beneath the hatchet of their pride,  
 Then like the serpent bit themselves and died!  
 Weep for the downfall of your president,  
 Who far too late his folly must repent;  
 Who like the dragon did all heaven assail,  
 And dragged his friends to limbo with his tail!  
 Weep o'er peculiar swelling coffers void,  
 Our treasures left, and all their banks destroyed;  
 Their foundless notes replete with shame to all,  
 Expecting every day their final fall,  
 In quest of profit never to be won,  
 Then sadly fallen and forever down!

**Source:** "Words for the Hour": A New Anthology of American Civil War Poetry, edited by Faith Barrett (2005)