

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 67, No. 9

620th Meeting

May 2018



• Guest:
**Fletcher Pratt Award
Winner Ron Chernow
for Grant**

• Cost:
**Members: \$50
Non-Members: \$60**

• Date:
**Monday,
May 14th**

• Place:
**The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street**

• Time:
**Dinner at 6:00 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm**

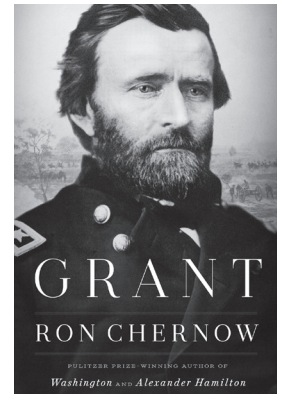
*You must call
718-341-9811 by
May 7th if you
plan to attend the
May meeting.*

*We need to know how
many people to order
food for.*

Fletcher Pratt Award Winner **Ron Chernow for Grant**

Ron Chernow, our Fletcher Pratt Literary Award winner is a writer, journalist, historian, and biographer. He has written bestselling and award-winning biographies of historical figures from the world of business, finance, and American politics.

He won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography and the 2011 American History Book Prize for *Washington: A Life*. He is also the recipient of the National Book Award for Nonfiction for *The House of Morgan*. His biographies of Alexander Hamilton (2004) and John D. Rockefeller (1998) were both nominated for National Book Critics Circle Awards, while the former served as the inspiration for the *Hamilton* musical, for which Chernow worked as a historical advisor.



Joe Hooker's Plan of Certain Destruction

Nevertheless, morale remained high in Confederate ranks, the supplies sent by Longstreet improved their rations, and the elaborate network of trenches they held along twenty-five miles of the Rappahannock near Fredericksburg gave them confidence that they could hold off any number of Yankees. But Hooker had no intention of assaulting those trenches. Having reinvigorated the Army of the Potomac after the Burnside disasters, he planned a campaign of maneuver to force Lee into the open for a showdown fight. Brash and boastful, Hooker reportedly said, "God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none."

For a few days at the end of April, Hooker seemed ready to make good his boast. He divided his large army into three parts. Ten thousand blue horsemen splashed across the Rappahannock far upstream and headed South to cut Lee's supply lines. Seventy thousand Northern infantry also marched upriver to cross at fords several miles beyond Lee's left flank, while another 40,000 feigned an advance at Fredericksburg to hold Lee in place while

the flanking force pitched into his left and rear. The Army of the Potomac carried out these complicated maneuvers swiftly. By the evening of April 30 Hooker had his 70,000 infantry near a crossroads mansion called Chancellorsville, nine miles west of Fredericksburg in the midst of a dense second-growth forest called locally the Wilderness. For once the Yankees had stolen a march on Lee and seemed to have the outnumbered rebels gripped in an iron pincers. "our enemy must ingloriously fly," declared Hooker in a congratulatory order to his men, "or come out from behind his defenses and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him."

Despite his nickname of Fighting Joe, Hooker seemed to have expected – and hoped – that Lee would "ingloriously fly" rather than "give us battle." When Lee instead showed fight, Hooker mysteriously lost his nerve. Perhaps his resolve three months earlier to go on the wagon had been a mistake, for he seemed at this moment to need some liquid courage. Or perhaps a trait noted but a fellow officer in the old army had surfaced again: "Hooker could play the best game of poker I ever saw until it came to the point where he should go a thousand better, and then

continued on page 4

2018 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2018

• **Monday June 11th** •

Patrick Schroeder

*The Appomattox Campaign:
Lee's retreat...Grant's Pursuit*

• **Wednesday September 12th** •

Ed Bearss

Ask Ed Anything

• **Wednesday October 10th** •

TBA

President's Message

The next meeting will be one of the highlights of the year, with the presentation of the Fletcher-Pratt Award to Ron Chernow, for his engaging biography of Union General and then President, Ulysses Simpson Grant.

In addition to adeptly covering one of the most discussed generals at our Round Table, Mr. Chernow has written comprehensive historical works on the lives of financial titans like John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and the J. P. Morgan family, as well as Revolutionary War figures Alexander Hamilton, and another general turned president, George Washington.

That is part of what marks the historiography in this book (in a campaign as comprehensive as the plan to take Vicksburg), to properly portray a man without whom we might very well have lost our United States.

Mr. Chernow serves as a member of the Board of American Historians. In 2006, he was selected as president of the Board of Trustees of the PEN American Center, succeeding novelist Salman Rushdie. The PEN American Center works to defend literary expression and foster international literary fellowship.

Now let us not forget the upcoming tour of one of the most under-representative marvels of New York history, Green-Wood Cemetery.

Date: Saturday, May 19, 2018

Time: 1:00 pm

Place: Green-Wood Cemetery - located on 25th Street and 5th Avenue in Brooklyn.

We will assemble at the cemetery gates before 1:00 pm where there will be plenty of free parking available. For information and to make reservations, please call my office at 718-238-6500 and ask for Monica.

MICHAEL N. CONNORS

61st ANNUAL BATTLEFIELD TOUR

Join Us As We Conclude Our Journey With...

The Appomattox Campaign: Lee's Retreat...Grant's Pursuit!

Thursday to Sunday, October 11-14, 2018

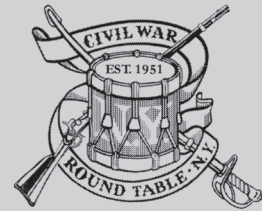
This year the Round Table will conclude its four-year Virginia journey as we travel the bloody roads South to RICHMOND, PETERSBURG AND—FINALLY—APPOMATTOX! The Round Table's 61st Annual Tour Guides include MIKE GORMAN from the Richmond National Battlefield and PATRICK SCHROEDER AND ERNIE PRICE from the Appomattox National Battlefield. They will complete the dramatic story of April 1865 as we walk in the actual footsteps of Lincoln, Grant, Lee and the hundred thousand soldiers who fought, died and suffered to bring peace to the greatest conflict in American history.

To Reserve Your Place:

Send your \$100 check (made out to "CWRTNY") and your complete contact information with your home phone number, cell phone, home address and email address to: Martin Smith/CWRTNY Tour, 158 West 81 Street #24, New York, NY 10024.

As a reminder, we need you to make reservations a week before the meeting - we must notify the 3 West Club at least 48 hours (business days only) before the meeting. Because we now meet on Mondays, there is no window if you call us the weekend before. Also, if you don't show up for the meeting after making a reservation and we have called in a certain number, we may have to pay for your dinner anyway, So from now on, we're going to charge the guest rate - \$60 - if you fail to make a reservation, and if you have a pattern of not fulfilling your reservations, we may ask you to pay for dinner. Now, we understand emergencies - illness, transportation problems, etc. We just ask that you let us know as soon as possible - that might allow us to fit in a late reservation. A little consideration would eliminate some of the guesswork we're required to use every month.

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May During the Civil War

1861

26 – MG George Brinton McClellan orders three Federal columns into Western Virginia to protect the Baltimore and Ohio RR and aid pro-Unionists in that area. This aggressive action sets a pattern for his future actions. Sure.

31 – Federal troops arrive at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas after abandoning posts in the Indian Territory. The trail they followed was forever designated after one of their scouts, named Chisholm.

1862

20 – With Southern obstructionists absent, Congress passes, and the president signs, the Homestead Act, which builds up the West, giving settlers a free plot of 60 acres which they must occupy and improve.

24 – The president writes to his leading general that Banks' position is critical (because of Jackson) and McDowell's movement to join him must be suspended. This gives Little Mac another excuse for his delays and failures on the Peninsula considering he was undermanned at more than 100,000 troops. Sure.

1863

3 – A single shell changes the course of the war as Joe Hooker is concussed by its impact. Darius Couch, although not in full command, withdraws Joe's beaten troops toward U.S. Ford, reluctantly following Hooker's retrograde orders.

18 – The famous siege of Vicksburg begins and will last until the Fourth of July, a holiday that the city will not celebrate for decades to come.

1864

7 – Uncle Billy Sherman moves against Joe Johnston and heads into the interior of the Peach State in order to make it howl.

11 – Yellow Tavern: Jeb Stuart is lost for the Confederates.



English Enfields in Confederate Service

This article was first published in *American Rifleman*, May 1999

In 1861, Howell Cobb of Georgia stood on the floor of the United States Senate and spoke with the full attention of those present to hear him. "We can beat you Yankees even if we are armed with cornstalks." And with these words Senator Cobb and the rest of the Georgia delegation in the U. S. Congress resigned their seats and headed south to take up arms against all those who would dare challenge Georgia's constitutional right to secede from the Union. Despite the distinguished senator's words, Georgia and the young Confederacy that the state had joined were going to need more than cornstalks to repel the Yankee armies descending upon Richmond and other key cities throughout the South.

The Confederacy was fortunate in being home to a number of U.S. armories and arsenals that yielded guns destined for the thousands of men flocking to the Stars and Bars in 1861. It was soon apparent, however, that the supplies of arsenals, state militias and personal firearms would not be enough to sustain a prolonged war against the industrial North.

Caleb Huse, a native Northerner with Southern leanings, accepted a commission from the Confederate government and became a purchasing agent with instructions to buy up all the arms in England and Europe that could be of use to the Confederacy. Huse set sail immediately to secure the finest rifles in current use anywhere in the world. He was headed for London, England, and the offices of the London Armoury Company, the makers of the Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle.

The Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle musket was then the standard arm of the British army, a 577 cal. muzzle-loading rifle. It weighed 8 lbs. 15 ounces, without the triangular socket bayonet attached.

The P53 saw service with British troops in every corner of the globe and quickly became the standard by which all other firearms were measured.

Once in England, Huse found that the factories of the London Armoury Co. were engaged in fulfilling a contract for the British government

and a small contract for the state of Massachusetts. Huse contracted to receive all the rifles that the London Armoury Co. could produce during the following three years once the firm's prior commitments were satisfied. Undaunted, Huse then set out to secure the services of the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield and all of the small arms contractors in London and Birmingham regions. He literally beat the North's agents by only hours in their attempts to buy up the surplus arms in England.

Purchasing agents working for the United States were ordered to purchase all the arms in England and Belgium in an effort to dry up the market that the Confederates were hoping to corner. The Northerners' efforts were wasted: Between 1861 and 1865 some 500,000 firearms of all types were shipped to the Confederacy from Europe, and another 400,000 were shipped to the United States and to Northern state governments.

Huse's initial efforts resulted in the purchase of 3,500 rifles from English firms during the summer of 1861. These guns were loaded on the 700-ton, iron-screw steamer *Bermuda*. On August 22, 1861, the *Bermuda* steamed from Falmouth and ran the Union blockade, arriving in Savannah, Georgia, on September 18, 1861. These were the first rifles to reach Confederate soil since the beginning of the war.

With the two main rifle factories in England busy fulfilling government contracts for the British Army, Huse was forced to turn to the smaller contractors to fulfill his needs. He turned to the rifle makers in and around the cities of London and Birmingham. It is important to note that England, the home of the industrial revolution, was not as industrially advanced as America at the time. Few factories were producing goods on what we would now call the 'assembly-line' process. In fact, the assembly line process and the concept of inter-changeable parts were pioneered by Eli Whitney and in use in American armories as early as 1841. By the 1860 only the government factory at Enfield and the London Armoury Co. were using standard gauges for the production of firearms.

Thanks to Ron Fish for this article

continued from page 1

he would flunk.” Whatever the reason, when Lee called his bet on May 1, Hooker gave up the initiative to the boldest of gamblers in the deadliest of games.

Guessing correctly that the main threat came from the Union troops at Chancellorsville, Lee left only 10,000 infantry under feisty Jubal Early to hold the Fredericksburg defenses, and put the rest on the march westward to the Wilderness on May 1. At mid-day they clashed with Hooker’s advance units a couple of miles east of Chancellorsville. Here the dense undergrowth gave way to open country where the Federals’ superior weight of numbers and artillery gave them an edge. But instead of pressing the attack, Hooker ordered his troops back to a

defensive position around Chancellorsville – where the thick woods evened these odds. Thunderstruck, Union corps commanders protested but obeyed. Years later General Darius Couch of the 2nd corps wrote that when Hooker informed him “that the advantages gained by the successive marches of his lieutenants were to culminate in fighting a defensive battle in that nest of thickets...I retired from his presence with the belief that my commanding general was a whipped man.”

And then Stuart brought reports from his scouts that Hooker’s right flank was “in the air, three miles west of Chancellorsville.” The rest, as we know, is history.

From *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James McPherson

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