



The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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




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June 2011

COL. ELMER E. ELLSWORTH RECRUITING FOR THE 11TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS – THE FIRE ZOUAVES

NEW YORK FIREMEN!

TO ARMS!!



TO ARMS!!

COMPANY E
ELEVENTH NEW YORK VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
FIRST FIRE ZOUAVES

are now forming in this city under the command of
COL ELMER E ELLSWORTH
late of the Chicago Zouave Cadets, and
LT COL NOAH L FARNHAM
assistant engineer, New York Fire Department.

Those interested in serving with this ELITE REGIMENT of
FIRE ZOUAVES are to inquire of H.A. Hermann or S.C. Grenan
at the following:
http: www.myrtle-avenue.com/firezou
or
NYCPres@aol.com or shamng@smperpa.net

J.W. WOODMAN, 107 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. CITY.



**JUNE MEETING
FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2011
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY**

**“The Fire Zouaves at Bull Run:
Heroes or Humbugs?”**

Patrick Schroeder

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 June meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be on Friday, June 10th. This meeting will be held at our new location at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. Our special guest speaker is author and historian at the National Park Service at Appomattox Court House, Patrick Schroeder, and his topic for discussion will be “The Fire Zouaves at Bull Run: Heroes or Humbugs?”

On April 15, 1861, Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to put down the rebellion. Elmer E. Ellsworth resigned his position in the War Department and went to New York City. There he quickly raised in 10 days the 11th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment (the “Fire Zouaves”) from the City’s volunteer firefighting companies, and returned to Washington as their colonel. “I want the New York Firemen,” Ellsworth said, “for there are no more effective men in the country, and none with whom I can do so much.” This regiment was one of the first to arrive in Washington. Ellsworth could have raised two regiments, but he had uniforms and equipment for only one

regiment. Ellsworth would be killed on May 24th in Alexandria, VA after removing a Confederate flag, but his regiment would be involved in the Battle of First Bull Run on July 21, 1861.

Schroeder was born January 1, 1968, at Fort Belvoir, VA, and was raised in Utica, New York, until he was 13. Patrick attended Stuarts Draft High School in Augusta County, VA. In the spring of 1990, he graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. in Historical Park Administration from Shepherd College, Shepherdstown, WV. He has a M.A. in Civil War History from Virginia Tech. From the summer of 1986-1993, Patrick worked as a seasonal living history interpreter at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. In 1993, he wrote “Thirty Myths About Lee’s Surrender,” which is currently in its twelfth printing. From 1994–1999, he was employed at Red Hill, the Patrick Henry National Memorial. Patrick has written, edited and/or contributed to more than twenty Civil War titles including: “More Myths About Lee’s Surrender,” “The Confederate Cemetery at Appomattox,” “Recollections and Reminiscences of Old Appomattox,” “Tar Heels,” “Civil War Soldier Life: In Camp and Battle,” “A Duryee Zouave,” “We Came To Fight: A History of the 5th New York Veteran Volunteer Infantry,” “Duryee’s Zouaves,” “Campaigns of the 146th Regiment New York State Volunteers,” “The Pennsylvania Bucktails,” “The Bloody 85th,” and “The Life of General Ely S. Parker: Least Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and Grant’s Military Secretary.”

Patrick resides in Lynchburg, VA. He has worked as an independent researcher, historian, and author. He has been the Historian at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park since 2002. In an effort to protect sites relevant to the Appomattox Campaign, Patrick has set up the “Appomattox Fund” with the Civil War Trust, to save land important to the climatic events of April 1865.



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. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site:

www.nycivilwar150.hotmail.com

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 May Board Meeting was held on May 23rd. There was no treasurer's report. There

is \$1850 presently in the Sue Knost Memorial Fund which will be donated to preservation activities after the November conference.

Rosemary Nichols has arranged a Civil War blog which is set up through the *Troy Record*. Each participant from the Round Table will do two or three entries ranging from a paragraph to a page, concentrating on New York's role in the Civil War. Entries will appear weekly starting in June.

We still have not been able to secure our original domain name for our website. For the present we are still using the temporary site.

<http://capitaldistrictcivilwarroundtable.club.officelive.com/default.aspx>

MAY MEETING

Mike Aikey, one of the founders of CDCWRT and Executive Director of the NYS Military Heritage Museum, described a rarely discussed aspect of the Civil War at our May 13th meeting when he offered a power point program about "Father Abraham's Boys." How many of us ever realized that thousands of children under the age of 18 were involved in the armed conflict?

Today, although child soldiers are frequently involved in warfare in certain Third World countries, the attitude in Western industrialized nations is that this is repugnant, immoral and a form of child abuse. However, 19th century American children, especially those of the working class or on farms weren't protected as carefully as today's. These children were expected to be productive, contributing to their families' welfare at a very early age by pitching in on the farm or working in factories. Children then did not have the prolonged, carefree childhoods of almost all modern American children. Most children in 19th century society either worked or left home.

During the Civil War thousands of children ages nine to seventeen served in both the Union and Confederate armies with estimates

of 33,000 or more on the Union side alone. In 1857 the US Army established age 18 as the minimum age to serve with parental consent and age 21 without. With the outbreak of the Civil War, recruiters weren't quite so careful about signing "men" up. There is the common story of teenagers in their mid to late teens putting a piece of paper with 18 written on it in their shoe to enable them to truthfully tell the recruiter, "I am over 18." Some really young fellows like Delavan Miller did slip through. At the time when he enlisted in the NY Heavy Artillery supposedly at age eighteen, he was actually thirteen if the statement in his postwar memoir that he was born in 1849 was true. Most of the children who were accepted into the army were to be musicians rather than soldiers.

Motivating boys to join the armies were several factors: desire for adventure, patriotism, escaping an abusive family situation or the drudgery of farm and factory or lessening the economic burden on their families. Sometimes it was to accompany their fathers who had also volunteered. At age 12 Gustav Schurmann joined as a drummer boy for the 40th NY Infantry to accompany his father, who was soon sent back home seriously ill. Remaining in the army, Gustav had an exciting career serving as a bugler for four Union generals, being present at several battles, receiving a medal and playing with Tad Lincoln at the White House. When he mustered out, the veteran was all of fifteen.

Most children in the army served as a musicians, especially as drummers or buglers, positions of importance since officers used this means to signal commands to troops and on the march to set the pace. Often called "ponies," these young musicians had to put in much time practicing on their instruments. They were also used by officers as messengers, and even acted at times as barbers.

For the boys in the army, once the initial excitement and novelty wore off, camp life was boring, conditions were often bad and the

food inadequate or just plain awful. Some aspects of camp life among the adult soldiers were not always wholesome as the boys picked up bad habits, card playing among them. Once in battle they often served as messengers and helped carry the wounded from the battlefield. One boy remembered giving anesthesia while a surgeon amputated limbs. When the pile of amputated arms and legs grew too high, it was the boy's job to carry them out to a burial trench.

Some actually took part in combat, the most famous of whom was "Johnny Shiloh," really John Clem, age eleven. A drummer boy whose drum was smashed at Shiloh, he picked up a rifle and shot back at the Rebels. After Antietam, sixteen year old Edward Spangler recalled that bullets "flew quicker than bees." When he ran out of his own bullets, he turned over the headless body next to him to take the dead man's cartridges and resume firing. Spangler was one of only eight soldiers in his company who emerged from the battle unhurt. Charles King, age 12 wasn't so fortunate. The young member of the 49th Pennsylvania Infantry was mortally wounded at Antietam. Other boys suffered permanent injuries with disfigurement or loss of limbs. Seventeen year old John Brooks' head was scarred while ten year old William Lawn lost part of his arm. One fifteen year old was captured, ending up at Andersonville Prison, but fortunately survived to tell the tale. A few boys including two New Yorkers, one as young as thirteen, were awarded the US Medal of Honor.

Sharing the excitement of enlisting, the boredom of camp life, the rigors of the march and the horrors and terror of battle changed the lives and outlook of these boys forever, frequently leaving physical and emotional scars. It was a sad chapter in our history that boys should have been allowed to endure such experiences.

This excellent summary was provided by the

Round Table's secretary, Mary Ellen Johnson.

GETTYSBURG FALL TRIP

Regina Daly, a member of the CDCWRT and the Greene County Historical Society has organized a Columbus Weekend trip to Gettysburg for the Historical Society. The trip is open to members of CDCWRT and it sounds like a real bargain. It is 3 days and 2 nights, October 8-10. for \$370.

Package Includes:

- 2 Nights lodging at the Quality Inn on Steinwehr Street
- 2 Hot Breakfast Buffets
- 1 Box lunch on Sunday
- 2 Dinners
- Gettysburg Museum & Visitor Center
- Cyclorama Painting
- "A New Birth of Freedom" Film
- 3 two-hour Historic Gettysburg Battlefield Tours given by Licensed Battlefield Guides
- Eisenhower Farm OR Town Tour
- Souvenir Gift
- Luggage Handling
- Taxes, Meal Gratuities and Driver Gratuity
- Motorcoach Transportation to and from Exit 21 of the NYS Thruway

To reserve your ticket, send \$25 deposit to the Greene County Historical Society by June 30th. The deposit is refundable until August 15th. The final payment of \$345 is due by August 15th. The per person rate of \$370 is based on double occupancy. Singles are available at additional charge. For further information contact:

Greene County Historical Society
Box 44
Coxsackie, NY 12051

www.gchistory.org

Dave Dorpfeld (518)817-8771 or
Regina Daly at rwdaly@yahoo.com

PAUL REVERE & THE CIVIL WAR

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW published [his best-known poem](#), "Paul Revere's Ride," 150 years ago December 20, 1860 — the same day that South Carolina seceded from the United States.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear/ Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere." Before Longfellow published those lines, Revere was never known for his ride, and Longfellow got almost every detail of what happened in 1775 wrong. But Longfellow didn't care: he was writing as much about the coming war as about the one that had come before. "Paul Revere's Ride" is less a poem about the Revolutionary War than about the impending Civil War — and about the conflict over slavery that caused it. That meaning, though, has been almost entirely forgotten.

Longfellow, a passionately private man, was, just as passionately and privately, an abolitionist. His best friend was Charles Sumner, for whom he wrote, in 1842, a slim volume called "Poems on Slavery." Sumner, a brash and aggressive politician, delivered stirring speeches attacking slave owners; Longfellow, a gentler soul, wrote verses mourning the plight of slaves, poems "so mild," he wrote, "that even a slaveholder might read them without losing his appetite for breakfast."

Still, publishing those poems cost Longfellow something: a piece of his privacy, with pressure from fellow abolitionists to enter politics. "I should be found but a weak and unworthy champion in public debate," he demurred. Asked to write once more about slavery, he refused: "I think no one who cares about the matter will be at any loss to

discover my opinion on that subject.” Yet Longfellow’s abolitionist zeal didn’t abate. He secretly spent money he earned from his best-selling poems, like “The Song of Hiawatha,” to buy slaves their freedom. In 1856, when Sumner gave his famous “Crime Against Kansas” speech in the Senate, Longfellow congratulated him: “At last the spirit of the North is aroused.” That speech nearly cost Sumner his life — it so incensed a South Carolina representative, Preston Brooks, that he beat Sumner with a cane on the Senate floor.

The next year, Longfellow wrote to Sumner calling the Dred Scott decision heart-breaking, and wishing he could find a way to write about it: “I long to say some vibrant word, that should have vitality in it, and force. Be sure if it comes to me I will not be slow in uttering it.” On Dec. 2, 1859, the day John Brown was hanged, Longfellow wrote in his diary, “This will be a great day in our history, the date of a new Revolution quite as much needed as the old one.” Pondering that new Revolution, Longfellow got to thinking about the old one. In April 1860, he began writing “Paul Revere’s Ride.” While he worked on the poem, he worried about the fate of the nation. Around the same time he went to see Frederick Douglass speak and read Sumner’s latest speech, which predicted that “the sacred animosity between Freedom and Slavery can end only with the triumph of Freedom.” In November, weeks after finishing “Paul Revere’s Ride,” Longfellow rejoiced in his diary that Lincoln had won the presidency; echoing Sumner, he wrote: “Freedom is triumphant.”

“Paul Revere’s Ride” was published in the January 1861 issue of *The Atlantic*, which appeared on newsstands on Dec. 20. It was read as a rallying cry for the Union. It is a poem about waking the sleeping, and waking the dead: “Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,/ In their night encampment on the hill.” The dead are Northerners, awakened, at last aroused. But the dead are also the enslaved, entombed in

slavery — an image that was, at the time, a common conceit: Douglass called his escape “a resurrection from the dark and pestiferous tomb of slavery.”

Much of the poem echoes stanzas in Longfellow’s earlier abolitionist verses, including “The Witnesses”:

***These are the bones of Slaves;
They gleam from the abyss;
They cry, from yawning waves,
‘We are the Witnesses!’***

Thanks to poems like “Paul Revere’s Ride,” Longfellow was once the country’s most respected and beloved poet. But, beginning with the rise of New Criticism in the early 20th century, literary scholars have dismissed his poetry as cloying, drippy and even childish. Generations of schoolchildren have memorized “Paul Revere’s Ride”; critics have barely read it. Yet neglecting Longfellow, taking the politics out of Longfellow, thinking of Longfellow as childish, have both occluded the poem’s meaning and made it exceptionally serviceable as a piece of political propaganda. It is, after all, a rousing call to action:

***In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoofbeats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.***

*This appeared on the opinion page of the **New York Times** on December 19, 2010. The author is Jill Lepore, Professor of History at Harvard.*

ELLSWORTH, THE CIVIL WAR AND MEMORIAL DAY

Col. Elmer Ellsworth was killed by civilian, James W. Jackson, when Ellsworth removed a large Confederate flag from the Marshall House Hotel in Alexandria, VA. He was the first Union officer of note to be killed in the Civil War. Ellsworth’s body lay in state at the White

House, City Hall in New York City and in Albany and Troy. The public noted his death with commemorative stationary, lockets, funeral marches, pottery and lithographs.

He was buried in an unmarked grave in Mechanicville. The following was prayed at a requiem: **“Sleep on, brave young warrior; narrow and silent is thy tent. The green mantle of thy mother earth shall enwrap thee. Thy nodding plume shall be the bent branches of the weeping willow. The robin shall sound for thee thy morning reveille. Thy bugle note shall be the sweet song of the oriole. All night long the watch-fires of heaven’s dome shall burn above thy bed, whence no alarm shall rouse thee.”**

In 1871, James G. Thompson, a graduate of Ames Academy in Mechanicville gave a commencement address entitled: "The Unmarked Grave of Elmer Ellsworth." The speech caused great comment, leading to the organization of a group to erect a fitting memorial, a task completed in November 1873, followed by an official unveiling on May 27, 1874. The New York State Legislature footed a good part of the bill, but subscriptions and a donation from the First Regiment Zouaves helped to cover the cost of the monument. The regiment donated what was left from the money donated to the regiment for saving the Willard Hotel to the monument fund in 1873.

His gravestone is 25 feet tall and is surrounded by black iron fencing. It is topped by a 300 pound brass eagle. There is a plaque mounted on the base of the stone with the quote from his final letter to his parents - **He who noteth even the fall of a sparrow will have some purpose even in the fate of one like me.**

Elmer E. Ellsworth believed in a better future, not only for himself but for others like himself who had been denied opportunity simply because they were too poor or too powerless to be taken seriously. Yet by the

age of 23, he was known and admired by a large segment of the population of the United States. In his idealism and youth, Ellsworth tied his fate and his future to a man and a cause which were much larger than his own personal well-being.

In 1861 young men were answering this call throughout the country. Instilled with patriotic fervor, this was going to be settled in glorious battle. Ellsworth’s letters to his parents and his sweet heart, and Lincoln’s letter to his parents afterwards, were all poignant and heartfelt. But they were just the precursor to the flood of letters that would be written as the war progressed.

The poetic words spoken at his requiem would **not** be heard over the makeshift graves of tens of thousands of men who would be hurriedly buried on the battlefields where they fell. Even more would die ingloriously of disease.

As the war went on, very few would be remembered on envelopes or sheet music or lockets. Ellsworth’s premonition that his country would require his blood immediately was correct, but the message was missed by most. This war was going to require the blood of hundreds of thousands of promising, ambitious, hopeful young men.

Traditional Memorial Day and celebrated Memorial Day are the same this year. Amid the hype of Memorial Day sales, the beginning of the summer driving season, the reassurance that we can now wear white fashionably, and the start of the summer movie season, let us pause to remember the true meaning of the day and remember all soldiers who have died for our rights and freedoms.

**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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