



The Dispatch
Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.AlbanyCivilWar.org



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RIOTING IN TROY ! FUGITIVE SLAVE ESCAPES ! TUBMAN REPORTEDLY INVOLVED

Artist – Mark Priest



**FEBRUARY MEETING
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2011
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY**

**Harriet Tubman and Charles
Nalle on the Eve of the
Civil War**

Social Hour	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Business Meeting	7:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Presentation	7:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Questions & Answers	8:30 – 9:00 p.m.
More Socializing	9:00 – 10:00 p.m.

CDCWRT MEETING

The February meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be on Friday, February 11th. This meeting will be held at the new trial location at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. For this meeting we will have not one but two presenters on the same topic about HARRIET TUBMAN AND CHARLES NALLE ON THE EVE OF THE CIVIL WAR. Dr. Kate Larson will talk about Harriet Tubman. Scott Christianson will talk about Charles Nalle.

Who was Charles Nalle? Some members may have viewed an art exhibit about Charles Nalle at the Rensselaer County Historical Society last year. It covered his epic rescue of Charles by Tubman and others on April 27, 1860 in Troy, New York.

Charles Nalle of Culpeper, Virginia was a fugitive slave from the Hansborough family in Culpepper, Virginia. He escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad and was living in Troy on the eve of the Civil War. Scott Christianson's book is an engaging narrative that represents the first in-depth historical study of this crucial

incident, one of the fiercest anti-slavery riots after Harpers Ferry.

Christianson also presents a richly detailed look at slavery culture in antebellum Virginia and probes the deepest political and psychological aspects of this epic tale. His account underscores fundamental questions about racial inequality, the rule of law, civil disobedience, and violent resistance to slavery in the antebellum North and South.

Scott Christianson, Ph.D. is an author, scholar, journalist and human rights advocate. He grew up in New England and New York State. He is a graduate of Bethlehem High School, and in his twenties he worked for several newspapers. Scott was profiled as one of the top twenty investigative reporters.

He has written hundreds of articles for many papers and journals including The Nation, the Village Voice, the New York Times and the Washington Post. He is a graduate of the University of Connecticut, and obtained his Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Albany. As an academic, he has directed numerous research projects and has taught at several universities including the University at Albany, Union, R.P.I. and has lectured widely.

His book is entitled "Freeing Charles: The Struggle to Free a Slave on the Eve of the Civil War."

Kate Clifford Larson, PhD., is an historian and author of The Assassin's Accomplice: Mary Surratt and the Plot to Kill Abraham Lincoln (Basic Books, June 2008). With degrees from Simmons College and Northeastern University, and a doctorate in history from the University of New Hampshire, Larson specializes in 19th and 20th century United States Women's and African American History.

Dr. Larson is also a leading Harriet Tubman scholar and the author of Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero (Ballantine-One World, 2004), one of the first non-juvenile Tubman biographies published in six decades. She has been working as a

consultant and interpretive specialist for numerous museum, community, and public history initiatives related to Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in Maryland and New York. She has served as the consulting historian for the National Park Service's Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study, resulting in the introduction of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park Act, now awaiting approval in Congress.

Dr. Larson has been a guest instructor at numerous professional development workshops for teachers, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and Teaching American History programs, on the topics of American Slavery, the Underground Railroad, Abolition, and Harriet Tubman. She teaches at both Simmons College and Wheelock College in Boston.

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, March 11, 2011 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our speaker will be Jason Emerson and the title of his presentation will be "The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln's Widow." This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center.

Friday, April 8, 2011 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our speaker will be Maj. Joseph Scott of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He will speak on the topic of Lowe's balloons and their use during the Civil War. This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center.

Friday, April 8 & Saturday, April 9, 2011 is the Underground Railroad Conference which will be held at Russell Sage College in Troy, NY.

Saturday, April 16, 2011 is Civil War Living History Day sponsored by the Schenectady County Historical Society and the Schenectady County Public Library. It is from 10:00am to 4:00pm at the Society's Mabee Farm located in Rotterdam Junction.

Friday, May 13, 2011 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our scheduled speaker is Michael Aikey of the Military Heritage Museum at Saratoga. Mike's topic is based on an article he wrote for the New York Archives Magazine entitled "Father Abraham's Boys: The Union and New York sent its share of men to fight in the Civil War, but some of them were children."

Friday, June 10, 2011 is the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our speaker will be Patrick Schroeder, historian at the National Park at Appomattox. His presentation is entitled "The Fire Zouaves at Bull Run: Heroes or Humbugs?"

Saturday, August 20th and Sunday, August 21st are the dates for the Civil War Heritage Days at Schuyler Flatts.

November 4th and 5th are the dates for our conference on New York in the Civil War. Mark those new calendars now, so that we can have a 90% membership attendance!

BOARD MEETING

The January Board Meeting was held on January 17th. The treasurer reported \$1648.12 in the general account and \$4216 in the preservation account. Donations collected for the Sue Knost Memorial Fund will continue to be collected until the November 2011 conference in her memory. In view of this conference, there will be no bus trip this October.

The Sesquicentennial Committee has continued to grow with over 60 organizations or groups joining.

JANUARY MEETING

Our annual Potpourri Night was on tap for the fifty people who gathered at our new Watervliet meeting location. First on the program was Gene Gore describing the history of the 27th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, a regiment recruited in the autumn of 1861 in four western Massachusetts counties. Mustering in at Springfield, the men trained at nearby Camp Reed where in spite of the nearness to the Springfield Arsenal they were issued Enfield rifles. Early November saw the 980 men en route to New York City and Annapolis. There the 27th was assigned to the First Brigade of Burnside's Coast Division.

Early in 1862 the 27th left by sea, their destination North Carolina, where stormy weather forced the men to remain on board their ships for 24 days. When seas calmed they became part of an invasion force attacking Roanoke Island as part of the Union drive to control the North Carolina coast. Soon after, they took part in an expedition up the Neuse River to take New Bern. Sadly many soldiers became ill, among them Gene's great grandfather William Newman who succumbed to typhoid. The regiment was later involved with other expeditions to the interior, coming under siege for a time at Washington, North Carolina.

In 1863 the regiment was ordered to Newport News, VA, at that time becoming part of Butler's Army of the James. They were involved in actions on the Peninsula culminating in the Battle of Drewry's Bluff where the Federal troops were outflanked by Beauregard's forces. Caleb Tufts, Gene's great uncle, was captured there and sent first to Libby Prison and later Florence, SC, eventually returning home to Massachusetts. After this they were ordered to take part in the fighting at Cold Harbor and Petersburg. Their final assignment was to return to North Carolina for the duration of the war.

A three year regiment, the 27th saw men leave when their enlistment was up, but 230 members re-

enlisted and were with the regiment throughout all their actions and changes in location. Their record was a proud one with 390 deaths, 300 wounded and 300 discharged due to disability.

Dave Getty, whose family's ancestral roots in Gettysburg makes the prospect of a casino in that historic community a very personal issue, gave an up to the minute report on the status of the second casino proposal currently pending. Approval by a three person Pennsylvania commission seems likely in the near future. Unfortunately numerous local residents have been swayed by the promise of "jobs," while others, realizing the negative impact on historical tourism and local businesses, are firmly opposed. Dave reported that members of the local business community are pessimistic about their future if the casino is approved. Audience members were appalled, but as Dave pointed out, this is a Pennsylvania issue and outsiders have no say.

Steve Muller, who admits to an obsession with anything to do with the Monitor, briefly reported on his visit to the USS Monitor Center at the Maritime Museum in Newport News, VA where salvaged Monitor artifacts are on display: the turret, engine, drive shaft, guns, etc. They are being conserved to gradually remove the salt acquired during their lengthy immersion, but may be observed by museum visitors. For those of us who were really interested, he provided a slide show on his laptop after the program.

Steve's latest challenge is documenting which specific iron components, in particular the hull plates, were actually fabricated in Troy. Now in the process of researching various archives for letters or records detailing Troy's role in the Monitor's manufacture, he has found one letter referring to iron plates. But unfortunately whether it is a reference to the hull plates or to the iron belt plates, definitely known to have been produced in Troy, isn't clear. In correspondence with Erastus Corning, John Winslow, owner of Troy's Albany Iron Works, makes mention of the ship under construction but gives no specific details. Steve's research conclusion will be of importance to the record of

Troy's industrial history as well as the history of the Monitor.

Two exhibits attracted much attention. Carol Litrides' two 1864 letters were written by a 2nd Cavalry soldier who reported on June 1st "...I have seen the Elephant – but – I cannot tell you what he looked like it was beyond description..." In addition to displaying the originals, she had transcribed them and provided us with copies. Talk about serendipity...at a general auction she had purchased an inexpensive box of assorted items: an old cook book, Bible, photo album and a few other odds and ends. Later as she went through the box there were these two letters!

June Howe's great grandfather fortunately survived well into the 20th century, enabling him to actively participate in many regimental reunions of his regiment, the 121st NY. Not only did he attend regularly, but he had the foresight to save the reunion ribbons and printed minutes of each meeting. Ms. Howe had a large selection of these on display along with an oversized photograph of the 121st posing in front of their regimental battle monument at the time of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. In all it was an interesting evening with members enjoying socializing in our new meeting site.

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

DRIVING AND PARKING DIRECTIONS TO THE WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER

From the south: Take Interstate 787 north from Albany to exit 8 (Watervliet & Green Island). Turn left at the light on the exit ramp onto 23rd Street. Go 2 blocks to second traffic light and turn left onto Broadway. Go 0.4 miles and arrive at the Center on your right.

From the north: Take Interstate 787 south from

Cohoes to exit 8. Turn right onto 23rd Street, In one block at light, turn left onto Broadway as listed above.

From the west: Take any road that intersects 787 (Interstate 90, route 378, route 155, or route 7) and follow the above directions. Or take route 2 (Troy-Schenectady Rd) which become 19th Street into Watervliet, and turn right on Broadway before going over the bridge into Troy.

From the east: look across the river and go.

Parking Options for the Watervliet Senior Center.

There are three parking lots directly behind the Center, and there's another one across 1st Ave. just north of the Center. In addition, one street parking is available on Broadway, 1st Ave. and 15th St. Both these directions and the map are available under the "Meetings" section on our web-site:

[Http://capitaldistrictcivilwarroundtable.club.officelive.com/default.aspx](http://capitaldistrictcivilwarroundtable.club.officelive.com/default.aspx)

MISCELLANEOUS

C-SPAN3 (Time Warner channel 580) is carrying Civil War programming every Saturday at 6:00pm and 10:00pm and Sunday at 11:00am. Historiam Gary Gallagher has done some of the discussions.

DUES! DUES! DUES! DUES!

This is to remind the membership that annual dues of \$25 are payable in the month of January each year.

THE ROAD TO WAR – PART 4

We have covered what was happening in Charleston at the forts, and what was happening in Secretary of War, Floyd's political life. However other events were occurring in Washington that

added more conflicting opinions to this volatile situation. Floyd had been opposed to secession, but with his world collapsing around him, he became a strident supporter of secession.

To make matters worse, the ill Sec of State, Cass, came back to Washington to tell Buchanan that he felt it was important to reinforce Anderson. Cass was joined by the attorney general, Jeremiah Sullivan Black, and they convinced Buchanan to reinforce Anderson by expressing concern a Charleston mob could overwhelm the garrison and slaughter everyone. Buchanan called Floyd to his office and told him the plan had changed. Floyd was flabbergasted. Floyd argued against this but Buchanan would not be swayed --- UNTIL Floyd suggested they wait until Gen. Winfield Scott arrived in Washington'

Floyd left and told Trescot that he would chop off his hand before he would sign an order to reinforce Anderson. Trescot volunteered to write a letter to Gov. Gist and asked the governor to send a letter promising that the forts would be safe so long as Washington sent no reinforcements. Floyd liked the idea and so it came to pass. When Buchanan read Gist's letter it satisfied him that the worries of Cass and Black were misplaced. Buchanan also received a letter from South Carolina's most famous secessionist, Robert Barnwell Rhett warning, "If you send any more troops to Charleston Bay, it will be bloody."

Congress opened its session on December 3, 1860. Buchanan's message was intentionally lawyerly about property rights of the federal government in dealing with secessionists. He wanted all the emotion squeezed from it and hoped the lawyers and politicians could arrive at some solution. The House formed a Committee of 33 and the Senate a Committee of 13 to consider a variety of proposals. Discussions would drone on into 1861, and in early March, hours before Lincoln's inauguration they voted on several possible compromises. The most talked about would be the Crittenden Compromise after the respected Sen. John Crittenden of Kentucky.

On December 8th Buchanan met with 5 SC

congressmen who told him that when SC seceded in a few days, the state would send commissioners to Washington to arrange the transfer of the forts to the state. They also wanted to make certain the status of the forts would not change. But Buchanan was not candid with them. He did not tell them that he had no intention of turning over the forts. Only Congress could so act. He thought he was clever because they had promised no popular violence against the garrison and Anderson, and he had only promised to not send reinforcements IMMEDIATELY, leaving himself open he believed, to sending them in the future if he considered it necessary. While speaking to the delegation he was unaware that his government had just sent a man to Charleston on a mission that would alter forever any agreement the president may have had.

Winfield Scott was America's highest ranking soldier. He and Buchanan had a cool relationship going back at least to the Mexican War. As the election of 1860 approached, Scott wrote Buchanan that Lincoln's election seemed assured and that the secession of one or more states would follow. Scott named 9 southern forts that he considered at risk for capture. 6 had no garrisons at all and 3 were very undermanned.. Scott urged Buchanan to strengthen all 9 but there were only 5 available companies of soldiers or 250 men it might use.

Buchanan felt this was absurd. The numbers of men were too small to make any difference and Buchanan thought this would be seen by southerners as a form of coercion. Scott was plagued with bouts of diarrhea and stayed in NYC rather than Washington. He was isolated from events, but returned to Washington on December 12th. He met with Floyd and the two of them met with Buchanan two days later. Floyd argued that if troops were needed for Moultrie, they could easily be rushed from Fortress Monroe by the powerful naval steamer, Brooklyn.

On December 17th, the South Carolina convention met in Columbia. David Jamison

was chosen leader. In his opening remarks he said he trusted that their connection with the U.S. was over. He noted the North was jealous of the South, had become aggressive, and that every northern state had passed ordinances nullifying the federal fugitive slave laws. A few minutes later the convention passed a resolution to transfer to Charleston because of an outbreak of small pox. They arrived the next day, December 18th.

On December 20th the convention, without debate, voted for secession. There was frenzied celebration in the city with fireworks, bonfires, parades, cannon salutes and bell tolling.

FRANCIS PICKENS was born into one of South Carolina's most prominent families. His grandfather was a Revolutionary War general and his father was governor. Francis left college in his senior year and entered politics. During the 1832 nullification crisis he was asked if he was afraid of confrontation with Washington: "Fear! I was born insensible to fear!" In 1860 he was 55 yrs old, opinionated, often dogmatic, at times impulsive, and at other times hesitant with self-doubt. South Carolina had no political parties and the legislature chose the governor for a single 2-yr term as a pleasant little honor given to state leaders late in their careers. Pickens returned to South Carolina from an ambassadorship to Russia, and after the legislature took 4 days and 7 ballots to decide, Pickens was chosen governor on December 16th 1860. As the new governor of a soon to be seceded state, he was handed the duties performed by American presidents including the right to oversee foreign diplomacy as with the federal government.

Even before his inauguration, Pickens wrote a remarkable letter to his friend Buchanan that mirrored the new governor as bombastic and ill-informed. He stated that he had accurate information that the guns of the forts were now turned on the city. He requested permission from Buchanan to send a force of 25 men to take possession of Sumter to give a feeling of safety to the city. He stated this should be no problem since there were only 4 or 5 U.S. troops there. (Actually

almost everyone in the city knew there was only an ordnance sgt. and Lt. Snyder, the engineer). He closed with "If something of the kind be not done, I cannot answer for the consequences."

On December 20th the day South Carolina seceded, Trescot hand delivered the letter to Buchanan. The president read the letter and showed it to Trescot who was stunned and feared this letter might change Buchanan's position on the status of the forts. Trescot took a copy of the letter to Jefferson Davis and John Slidell, two of the Deep South's most respected senators. They were aghast. All 3 sent a telegram to Pickens asking him to withdraw the letter before Buchanan could respond. The governor agreed. Trescot followed up with a long letter to Pickens explaining in detail Buchanan's position on the forts.

But 2 days later Pickens wired Trescot because he had heard 13 men had arrived by train bound for Moultrie and they were part of 150 reinforcements being sent by Washington. Pickens demanded to know if Buchanan had any intentions of reinforcing the garrison or transferring any force from Moultrie to Sumter. "I want a clear answer on this immediately." Trescot went to Floyd who again confirmed no reinforcements were being sent.

Pickens remained jittery as rumors flew. The state legislature authorized 10 regiments be organized to resist any attempt by the U.S. government to coerce the state. This would include overt acts or even the intention to commit acts such as the government gathering troops together anywhere that MIGHT threaten South Carolina. But then came a report that the state arsenal in Columbia had several thousand old muskets, 34 cavalry pistols, 3 swords and 1580 sabers. Not much with which to go to war. On December 20th Pickens did authorize two steamboats (Nina and Clinch) carrying between 40-120 men to steam back and forth between Moultrie and Sumter each evening.

END PART 4

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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