

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 70 No. 9

652nd Meeting

May 2022



- Guest:  
**70th Anniversary Dinner**  
Guest speaker:  
Fletcher Pratt winner  
Stephen Davis  
*The generalship of John Bell Hood.*
- Date:  
**May 11<sup>th</sup>**
- Date:  
**7:00 pm**

*If you plan to attend our May 11th dinner meeting, please call 718-341-9811 no later than May 4th.*

*We will also be featuring music from the talented musician John Gregor of the Sons of Union Veterans (remember him from the beforetimes? A crowd favorite).*

## This year's Fletcher Pratt Award winner: Stephen Davis

### The generalship of John Bell Hood.

Stephen Davis is a nationally known author and recognized expert on the Atlanta Campaign of 1864. He has written 7 books on the subject. He has also written hundreds of articles for both scholarly and popular publications. He graduated from Emory University, where he studied under Bell I. Wiley, and also earned his PhD. He now lives in Cumming, Georgia with his wife Billie.

He will be telling us about the generalship of John Bell Hood. He was given the Fletcher Pratt Award for his 2-volume work on the general, *Texas Brigadier to the Fall of Atlanta* (2020 award) and *Into Tennessee and Failure* (2021 award).

## Grant's Tomb Tour

Hey, how about a mini-trip? Sunday, May 15th, the National Parks folks at Grant's Tomb have agreed to give the CWRTNY a tour of the building. If you missed both birthday celebrations, you still have a chance to pay the General your respects at 1:00 on the 15th. Just meet us in front of the Tomb. If there's a crowd, they'll take us 10 at a time. Afterward, we'll try to find a place for lunch if anyone wants to join up for that, or you can just head out. Closest subway is the 116th St. stop on the 1 train, but the #4 bus should also get you there if you don't want to drive. It's @122nd St. and Riverside Drive. Join us!



## 2022 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2022

• May 11<sup>th</sup> •

Stephen Davis  
Fletcher Pratt Award Winner  
70th Anniversary

• June •  
TBD

• September •  
TBD

## President's Message

The "Merry Month of May" was not so merry for a number of notable Civil War figures, including Joe Hooker, "Stonewall" Jackson, Jeb Stuart, and Jeff Davis.

But for all involved, May was a month fraught with drama, epic events and great battles.

May 1861 saw the venerable General Winfield Scott propose what would become known as the "Anaconda Plan", to squeeze the South with a coastal blockade while severing it by controlling the Mississippi River Valley. To no one's surprise, Tennessee and North Carolina seceded to join the Confederacy, and the voters of Virginia confirmed the Commonwealth's prior decision to leave the Union by better than 2 to 1.

Union troops seized Alexandria, directly across the Potomac from Washington, with the North gaining its first martyr, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, killed by a hotel owner after tearing down a Confederate flag from its roof. Funeral services for the 24 year old Ellsworth, a friend of the President, were held in the White House. In one seemingly minor decision that would have profound consequences, General Benjamin Butler (a mediocre commander, but a clever attorney) refused to return three runaway slaves to their owner (as the then-current law required), but, instead, declared them "contraband of war".

May 1862 finally saw some movement in General McClellan's slow-motion offensive on the Virginia Peninsula at Yorktown and Williamsburg, but, as the "Young Napoleon" gradually approached the outskirts of Richmond, his opponent, General Joe Johnston was seriously wounded on the last day of May at the Battle of Fair Oaks/Seven Pines, leading to the ascension of one Robert E. Lee as the new Confederate commander.

While McClellan had been slowly creeping toward Richmond, a legend was being born in the Shenandoah Valley as General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson won a number of small encounters at New Market, Strasburg, McDowell, Front Royal, & Winchester. Although minor by later standards, these victories during his "Valley Campaign" were enough to scare Washington into keeping substantial forces near Washington, thus denying them as reinforcements for the already overcautious McClellan, with predictable results.

General Butler, now in charge of the occupation of New Orleans, earned his sobriquet "Beast" - and the eternal hatred of all the South - by threatening to treat the good ladies of the Crescent City as "women of the town" (prostitutes) if they continued to "insult or show contempt" for Union occupying troops.

The epic Battle of Chancellorsville highlighted the month of May 1863. General "Fighting Joe" Hooker, who had done much to restore efficiency and morale in the Army of the Potomac (AoP) after their brutal loss at Fredericksburg, stole a march on General R. E. Lee, placing the AoP in a great position to outflank Lee and move on toward Richmond. But, a lethal combination of Lee's audacity and Hooker's sudden timidity led to a ferocious week-long battle, causing a beaten Hooker to withdraw back north. The losses on both sides were horrendous, totaling about 30,000 with about 3,500 killed. Although Lee won what has been called his "perfect victory", he also lost, to "friendly fire", the irreplaceable Stonewall Jackson. At the end of the month, Lee would reorganize his victorious, but battered, army, from two to three Corps, with Generals Dick Ewell and A.P. Hill now joining Longstreet as Corps commanders. This is the army that would fight at Gettysburg.

However, in the Western Theater, it was a far different story. About the same time Hooker retreated back across the Rappahannock River, General U.S. Grant, who, with the able assistance of the Union Riverine fleet, had daringly crossed the Mississippi River from Louisiana to the dry land on the Mississippi side, well south of the fortress city of Vicksburg, befuddled the Confederates by first moving north and east, winning at Raymond and Jackson, then turning back to the west, defeating General Pemberton's army at Champion Hill and at the Big Black River, then enveloping and beginning the siege of Vicksburg.

May 1864 witnessed the major Union commands begin operations toward Richmond in the East and Atlanta in the West. With General Grant accompanying the AoP (commanded by General Meade), great battles would be fought against General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in "The Wilderness", Spotsylvania Court House, and at the North Anna River, with stunningly high losses on both sides - including Lee losing two more of his valued commanders; Jeb Stuart, killed, and James Longstreet, seriously wounded.

In the West, General W.T. Sherman's combined armies would fight Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee at Snake Creek Pass, Resaca, New Hope Church, and Dallas, all the while moving ever closer to Atlanta.

In the "Valley of Virginia", still far from being under Union control, a relatively small battle at New Market would see the teenaged Cadet Corps of VMI attack across the "field of lost shoes", capturing a Union position, while losing 57 Cadets, including ten killed.

It's May 1865, and war is over - almost!

Early in the month, General Richard Taylor surrenders the remaining Confederate forces in Alabama, Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana. On the 10th, the heretofore elusive Jefferson Davis is captured by Federal Cavalry in Irwindale, Georgia. President Johnson then issues a proclamation that organized resistance in the rebellion is now at an end. On the 12th, the last known battle of the "great civil war", ironically, a Confederate win, is fought at the Palmetto Ranch in Texas. Two weeks later, the Confederate Trans-Mississippi forces are formally surrendered at Galveston.

On May 23rd and 24th, the "Grand Review" of the two major Union commands - the AoP marching down Pennsylvania Ave on the 23rd and Sherman's Western forces on the 24th - are held in Washington. Finally, on May 29th, President Johnson proclaims amnesty for all who participated in "the late rebellion" - excepting Confederate government officials, Rebel officers with the rank of Colonel and above, any Southern officer who attended a US military academy, and a few other minor categories.

Please join us on Wednesday, May 11, when we honor author Stephen Davis with our 2021 Fletcher Pratt Award for his marvelous two volume military biography of "John Bell Hood, Texas Brigadier".

Hope to see you there!

Paul Weiss



# THE DISPATCH



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## Civil War Events During the Month of May 1864

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>5 Battle of the Wilderness, Virginia</p> <p>6 Day two of the Battle of the Wilderness, General James Longstreet is seriously wounded in combat</p> <p>7 Sherman begins his Atlanta campaign</p> <p>Union troops seize Tunnel Hill on the first day of the Atlanta Campaign, an important tunnel on the Western &amp; Atlantic Railroad.</p> <p>8 Battle of Spotsylvania, Virginia</p> <p>Engagement at Dug Gap, Georgia</p> <p>9 Engagement at Swift Creek, Virginia</p> <p>11 Battle of Yellow Tavern, Virginia on Sheridan's Richmond Raid</p> <p>12 Battle of Spotsylvania continues with the fight for the Bloody Angle</p> <p>Death of J.E.B. Stuart</p> | <p>13 Battle of Resaca, Georgia begins</p> <p>15 Battle of New Market, Virginia</p> <p>18 Engagement at Yellow Bayou (Bayou de Glaize), Louisiana (Red River Expedition)</p> <p>20 Battle of Ware Bottom Church</p> <p>23 Battle of North Anna River, Virginia</p> <p>25 Battle of New Hope Church, Georgia</p> <p>27 Battle of Pickett's Mill, Georgia</p> <p>28 Skirmish near Jacksonville, Florida</p> <p>Battle of Dallas, Georgia</p> <p>29 Confederates capture wagon train at Salem, Arkansas</p> <p>31 Combat at Bethesda Church, Virginia</p> |
|--|--|

## Battle of New Hope Church by Paulding County, GA

May 25 - 26, 1864

After Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston retreated to Allatoona Pass on May 19-20, 1864, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman determined to move around Johnston's left flank rather than attack the strong defenses in his front. On May 23, Sherman set in motion Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas's Army of the Cumberland toward Dallas, a small crossroads town 30 miles northwest of Atlanta. Johnston anticipated Sherman's move and blocked the Federals at New Hope Church. Believing the Confederates were merely a token force, Sherman ordered Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's XX Corps to attack on May 25. Advancing over rough terrain, later dubbed the "Hell Hole" by Hooker's men, the Federal soldiers were severely mauled in front of the Confederate earthworks by infantry and artillery fire. Both sides dug in, and skirmishing continued throughout May 26. The next day, Sherman ordered a withdrawal and concentrated his efforts toward the Confederate right flank, resulting in the Battle of Pickett's Mill.

From: [battlefields.org](http://battlefields.org)



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### Question of the month:

**What milk product, patented in 1856, became an important part of the Union soldiers' diet?**



## MARCH INTO VIRGINIA, ENDING IN THE FIRST MANASSAS (JULY, 1861) by Herman Melville

Did all the lets and bars appear  
To every just or larger end,  
Whence should come the trust and cheer?  
Youth must its ignorant impulse lend—  
Age finds place in the rear.  
All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys,  
The champions and enthusiasts of the state:  
Turbid ardors and vain joys  
Not barrenly abate—  
Stimulants to the power mature,  
Preparatives of fate.

Who here forecasteth the event?  
What heart but spurns at precedent  
And warnings of the wise,  
Contemned foreclosures of surprise?  
The banners play, the bugles call,  
The air is blue and prodigal.  
No berrying party, pleasure-wooded,  
No picnic party in the May,

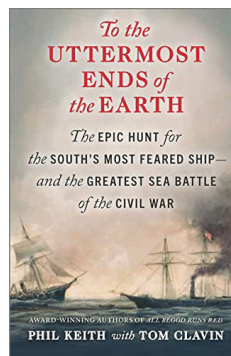
Ever went less loth than they  
Into that leafy neighborhood.  
In Bacchic glee they file toward Fate,  
Moloch's uninitiate;  
Expectancy, and glad surmise  
Of battle's unknown mysteries.

All they feel is this: 'tis glory,  
A rapture sharp, though transitory,  
Yet lasting in belauled story.  
So they gayly go to fight,  
Chatting left and laughing right.

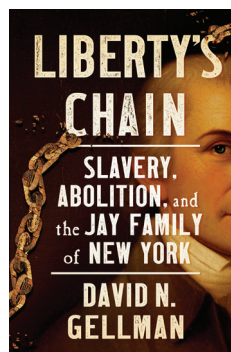
But some who this blithe mood present,  
As on in lightsome files they fare,  
Shall die experienced ere three days be spent—  
Perish, enlightened by the vollied glare;  
Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,  
Thy after shock, Manassas, share.



## Recently Published Books on the Civil War



*To the Uttermost Ends of the Earth: The Epic Hunt for the South's Most Feared Ship – and the Greatest Sea Battle of the Civil War* by Phil Keith  
Published by Hanover Square Press, April 12, 2022, Hardcover \$24.99 (Amazon), pp 320



*Liberty's Chain: Slavery, Abolition, and the Jay Family of New York* by David N. Gellman  
Published by Three Hills, April 15, 2022, Hardcover \$24.90 (Amazon), pp 544

## J. E. B. Stuart

James Ewell Brown Stuart, known to friends and fellow servicemen as Jeb, came from an acclaimed military lineage. His great grandfather, Major Alexander Stuart, commanded a regiment in the Revolutionary War, and his father Archibald Stuart fought in the War of 1812 before serving as a Commonwealth and U.S. Representative. He attended Emory and Henry College and then West Point, where he graduated 13th of 46 in 1854. West Point was also where he first met and befriended Robert E. Lee.

In his U.S. service, Stuart was involved in several Indian conflicts, the “Bleeding Kansas” incident at the Kansas-Missouri border and was sent by Lee to crush John Brown’s raid at Harpers Ferry.

Stuart resigned from the United States army in May of 1861 to join the Confederacy following Virginia’s secession, despite his father-in-law choosing to remain in the US Army for the engagement. He was assigned to report to Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, who promoted him to Colonel early on and assigned him to command cavalry units of the Army of the Shenandoah. He led his regiment in the First Battle of Bull Run, where the Union Army’s early success was undone in part because of Stuart’s routing, forcing their retreat to Washington DC. Soon thereafter, he began commanding all the cavalry brigades for the Army of Northern Virginia in March of 1862.

Stuart was a master of reconnaissance missions, and twice made daring exploits, first in the Peninsula Campaign and again at Antietam. In the Northern Virginia Campaign, he was promoted to major general after he executed successful raids at Catlett’s Station and Rappahannock River, and then performed great defensive strategy at the Battle of Fredericksburg. After the mortal wounding Jackson during the battle of Chancellorsville, Stuart temporarily assumed command of Jackson’s Second Corps and was influential in exploiting the success of his predecessor’s famous flank attack.

In spite of Stuart’s brilliant reputation (or perhaps because of it), his performance during the Gettysburg Campaign has been the subject of much debate and controversy. Prior to 1863 the Federal mounted arm had been repeatedly embarrassed by Stuart’s seemingly invincible cavaliers. But as the war entered its third summer, that perception would begin to change. At Brandy Station, despite holding the field for the South, Stuart failed to detect the movements of the Union cavalry that would eventually instigate the attack. Just a month later, Stuart’s cavalry fell out of touch with headquarters in the days leading up to Gettysburg, and left Lee and his fellow commanding officers with little to no intelligence in unfamiliar enemy territory. Stuart finally arrived late on the second day and the following day was repulsed by Union cavalry gaining no ground there.

Stuart fought his final battle on the outskirts of Richmond on May 11, 1864. The Confederate cavalry was working feverishly to deny Gen. Philip Sheridan’s Federal horsemen from gaining entry into the Confederate capital. Stuart’s men were able to check the Yankee advance but at a terrible cost. The Confederate cavalry chief was shot by a dismounted Michigan trooper with a pistol, and the wound proved fatal. He died the day after the battle, May 12, 1864, and was buried at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond.



FEBRUARY 6, 1833 - May 12, 1864

### SUGGESTIONS

**The Dispatch welcomes articles, book reviews (non-fiction only) and suggestions.**

**Just send them in to our mailing address.**

### Answer:

**Gail Borden’s condensed milk.**

