

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 71 No. 5

659th Meeting

May 2023



- Guest:
Kent Masterson Brown on Meade and Gettysburg
- Date:
**WEDNESDAY,
May 23rd**
- Time:
6:00 pm
- Place:
**Villa Mosconi,
69 Macdougall St.,
Greenwich Village**

The speaker will be joining us by Zoom, but you must be there to hear him – we will not be making this Zoom public. Come join us, have a lovely homey Italian meal and visit with your fellow Round Table members (and maybe meet some new ones.

Kent Masterson Brown Winner of the 2023 Fletcher Pratt Award

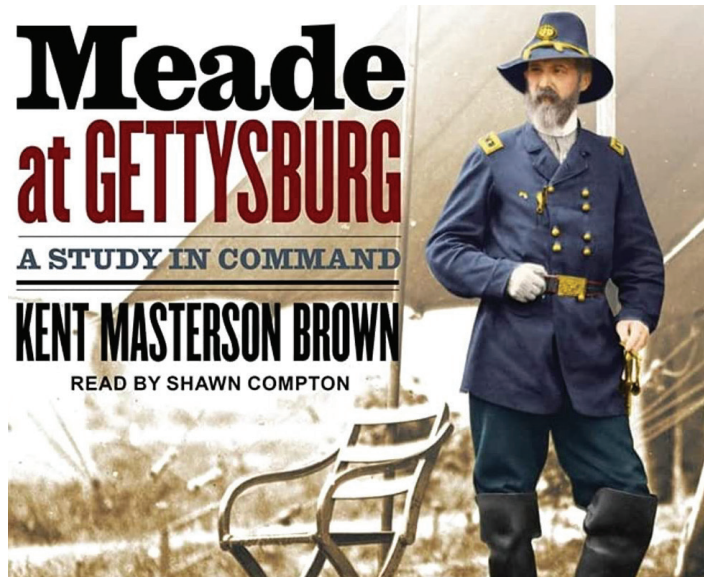
This year's winner of the Fletcher Pratt award is Kent Masterson Brown for his book on Meade at Gettysburg.



Kent is the author of six books for which he has received rave reviews and numerous national awards. He has also written, hosted, and produced eight award-winning documentary films for public and cable television that are free to view on Witnessing History Education Foundation, Inc.'s YouTube Channel. Brown is President of the Witnessing History Educational Foundation, Inc., a qualified Kentucky non-stock, nonprofit public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, created to produce and finance documentary films on all aspects of American History for broadcast on public and cable television, and to provide tours and lectures, produce articles, pamphlets, and other print and electronic publications for the purpose of making American History readily available to the public.

Our Meeting Places

We must apologize for our changing venues for meetings. We were priced out of the 3 West Club, which charges a hefty room fee and bar fee on top of the dinner charge, and we tried Connolly's in midtown, which had good (and plentiful) food and very nice, cooperative employees, but was just too noisy for everybody. So now we're trying Villa Mosconi, where we unfortunately had to charge more for dinner, but the food is good, and the private room is perfect for presentations. We wish we could have found something in midtown, and if anyone has suggestions, we'll gladly look into them, but for now, we're at the Villa. Thanks for keeping up with us.



2023 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2023

• May 2023 •
TBD

• June 2023 •
TBD

• July 2023 •
TBD

President's Message

The "Merry Month of May" was not so merry for a number of notable Civil War figures, including "Fighting" 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 in half 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.

THE DISPATCH



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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 swampy 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 47 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 Tuesday May 23, once again at the Villa Mosconi when we honor author Kent Masterson Brown with our Fletcher Pratt for 2022's best Civil War, his superb, "Meade at Gettysburg: A Study in Command".

Hope to see you there!

Paul Weiss

Civil War Events During the Month of May/June/July 1865

May 2	A \$100,000 reward offered for the arrest of Jefferson Davis	May 29	President Andrew Johnson proclaims amnesty for most ex-Confederates
May 4	Surrender of Confederate General Richard Taylor's forces at Citronelle, Alabama	June 23	General Stand Watie surrenders Confederate forces in the Indian Territory (OK)
May 10	Confederate President Jefferson Davis captured by U.S. troops at Irwinville, Georgia	June 30	Eight Lincoln-assassination conspirators convicted in Washington, D.C.
May 12	Skirmish at Palmito Ranch, Texas - the last engagement of the Civil War	July 7	Conspirators in the assassination of Lincoln are executed
May 23 to 24	Grand Review of Union armies in Washington, D.C.		
May 26	Surrender of Confederate General E.K. Smith's Trans-Mississippi forces, New Orleans, Louisiana		

From: battlefield.org

BATTLE OF PALMITO RANCH

Considered the final battle in the Civil War, Confederate forces under Col. John S. “Rip” Ford defeated Union forces under Col. Theodore H. Barrett at Palmito Ranch, Texas, from May 12 to 13, 1865.

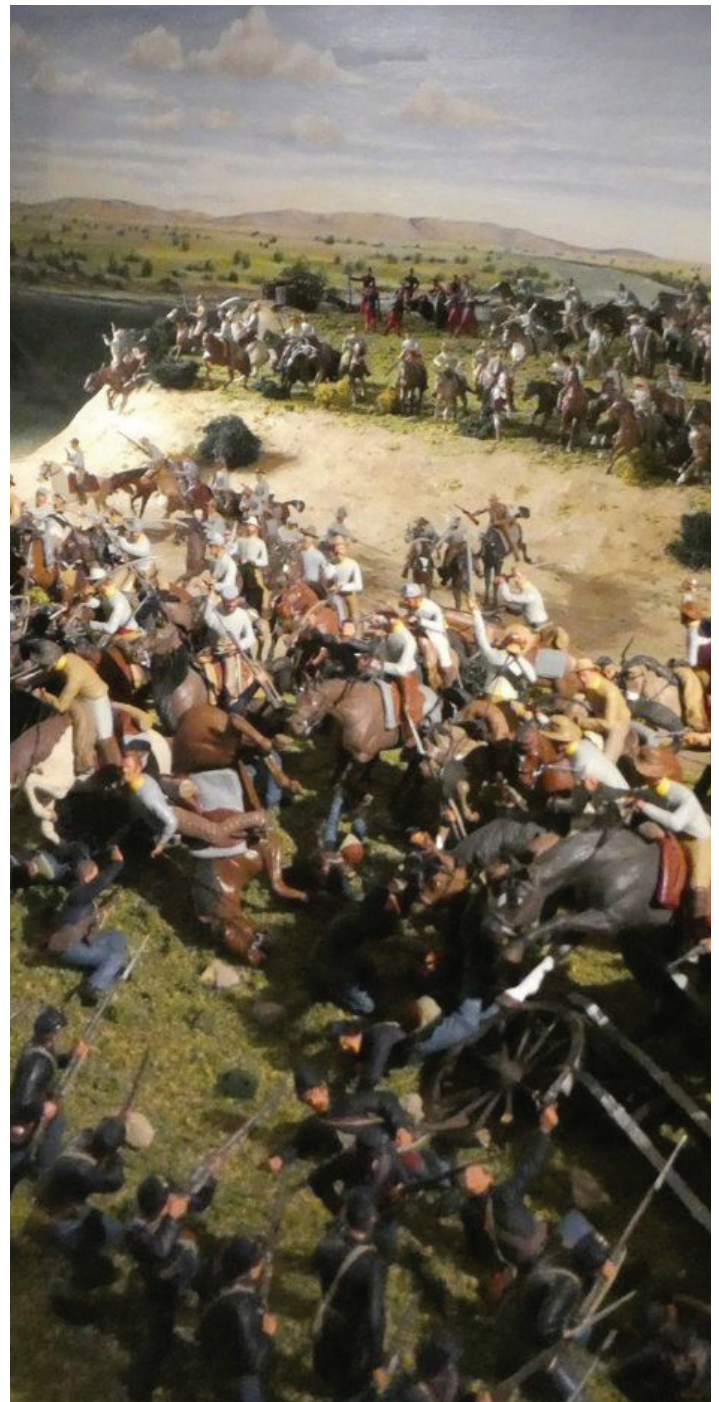
In mid-May of 1865, Col. Theodore H. Barrett, commanding forces in Brazos Santiago, Texas, decided to dispatch a 500-man column to attack Confederate outposts and camps in the area. Despite Barrett knowing about Robert E. Lee’s surrender, the column moved towards White and Palmito Ranches, where they hoped to destroy a sizable Confederate camp.

After marching all night, Barrett’s force made it to the outskirts of White Ranch. After trying to conceal his men in a thicket just beyond the ranch, the column was spotted by Confederates on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande River, losing the element of surprise for Branson. Nevertheless, Branson moved into White’s Ranch and found no Confederate force. After securing the area, Branson moved onward towards Palmito Ranch. Once in sight of Palmito Ranch, Branson ran into Capt. W. N. Robinson’s 100-man company, from Lt. Col. George H. Gidding’s Texas Cavalry Battalion. After a short skirmish, both sides fell back, with Robinson’s command heading toward the ranch and Branson retreating to a hill that overlooked the ranch.

During the night, Branson requested reinforcements, and by the early morning hours, Col. Barrett himself was on the field with 200 men from the 34th Indiana Infantry, bringing the total Federal force to 500. After setting a battle plan, Barrett moved towards the ranch and hit Robinson’s outnumbered company along the river and at the ranch. After a few hours of fighting, Robinson pulled back towards Brownsville and requested reinforcements. Barrett’s men pursued only a mile from the ranch, resting his men on a small hill. At 3:00 pm, Col. John S. “Rip” Ford appeared with almost 400 men, including Robinson’s company. Ford had a greater advantage over Barrett because his column included six cannons which were

deadly on the flat prairie. At 4:00 pm, Ford’s men were in position and commenced their attack. After hitting both flanks and punching the center of his lines, Barrett decided to withdraw back to Brazos Island. Ford’s men continued to pound Barrett’s lines and almost captured the entire command but were stopped when the 62nd U.S.C.T held the Federal right flank and kept the escape route open.

From: battlefield.org



Question of the month:

What was the height of the tallest man in the Union forces, and what was the height of the shortest man in the Union forces?

GENERAL STAND WATIE SURRENDERS CONFEDERATE FORCES

At the outset of the Civil War, members of the Cherokee Nation tried to stay neutral. Within months, however, the Cherokee split between those who supported the Union and those who supported the Confederacy. The most famous Confederate supporter was Stand Watie, who was promoted to colonel of the First Cherokee Mounted Rifles in late 1861. Watie was eventually promoted to brigadier general in the spring of 1864 and later commanded the First Indian Brigade.

Watie still maintained a fighting force nearly a month after Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department. Realizing he was fighting a losing battle, Watie surrendered his unit of Confederate Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, and Osage Indians at Doaksville, near Fort Towson in Indian Territory, on June 23. Stand Watie was the last Confederate general to surrender his command.

Watie led the Southern Cherokee delegation to Washington, D.C., after the American Civil War to sue for peace, hoping to have tribal divisions recognized. The federal government negotiated only with the leaders who had sided with the Union. Watie stayed out of politics for his last years and tried to rebuild his plantation.

From: *battlefields.org*

Who Was Stand Watie?

The only Native American to be fully promoted to the rank of General in the Civil War, Stand Watie was born Degataga, meaning “Stand Firm” in the Cherokee language, and baptized as Isaac in Georgia to a man named David Uwatie and his mixed-race wife, Susan Reese. “Stand Watie” is actually a combination of his English and Cherokee names. Like many children of wealthy Cherokee planter families, Watie grew up bilingual and received a Western-style education from local Christian missionaries. At the time, the Cherokee Nation was considered by many Anglo-Americans as one of the “Five Civilized Nations,” along with the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee and Seminole, for their adoption of certain Western cultural customs such as centralized government, agriculture, Christianity, ability to speak English, as well as the use of African slavery (the Cherokee, of course, had been practicing agriculture for centuries before Europeans arrived in North America, and they were far from the only Native group to do so). This did mean, however, that these tribes had close diplomatic relations with the United States government, and existed as semi-sovereign nations for many years.

Under the threat of Indian Removal and increasing harassment from local state militias, Watie and several other tribal members helped to negotiate the Treaty of New Echota with the United States, which confirmed Cherokee relocation to Indian Territory, now modern-day Oklahoma. Watie’s party represented only a minority of the Nation, and their actions caused an enormous rift between them and the majority that opposed any relocation, represented by Principal Chief John Ross. The treaty was ratified in the U.S. Senate, and the Cherokee were ordered to leave their ancestral lands in what became known as the Trail of Tears.

Once settled in Indian Territory, the partisan divides between the Cherokee continued. Watie was actually one of the few treaty party members who was not assassinated in the years between Removal and the Civil War. The issue of slavery and support for the Union or Confederacy also divided the Cherokee along the same lines: John Ross and his allies supported the Union, and included fervent traditionalists who supported abolitionism, while Watie and his fellow planters supported the Confederacy to protect their investment in slaves. Watie joined the Confederate army in 1861, earning a commission as colonel in what became the 1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles. Violence between the two sides caused Ross and many of his supporters to flee to Union-occupied areas in 1862, leaving those that remained to elect Watie as Principal Chief.

Watie spent much of the war in Indian Country, attacking both Union soldiers as well as the Cherokee and other Indian partisans that supported them. He and his men also took part in the battles of Wilson’s Creek and Pea Ridge, where they were mainly used as scouts and skirmishers, which remained their general expertise. Watie himself was often noted for his personal valor by many of his peers, and was promoted to Brigadier General in 1864. General Watie was actually the last Confederate commander to cease field operations, surrendering in June of 1865.

After the war, Watie returned to his home in Indian Territory, where John Ross, who the Union had continued to recognize as Principal Chief, ran the nation once again. Fortunately, Ross’ successor, Lewis Downing, made a concerted effort to heal the divide that had plagued the nation for so long. As for Watie, he returned to his life as a planter, and used much of his wealth to engage in many other business ventures until his death in 1871. He is buried in Polson’s cemetery in Delaware County, Oklahoma.

The CRT-NY proudly presents the nominees for 2023 – 2024

Civil War Round Table NY Slate 2023 – 2024

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Answer:

Capt. Van Buskird at six feet, ten and one-half inches. The shortest man stood at three feet, four inches (a private in the 192 Ohio).

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

AT APPOMATTOX

By Carl Holiday

What shall we say? Was it at last defeat
That leader of the weary army gained?
When those two knights of North and South did meet
Upon that final field with blood so stained,
Was one the vanquished, one the victor there?
O patriots, no; on that sad day of peace
There was no sign of conquest anywhere,
But only two great hearts content to cease
The strife and live at peace, the battle done.
And who was greater of the twain that day?
Ah, ask not that. One lost, the other won;
Each followed his ideal all the way.
It matters little if we win not goals,
But much how goals are kept before our souls

From: *discoverpoetry.com*

