

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

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653rd Meeting

June/July 2022



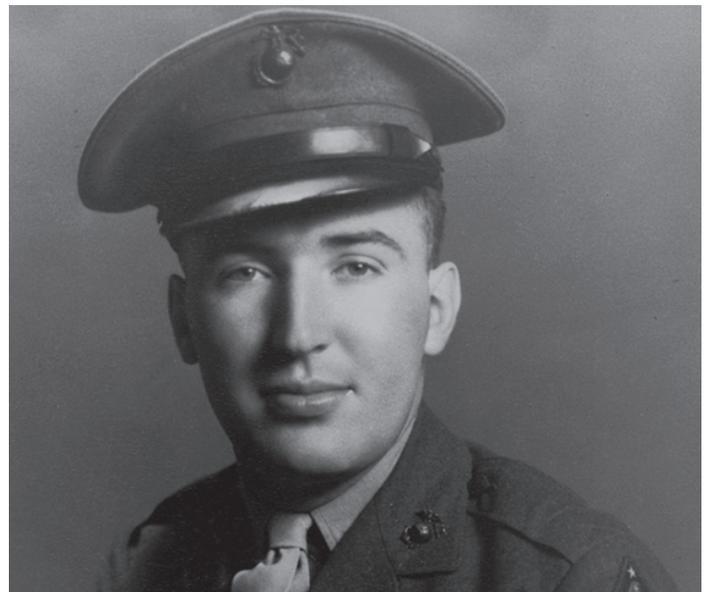
- Guest:
Ed Bearss
- Date:
**THURSDAY,
June 16th**
- Time:
6:00 pm

If you plan to attend our June 16th dinner meeting at the 3 West Club, please call 718-341-9811 no later than June 9th.

Ed Bearss

Former RT president Charlie Mander had a suggestion. Why not make the June meeting a reunion, he asked. A time to re-up your membership in the Round Table and get together with other members, especially if you missed the 70th anniversary celebration.

So we're trying something different – a **THURSDAY** meeting, in hopes that we're less likely to clash with any other group's meeting. And we have a special treat for you. A DVD of Chief National Park Historian Ed Bearss, describing what happened in World War II when he was shot in New Britain. Few people have seen this DVD as it's not on the market. It was made to commemorate Ed on his 95th birthday (he died in 2020). Ed joined the Marines after Pearl Harbor, following in the footsteps of his father and a much-admired cousin. He spent about a year and a half in the South Pacific before being shot. He'll describe the wounding and his recovery, and some of what he went on to do after it was clear he wouldn't be returning to the service. You all know that he went on to join the Park Service, after the GI bill made it possible for him to go to college and graduate school. But this will be Ed, telling you his story.



2022 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2022

• June •
Ed Bearss

• September •
TBD

• October •
TBD

President's Message

During the Civil War, the usually pleasant weather and satisfactory road conditions made June an ideal month for campaigning. This is shown by the heavy activity during this month throughout the war.

In 1861, when the war had just begun, this involved relatively small engagements that, later, would have been considered mere skirmishes, but loomed large at this stage of the war.

The Federals mounted two small, but successful offensives in Western Virginia (one from Grafton to Phillippi to Beverly; the other up the Great Kanawa Valley).

General P.G.T. Beauregard took command of Confederate troops in Northern Virginia declaring, "A reckless and unprincipled tyrant (Lincoln) has invaded your soil", and asking all citizens to rally to their old state and new country. On June 8, Tennessee became the 11th (and last) slave state to secede, with the vote for secession winning 104,913 to 47,328.

The small battle of Big Bethel, a Union loss, received much press although total casualties for both sides were under 100. Pro-Union delegates in mountainous NW Virginia met at Charlestown to organize a planned secession from the now Confederate Commonwealth of Virginia.

On the 17th, another relatively small encounter at Boonville, Missouri led to a Confederate withdrawal from the middle part of that much conflicted "Border" state.

The First of June 1862 saw the end of the two day, indecisive Battle of Seven Pines (or Fair Oaks), the severe wounding of Confederate commander Joseph Johnston, and the appointment of one Robert E. Lee as his successor. The war in Virginia was about to change, and not in the Union's favor.

General T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson continued to befuddle numerically superior, but scattered, Federal forces in the Shenandoah Valley, winning victories at Cross Keys and Port Republic, clearing the Valley of Federals (while keeping substantial Union elements from reinforcing General McClellan), then stealthily moving his small army east to reinforce General Lee.

While Jackson was becoming world famous during his "Valley Campaign", Confederate Cavalry commander "Jeb" Stuart (starting on the 12th), began his also famous four day reconnaissance ride "around McClellan", that embarrassed "Little Mac", and provided General Lee with vital intelligence about the vulnerable Union dispositions. It also served to warn McClellan and start him thinking about possibly redeploying.

The same day (June 17th) that Jackson started east, General Braxton Bragg replaced an ailing and disgruntled P.G.T. Beauregard as commander of the Confederate Western Army. On June 23, the new commander of Confederate forces around Richmond, Robert E. Lee, held a meeting of his officers (including Jackson) at the Dabbs House to discuss the planned offensive against the Union right.

The subsequent Battle of Mechanicsburg (or Beaver Dam Creek) signaled the start of the "Seven Days", during which a combination of aggressive but uncoordinated Confederate attacks, and McClellan's decision to "move his base" south to the James River, saw the Federal Army withdraw completely from Richmond, saving the capital from any further threat of capture. After the June 27th Battle of Gaines Mills, McClellan whined to Lincoln, "I lost the battle because my force was too small . . ." even though he had failed to utilize two thirds of his army! The last two days of the month saw the Battles of Savage Station and Fraysers Farm (Glendale), with Lee winning the field, but failing to significantly damage McClellan's retreating Army of the Potomac (AoP).

June 1863 would, of course, see General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia begin their movement north (starting on the 4th) for his second attempt to bring the fight north of the Potomac.

On June 9th, AoP commander General Joseph Hooker, attempting to discover Lee's intentions, sent his Horse Soldiers south, which resulted in the war's largest Cavalry battle at Brandy Station, where they surprised Jeb Stuart and showed for the first time in the war, they could battle the heretofore superior Southern Cavaliers on equal terms.

The very next day, new Confederate Corps Commander Richard Ewell left Culpeper and



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During business hours.

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headed north and west into the Shenandoah Valley, where he would soon overwhelm the Union garrison at (“Second”) Winchester, capturing 4,000 of the 7,000 defenders. At about the same time, out west, south of the besieged fortress city of Vicksburg, General Nathaniel Banks launched an unsuccessful assault on Port Hudson, losing about 1,800 men (203 killed), with the defenders’ losses at less than 50.

While all attention was on Lee’s army moving north, West Virginia by Presidential Proclamation, became the nation’s 35th state. Across the mountains, Union General William Rosecrans began (on the 23rd) his brilliant Tullahoma Campaign, in which he maneuvered General Bragg completely out of Middle Tennessee.

Back east (on June 25th), Jeb Stuart would begin his controversial ride north and east, between the Union Army and Washington, which would remove his Cavalry Corps from most of the ongoing Gettysburg Campaign. On the 26th, elements of General Jubal Early’s division would pass through the small county seat (and multiple road junction town) of Gettysburg, on their way to York.

A few days later, an unhappy General Hooker’s resignation was immediately accepted by Washington, and a surprised General George Meade was named as the new AoP commander – just days before it would be engaged in the largest battle ever fought on the North American Continent.

On June 28, Union Cavalry under General John Buford began posting units on the ridges west of Gettysburg.

In war’s last summer, this month opened with the last major battle of General Grant’s “Overland Campaign,” the disastrous Union defeat at Cold Harbor. Grant had pushed his commanders to quickly attack the Confederate positions there, as both armies had moved east from the North Anna River. But delays due to the weather, the terrain, and exhausted Union troops, allowed Lee’s men to construct formidable field fortifications before the Federals could organize a proper attack. Grant ignored the front-line intelligence indicating a frontal attack would be futile, and, as a result, lost between 6,000 to 7,000 men in less than an hour. He later wrote in his memoirs that, “I have always regretted that last attack at Cold Harbor was ever made. . .”.

On June 8, at a Baltimore “Union Party” Convention, President Lincoln was nominated to run for reelection, with Tennessee War Governor Andrew Johnson as his VP.

Recovering after the brutal loss at Cold Harbor, Grant soon executed a brilliant (and much overlooked) operation, sending 100,000 men from the AoP across a specially built, half-mile long pontoon bridge over the widest part of the James River, with General Lee not having any idea it was happening.

Unfortunately for the North, uncoordinated and sometimes timid leadership in front of the massive, but lightly manned, fortifications of Petersburg, caused the abject failure to take advantage of the brief, but excellent opportunity to seize that vital transportation and supply hub before General Lee could rush sufficient forces down to adequately defend the city.

Meanwhile (on June 19th), way, way over in the English Channel, off the coast of Cherbourg, the Union frigate USS Kearsarge, tracked down and engaged the legendary Confederate raider, the CSS Alabama, sinking the famous Rebel vessel, which had captured 65 Union ships.

Out west, as General W.T. Sherman maneuvered ever nearer to Atlanta, he misinterpreted General Joe Johnston’s movements, and ordered a rare (for him) frontal attack at Kennesaw Mountain, costing the Federals over 2,000 casualties for no gain.

Although the Union was making some hard-won progress at great cost, for most of the country, the end of this “great civil war” seemed far away, indeed.

Please plan to join us on Thursday, June 16 for a special showing of a tribute video, honoring the late, great American legend, Ed Bearss. If you can attend, please call in (preferably by Thursday, June 9), so we may give the 3 West Club an accurate count for dinner.

Thanks, and hope see you – in person! - on the 16th.

Paul Weiss



SUGGESTIONS

The Dispatch welcomes articles, book reviews (non-fiction only) and suggestions.

Just send them in to our mailing address.

RT Members at Breezy Point

If you’re not busy on June 15th, you can head over to Breezy Point, Far Rockaway to hear Pat Falci tell the Breezy Point Civil War Club about **A.P. Hill at Gettysburg**. It’s at the Breezy Point Activity Center at 17 W. Market St. (not far from the Marine Bridge) at 7:00 p.m. Then on July 20th, you can make a return trip to check out Mike Connors’ stories about **Greenwood Cemetery**. Same time, same address.

Civil War Events During the Month of June/July 1864

JUNE 1864

- June 1** Major Union attack at Cold Harbor, Virginia
- June 3** All-out Union assault at Cold Harbor, Virginia
- June 5** Battle at Piedmont, Virginia
- June 6** Engagement at Lake Chicot (Dutch Bayou), AK
- June 8** Abraham Lincoln nominated for a second term as U.S. President
- June 10** Battle of Brice's Cross Roads (Guntown), MS
- June 11** Skirmish at Pine Mountain, Georgia
- June 11** **Battle of Trevilian Station, Virginia**
- June 15** First attack on Petersburg, Virginia
- June 19** USS Kearsarge sinks CSS Alabama near France
- June 21** Christopher Memminger resigns as Confederate Secretary of the Treasury
- June 22** Battle of Kolb's Farm (Culp's Farm), Georgia
- June 27** Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia
- June 29** Skirmish at Reams Station, Virginia on Wilson's Raid

JULY 1864

- July 9** Battle of Monocacy, Maryland
- July 12** Early's raid of Fort Stevens, DC
- July 14** Battle of Tupelo (Harrisburg), Mississippi
- July 17** Confederate General J.B. Hood replaces J. Johnston as commander of the Army of Tennessee
- July 18** **Battle of Cool Spring, Virginia**
- July 20** Engagement at Rutherford's Farm, Virginia
- July 20** Battle of Peachtree Creek, Georgia
- July 22** Battle of Atlanta, Georgia
- July 24** Second Battle of Kernstown, Virginia
- July 28** Battle of Ezra Church, Georgia
- July 30** Capture and burning of Chambersburg, PA
- July 30** Battle of The Crater at Petersburg, Virginia



Louisa County, VA

June 11 – 12, 1864

In early June 1864, Lieut. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan, his cavalry commander, to embark on a raid westward from Grant's army near Cold Harbor. Sheridan's tasks were to draw Confederate attention away from Grant's upcoming movement south, destroy railroads connecting the Shenandoah Valley with the Confederate armies, and join up with Brig. Gen. David Hunter in Charlottesville. On June 11, near Trevilian Station, Sheridan clashed with Confederate cavalry under Maj. Gens. Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee. Brig. Gen. George Custer briefly captured Hampton's supply train. Confederate brigades soon surrounded Custer's men, and only the arrival of other troopers saved Custer and allowed the capture of Trevilian Station. The next morning, after damaging several miles of railroad, the Union cavalry made several assaults against a fortified Confederate line, but each attack was repulsed. Ultimately, Sheridan was forced to withdraw. He had succeeded in drawing attention away from Grant but failed to substantially interrupt supply lines or join up with Hunter. The battle at Trevilian Station was the largest all-cavalry battle of the Civil War.

From: *battlefields.org*

Clarke County, VA

July 18, 1864

A Union column consisting of elements of the VI and XIX Corps pursued Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's army as it withdrew from Washington, D.C. in July, 1864. On July 17, Union cavalry following Early passed through Snickers Gap and attempted to force a crossing of the Shenandoah River at Castleman's Ferry. The next morning, the vanguard of the Union infantry moved through the gap. Col. Joseph Thoburn led a division downstream to cross the river. Early's three nearby infantry divisions moved to defend the fords and block the Yankees. In the afternoon, the Confederates attacked and shattered Thoburn's right flank on the Cool Spring Farm. Thoburn's men made a stand behind a stone wall at the river's edge and beat off three attacks until darkness enabled them to withdraw. The battle delayed Union pursuit of Early into the Valley several days. From: *battlefields.org*

Question of the month:

On September 13, 1862, what enlisted man found Robert E. Lee's famous Lost Order, which had been carelessly dropped by a Confederate staff officer?

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE

If you missed our 70th anniversary celebration – well, your loss. We had a wonderful program of Civil War music by John Gregor and his vintage (100 years +) banjo, we had a talk on John Bell Hood from Fletcher Pratt winner Stephen

Davis (who is delighted with his FP plaque), and we topped it off with a tour of Grant's Tomb on the following Sunday (this is the 200th anniversary of his birth, after all).

Still history after all these years.



BROTHER JONATHAN'S LAMENT FOR SISTER CAROLINE by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)

She has gone,-she has left us in passion and pride
Our stormy-browed sister, so long at our side!
She has torn her own star from our firmament's glow,
And turned on her brother the face of a foe!

O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
We can never forget that our hearts have been one,
Our foreheads both sprinkled in Liberty's name,
From the fountain of blood with the finger of flame!

You were always too ready to fire at a touch;
But we said: "She is hasty,-she does not mean much."
We have scowled when you uttered some turbulent
threat;
But Friendship still whispered: "Forgive and forget!"

Has our love all died out? Have its altars grown cold?
Has the curse come at last which the fathers foretold?
Then Nature must teach us the strength of the chain
That her petulant children would sever in vain.

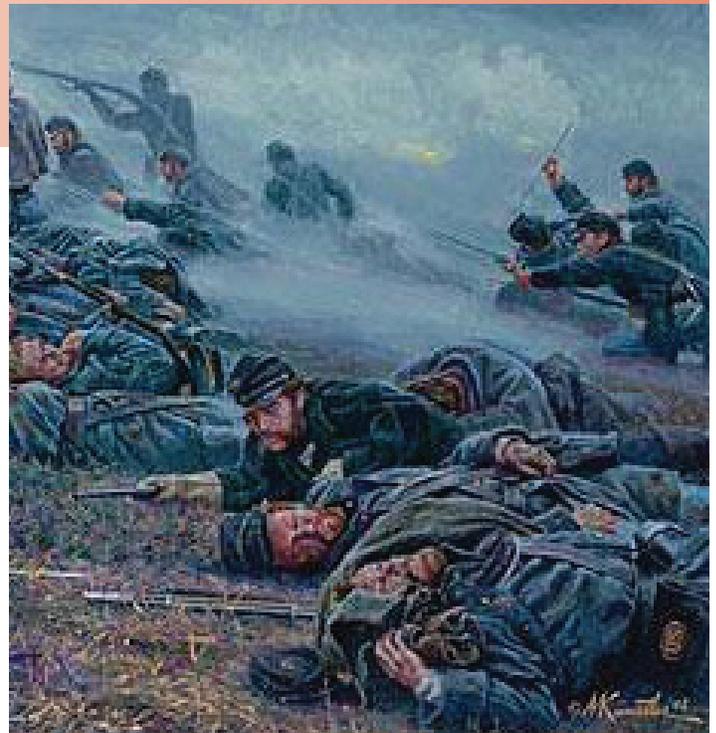
They may fight till the buzzards are gorged with their
spoil,Till the harvest grows black as it rots in the soil,
Till the wolves and the catamounts troop from their caves,
And the shark tracks the pirate, the lord of the waves:

In vain is the strife! When its fury is past,
Their fortunes must flow in one channel at last,
As the torrents that rush from the mountains of snow
Roll mingled in peace through the valleys below.

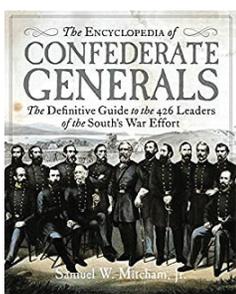
Our Union is river, lake, ocean, and sky;
Man breaks not the medal when God cuts the die!
Though darkened with sulphur, though cloven with
steel,
The blue arch will brighten, the waters will heal!

O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
There are battles with Fate that can never be won!
The star-flowering banner must never be furled,
For its blossoms of light are the hope of the world!

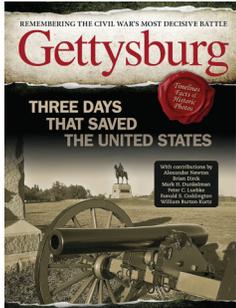
Go, then, our rash sister! afar and aloof,
Run wild in the sunshine away from our roof,
But when your heart aches and your feet have grown sore,
Remember the pathway that leads to our door.



Recently Published Books on the Civil War



*Gettysburg: Three Days
that Saved the United
States*, by Ben Nussbaum,
Fox Chapel Publishing, July
19, 2022, Hardcover \$24.99
Amazon, 96 pp



*The Encyclopedia of
Confederate Generals:
The Definitive Guide to
the 426 Leaders of the
South's War Effort*,
by Samuel W. Mitcham,
May 24, 2022, Regnery
History Publisher, Hardcover
\$29.99, Amazon, 800 pp

Answer:

Pvt. Barton W. Mitchell of Company E.
Twenty-seventh Indiana.