



THE CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



P.O. Box 14871, Albany, NY 12212

www.AlbanyCivilWar.org

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BATTLE FLAGS ENDANGERED BY TIME, NATURE AND NEW YORK STATE



Pictured above is the logo for the flag preservation project which is in its tenth year. About one-quarter of the flags have been conserved, but the project is jeopardized by the financial condition of the state. If the project is 'temporarily' suspended, the remaining flags will continue to deteriorate until funding is restored - - - if it is ever restored.

The regimental flag of the 125th NYVI has been conserved. As we begin to celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the state has it within its power to display treasures, like this flag, in relatively inexpensive exhibits. Will NYS do what numerous other states in the same economic climate are doing, or will we just forgo this historical time?

**MARCH MEETING
FRIDAY, MARCH 15TH**

**A BANNER DECADE:
Ten Years of the New York State
Battle Flag Preservation Project**

**Guiderland Public Library
Western Ave. (Route 20) Guiderland**

Social Hour	6:00 pm-7:00 pm
Business Meeting	7:00 pm-7:30 pm
Presentation	7:30 pm-8:30 pm
Q&A	8:30 pm-9:30 pm

CDCWRT MEETING

The next meeting of the CDCWRT will be on Friday, March 15, 2010 at the Guiderland Public Library. Our special guest speaker is Christopher Morton, who had spoken to the Round Table on several occasions over the past ten years. His topic for tonight is entitled: "A Banner Decade: Ten Years of the New York State Battle Flag Preservation Project."

In 2000, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) initiated a preservation campaign and developed plans for archival long-term housing of the New York State Battle Flag Collection administered by the Division of Military & Naval Affairs (DMNA). This inter-agency partnership, known as the New York State Battle Flag Preservation Project, is responsible for the flag collection's conservation, storage, research, and interpretation. 2010 marks the tenth anniversary of the Flag Project.

Over the last decade, OPRHP textile conservators from the Peebles Island Resource Center, with assistance from the Flag Project curator, have preserved and placed into temporary storage over 500 flags from the collection and have provided educational and interpretive services for the interested public. Christopher Morton, the Flag Project curator, will discuss the history of the Battle

Flag Collection and highlight the Flag Project's accomplishments to date while showcasing a number of interesting and historic flags from the collection.

Christopher Morton, Assistant Curator at the New York State Military Museum, is curator for the New York State Battle Flag Preservation Project. Morton received his Master's degree in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany in 1996 and has been working with the collection since 1998.

BOARD MEETING

A Board Meeting of the CDCWRT was held on February 15th. The treasurer reported \$1664.81 in the regular checking account. There was \$6852.04 in the preservation account. CDCWRT support for the Underground Railroad Conference February 26-28 will be in the form of a \$300 full page ad. The Board also approved a \$500 donation in memory of Joe Stracuzzi to CWPT for purchase of the Snyder Farm. This is a 5:1 match. Melanie Stracuzzi will be notified of the donation. Plans for upcoming events were also discussed.

DUES! DUES! DUES!

This will be the last announcement for annual dues. Don't allow your name to be placed on the inactive list and miss your newsletters.

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly.

Friday, April 9, 2010 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. The speaker will be Willie Runk who will talk about the Garibaldi Guard. The first part of the presentation will be a first person presentation as an officer in the Guard, followed by a power point presentation of the Guard's history and an explanation of the uniforms. Willie will also cover the court-martial of the colonel of the Guard, a scoundrel only rivaled by Dan Sickles.

Sunday, May 2, 2010 is the Ten Broeck Mansion Living History Day. The CDCWRT has

participated in this event the past several years. Various groups will be present to demonstrate and talk about 19th Century activities. There will be tours of the Mansion also. This event and the Mansion are under-appreciated gems, and deserve community support and attendance.

Friday, May 14, 2010 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Kate Larson will present a program entitled, "Mary Surratt – An Accomplice to John Wilkes Booth."

Friday, June 11, 2010 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Patrick Schroeder, historian at Appomattox Court House, will return to present a living history program entitled, "George Peers, County Clerk of Appomattox."

July 2010 – no meeting scheduled

August 2010 – CDCWRT picnic – date to be determined.

Friday, September 10, 2010 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. The speaker will be our own resident historian, Bob Mulligan. Bob will present his first person portrayal of Corporal Tanner, who was the recorder of events in the Petersen House the day Lincoln died.

Friday, October 8, 2010 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Chris Kelly will present a program entitled, "The Civil War Art of Thomas Nast and Winslow Homer."

TRIP CANCELLED

The one-day March trip to New York City to tour the Lincoln exhibit with Lincoln-author, Harold Holzer, as you personal tour guide has been cancelled because of inadequate numbers. Only 13 members expressed interest in the trip in spite of adequate advance publicity and publicity sent to local historical societies and educators. A minimum of 30 attendees were needed.

FEBRUARY'S MEETING

CDCWRT members who braved a windy, wintry night to attend our February 12th meeting enjoyed author Anita Sanchez's lively power point presentation *Mr. Lincoln's Chair – The Shaker Quest for Peace*.

The Shakers, a religious sect originating in 18th century England migrated to the United States in the 1770s. In succeeding decades the Shakers attracted enough followers to have established communities in several states.

Individuals who became Shakers relinquished their wealth and possessions, lived apart in Shakers communities, and in an effort to emulate Heaven, sought perfection in all they did. Creative, industrious and innovative, the Shakers were successful businessmen selling such diverse products as herbal medicines, seeds in packets, woven baskets and furniture, well known for their high quality. By the time of the Civil War the Shaker sect had reached its apogee.

Practicing celibacy, pacifism, equality of men and women and accepting blacks as members, the Shakers stood apart from the 19th century mainstream. Both men and women lived together in the community, but contact between sexes was strictly limited. They worshipped together in one meeting house, but entered and left by separate doors. Expressive dancing of choreographed movements and song were the integral parts of their worship services.

When the Civil War erupted, the pacifist Shakers remained uninvolved. However with the coming of the draft in 1863, Shaker men of eligible age began to be conscripted in spite of their beliefs. Henry Blinn, who had joined the Canterbury, NH Shaker community as a 14 year old, was a single 38 year old man in August 1863 when he and three other Shaker men were drafted. A prolific diarist, Blinn left a detailed narrative of his encounter with the doctors who examined him in Concord, NH. His height and other physical characteristics were noted, then his teeth inspected, eyes checked, and to his discomfort, next he was told to undress. Nudity, being abhorrent to a Shaker, caused Blinn to object firmly, and fortunately the examining doctor allowed him to be only partially unclothed to complete the examination. Blinn and one of the other Shaker men were told they were conscripts, but were allowed to return to their community for a short furlough.

The possibility that Blinn and other Shaker men would be forced to fight, aroused Shaker Elders to take action. Elder Frederick Evans of the New Lebanon, NY community, a Shaker who had much experience in

dealing with the outside world, and another Elder traveled to Washington, DC to meet with President Lincoln, seeking to establish that Henry Blinn and other Shaker men were conscientious objectors who should not be forced to fight by reason of their religious beliefs.

Lincoln, who was accessible to most people who sought to see him, allowed them into his White House office. A very articulate man, Evans not only expressed to the president the philosophical basis of their beliefs, but shrewdly brought up the practical matter that many Shakers had once served in the army before becoming Shakers, then never claimed the pensions to which they were entitled. In fact, by his calculations, the government owed the Shakers \$1,032,873.77 for back pension payments if they should decide to press their claims. In addition, they presented Lincoln with a petition respectfully stating their views.

Lincoln after consideration of their petition and possibly the effect of the Shakers pressing for their pensions eventually decreed that the Shakers, conscientious objectors by reason of their pacifist beliefs, were no longer to be drafted. The grateful Shakers responded by sending Lincoln the gift of a fine chair, made with typical Shaker simplicity and perfection. It is conjectured today that this chair was probably the most expensive model sold to the public, a Shaker rocking chair. Lincoln's response for the gift was a letter to the Shakers thanking them "for the very comfortable chair." The thank you letter still survives in the Shaker Museum and Library in Old Chatham, NY but there is no record of what happened to the chair. During the Victorian era, homes including the White House were cluttered with elaborate interior decoration where the simplicity of a Shaker chair would have been out of place. It was only in the 20th century that we learned to admire the simplicity and perfection of a Shaker chair and the Shakers' courage to fight for their beliefs by questioning the government's authority.

This excellent summary of the meeting was provided by our secretary, Mary Ellen Johnson.

GRANT AND TWAIN

The Story of an American Friendship

This is part two of a summary of Mark Perry's book on U.S. Grant and Mark Twain.

How did Twain and Grant become friends?

Twain and Grant had much in common. Both grew up on the frontier, both failed in their fathers' expectations, and both struggled to find their ways. They were just boys with dreams, and the people of both Galena and Hannibal hoped that their boys would not embarrass the towns as they grew up.

Twain and Grant first met at a White House reception in the winter of 1866, but they did not exchange any words. Both remembered the handshake and commented on it at their second meeting, again at the White House, during the first term of Grant's presidency. Twain greeted the President politely, and then stood awkwardly, searching for something to talk about. Twain later recounted, "I shook hands and then there was a pause and silence. I couldn't think of anything to say. So I merely looked at the General's grim, immovable countenance a moment or two in silence and then I said, Mr. President, I am embarrassed. Are you? He smiled a smile which would have done no discredit to a cast-iron image and I got away under the smoke of my volley."

In 1876, Twain, now famous, was asked to prepare a toast to honor Grant at the Palmer House in Chicago. Grant had returned a hero from a world tour that had been a kind of exile after his presidency. His critics noted he spent much time trying to take his foot out of his mouth. Twain wanted to break Grant's iron demeanor. Twain recalled a time in infancy when the future commander in chief gave his entire attention to "trying to find some way to get his big toe into his mouth." The audience was stunned. Twain broke the embarrassing silence by finishing with a flourish. "And if the child is but the father of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt that he succeeded." The crowd roared; Grant's iron demeanor collapsed.

From this time on the two worked diligently to cement their friendship. They stayed in close touch, and when Grant moved to NYC, Twain visited him frequently. They took long walks and discussed the war and their lives. During a visit to Grant's home in 1881, Twain first suggested that Grant must write his memoirs. The general would not listen to the suggestion, but that was three years before the bankruptcy. After the failure, Twain was saddened by Grant's fall. Twain knew it was not the monetary loss, but the blow to Grant's pride that he had been pretended to be one of

the Wall Street barons, and now could not face those whom he admired.

When did Grant start writing, and when did he become ill?

On June 2, 1884 the Grant's were vacationing at Long Branch on the Jersey Shore, where they had gone regularly since 1869. Many of the wealthy went there as did subsequent Presidents Hayes, Garfield, Harrison and McKinley. Garfield died there of his wounds in 1881. Grant bit into a peach and had a sudden, severe, sharp pain in his throat that subsided after a second bite. The pain returned with increased frequency with eating and in mid July was examined by Dr. Jacob Da Costa, who was vacationing next door. Da Costa recommended he see a throat specialist in NYC immediately. Because his family doctor, Fordyce Barker, was on vacation in Europe, Grant delayed and the pain subsided.

Meantime Richard Watson Gilder (senior editor of Century Magazine), Robert Underwood Johnson (associate editor) and Roswell Smith (president of Century) had been working on a 3 year project to have Civil War participants write article that would later be put into a 3-volume set. The series would become very popular, but plans were lagging at the time, and they felt that Grant's participation would spark cooperation. Grant had turned them down in 1884 when approached about a single article. Grant said that Adam Badeau had written a highly successful 3volume set, *The Military History of Ulysses S. Grant*.

Johnson visited Grant again at Long Branch in June 1884 and was surprised that Grant spoke candidly about his financial situation. Johnson suggested Grant write 4 articles on Shiloh, Vicksburg, The Wilderness and Appomattox. Century would pay Grant \$500 per article. His initial 4 page account was a battle report and was flat with no color. Johnson suggested it was not to be a report but like a story for someone who had never heard about Shiloh. Grant plunged into his work and by the end of August his article was clear, very readable and filled with human anecdotes. At times his prose was almost electrifying. His articles made the Century series one of the most popular magazine series in his or any time.

In September, Johnson once again raised the issue of a memoir with Grant. This time Grant was interested.

Smith suggested the book should sell by subscription, and he was confident that Century would get the book. In October Grant finally saw Dr. Barker who referred the general to Dr. John Hancock Douglas, the foremost specialist on the East Coast. Douglas had discovered a remedy for scurvy during the war (sauerkraut and pickles). His exam of Grant revealed a small inflamed growth at the base on the tongue. He truthfully answered Grant's question. "Is it cancer?"

The carcinoma Douglas knew would spread into the neck making it impossible for Grant to eat and then breathe. It could not be treated, and Grant would die in excruciating pain. Comfort care was all that was possible. Topical cocaine was applied with immediate relief. The President was to return twice a week for topical Iodoform, a derivative of chloroform, as a disinfectant to treat the infection in the inflamed tonsil.

Grant left the doctor's office and went directly to Century Co. and told Smith he wanted them to publish his book. Smith told Grant the company would offer him a 10% royalty with an expected sale of 25,000 copies. Grant did not object, and Smith began to work on a final agreement. In November, Dr. Douglas took a frozen biopsy to Dr George Shrady, a noted microbiologist. Shrady agreed with the diagnosis and the prognosis of much less than one year. Shrady had been called into the treatment of President Garfield and Frederick III of Germany. Grant and Shrady became close friends and was allowed to study the course of Grant's disease. In a discussion with Grant, the general had said the more brutal the war, the more quickly it could be completed. It was always the idea to do it with the least suffering on the same principle as the performance of a severe and necessary operation. Shrady immediately agreed. Since that was his philosophy in treating Grant. At key moments in the months ahead, Shrady would sometime refuse to treat Grant, hoping that it would more quickly bring about his death, thereby putting an end to his suffering. Grant understood this perfectly, and accepted the discipline.

Grant contacted his old aide and biographer, Adam Badeau to help on his memoirs and agreed to pay Badeau \$5000 out of the first \$20,000 the book earned and then \$5000 out of the next \$10,000.

EDITORIAL

Like many historians, I am dismayed by the loss in funding for the Flag Preservation Project. New York provided the largest number of soldiers to the Union cause in the Civil War. The flags of its proud regiments and many flags of the vanquished Confederate regiments became the property of the State. The State kept many of its regimental flags furled and in display cases in the Capitol in Albany, and over the decades they have steadily deteriorated to bits and dust in the bottom of the cases.

About 10 years ago a letter to the Times Union complained about the condition of the flags. With the increased interest in the Civil War in the 1990's this caught the public's attention. The State claimed budgetary constraints limited restoration of the flags. The Sons of Confederate Veterans offered the State \$350,000 to be used for preservation on the condition the Confederate flags in the collection be returned. The State absolutely refused the offer, calling it a stunt. This appeared somewhat schizophrenic since just a little earlier the New York Legislature had gotten into a shouting match with South Carolina, Mississippi and Georgia over the Confederate battle flag in those states' flags.

In 2000, at a time when many states were investing millions in Civil War preservation activities, the NYS Assembly appropriated \$175,000 to help preserve the nation's largest collection of Civil War flags. The Senate did not match it because preserving the flags was not a priority. Embarrassed into responding, the Senate matched the figure and \$350,000 was made available.

Fast forward to today. The Flag Project is in its 10th year. Over 500 flags (25% of the collection) have now been conserved with an annual funding of \$100,000. Let me state that again --- \$100,000 annually. If the deficit is \$8.2 billion, then the flag budget is about one one-hundred thousandth of that. If a one dollar bill represented the deficit, it would take one hundred and twenty thousand pennies to equal that. The flag budget is one of those pennies.

With the reconciliation that occurred in the late 19th Century, many northern states returned their captured Confederate flags. New York did not. In the late 1990's the state had an opportunity to "sell" its

Confederate flags to raise funds to conserve other flags, but it did not. The state embarked on a conservation program for its flags committing a mere \$100,000 a year during the economic boon of the 7-10 years ago and could have quadrupled its efforts easily, but did not. This year we could have been celebrating the conservation of the last flag in the collection, but we will not.

Some of these flags are stained with the blood of Civil War Veterans. They are "remains" as much as they are artifacts, or objects of historical interest. The Office of Veterans' Affairs has spent millions to repatriate fragments of a veteran. I submit leaving the flags to deteriorate in a closet in the hall of the Capitol is like leaving the corpse of a veteran to disintegrate in the Capitol. It seems that the governor and legislators are simply stepping over the remains of the dead who in some cases were recipients of the Medal of Honor.

Last fall we appropriately gave the remains of a Civil War veteran the kind of honor he earned at Antietam in 1862. In the same time frame the farcical power ploy in the Senate that shut down the State, cost the State much more in wasted money than the annual flag budget. For every year we delay, the flags deteriorate, especially the silk regimental flags. Some are nothing more than fragments. They will continue to deteriorate while the State continues in its financial woes. And should NYS miraculously be in the black five years from now, I am not confident that money will again be allocated to finish the Flag Project.

NYS needs to continue the \$100,000 yearly funding for the preservation of these sacred relics. That is the State's debt owed to the veterans of the past, and that is the State's obligation to future generations even if there is not yet a facility in which to display the flags or make them available to the general public to view. If the State continues to ignore and dishonor these artifacts, then perhaps it is time for the State to open negotiations with private collectors or the Sons of Confederate Veterans to sell some of the collection to preserve the rest. Conversely, Civil War groups can ask the Veterans Administration for their help in acquiring these artifacts from NYS for either appropriate preservation or interment as the veterans' families determine.

From: Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant
To: CDCWRT members
Re: Dues for the 2010 calendar year – Final Notice

As reported in January, the Army of the Potomac has now crossed the Rappahannock River and has moved into the Wilderness. The pontoon bridges were cut loose after that little scrap with “Bobbie Lee”. That showed the men that I am not like that fop, Hooker. While I generally respect civilian property, unlike Billy Sherman, I did order my massed artillery to shell the future parking lot of that Super Wal-Mart they are planning on building near the Wilderness. Perhaps the threat of unexploded ordinance will give those rascals something to think about.

Your support of the Army of the Potomac is crucial. General Halleck in Washington continues to divert supplies to the forts surrounding Washington. If this continues, I may just have to remove most of those heavy artillery regiments from those forts just to preserve the rations.

I am asking you to please pay your CDCWRT dues of \$25.00 that were due in the month of January. This will allow the Army of the Potomac to purchase stamps for mailings and to continue publishing this fine newsletter.

While I am not ordering you to pay your dues, those NOT paid in March, can expect orders transferring them to the commands of Judson Kilpatrick or Robert Milroy, where there will be absolutely no communications with headquarters. Send your \$25.00 to:

**CDCWRT
PO Box 14871
Albany, NY 12212 or bring it to the meeting and save 44-cents.**

If you desire instant communication with headquarters and do not want to wait for telegraph, wig-wag or snail mail, PRINT your name and e-mail address below and return it with your dues. This will save CDCWRT 44-cents each newsletter.

NAME: _____
e-mail: _____

CDCWRT
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Created in 1984, the Capital District Civil War Round Table is an incorporated non-profit educational organization. Meetings are held monthly in various locations in the Capital District. This newsletter is published eleven times per year. Annual dues are \$25. The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.

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