

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 67, No. 7

618th Meeting

March 2018



*You must call  
718-341-9811 by  
March 5<sup>th</sup> if you  
plan to attend the  
March meeting.*

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

• Guest:  
**Dr. E.C.(Curt) Fields, Jr.**  
Grant Announces his Bid  
for the Presidency

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

• Date:  
**Monday,  
March 12<sup>th</sup>**

• 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**

## **Dr. E.C.(Curt) Fields, Jr.** Grant Announces his Bid for the Presidency

Our March guest, Dr. E.C. (Curt) Fields, Jr., is an avid and lifelong student of the Civil War. His interest in playing General Ulysses S. Grant was driven by that study and his deep respect and admiration for the general. Dr. Fields is the same height and body style as Grant and, therefore, presents a convincing, true-to-life image of the man as he really looked.



Dr. Fields holds a B.A. and Master's Degree in Education from the University of Memphis. He later earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Curriculum from Michigan State University. He is a career educator, having taught at the Junior and Senior high school levels, and he then served for 25 years as a high school administrator.

## **Some praise for Rosecrans**

In 1905 a group of Civil War veterans gathered in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a city they had captured 42 years earlier in one of the key moments of the American Civil War.

They were in Chattanooga for the 33rd annual meeting of The Society of the Army of the Cumberland. The army had fought and marched across middle Tennessee in 1863, climbing mountains and traversing rivers before fighting the Confederate Army at West Chickamauga Creek in the greatest battle in the Western theater of the war. In the minds of these veterans, Chickamauga was not a Union defeat but rather their permanent possession of the city which eventually led to the capture of Atlanta and Union victory in the war.

At the third session of the meeting an unexpected topic came up: a statue for the man who had led the Army of the Cumberland during the period of its most important battles and campaigns, Major General William S. Rosecrans.

The men began to express themselves. "I worship the memory of General William S. Rosecrans. I hold for him a reverence in my heart never to be effaced," said one veteran.

"He was certainly second to nobody in the Army of the United States. There was no one superior to Rosecrans," said another.

A third voice added, "...I want to say that I think in strategy Rosecrans was not surpassed by anyone in [the Civil] War or any previous one. He secured this city in the face of a strong and powerful enemy, overcoming almost insurmountable difficulties, but he had the nerve to undertake it, and I think the success of Grant was due to Rosecrans' matchless strategy."

A fourth veteran opined, "Anyone who studies the campaigns from Murfreesboro to this city, gained by his splendid strategy, cannot fail to accord to him the place of one of the great leaders of his age. And this statue should have a place in Washington where it will stand as long as this republic endures."

Submitted by Pat Falci. This item was handed out at the Rosecrans meeting.

## **2018 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2018**

• **Monday April 9<sup>th</sup>** •

John Fazio  
*Decapitating the Union*

• **Monday May 12<sup>th</sup>** •

Fletcher Pratt Award  
Ron Chernow for *Grant*

• **Monday June 8<sup>th</sup>** •

TBA

## President's Message

Spring is approaching which means the Civil War Round Table of New York schedule is coming into its final lap.

This month we eagerly await the arrival of General Grant to see if he will run for president in 1868. After that we will have attorney John Fazio attempt to make the case why Jefferson Davis should have been indicted in the assassination of President Lincoln.

In May the Fletcher-Pratt award will be given to Ron Chernow for his monumental work on Grant.

In June we will be hearing from our battlefield tour guide for the Appomattox campaign. (If you wish to attend the tour, contact Marty Smith soon.)

As to our Green-Wood Cemetery tour, some of the highlights will include memorials to the Civil War generals, Halleck, Sweeny, Meagher, Slocum and Garnett, along with other notable personalities from the period. The tour will run on May 19th starting at the main gate of Green-Wood Cemetery at 25th Street and 5th Avenue in Brooklyn.

The exact cost and details will be announced at our March meeting. For the latest news on the tour you may call (718) 238-6500.

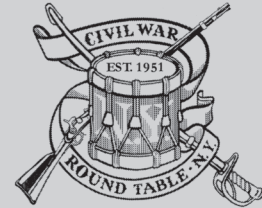
Enjoy the Round Table.

*MICHAEL N. CONNORS*



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.

## THE DISPATCH



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**The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.,**

139-33 250th Street,  
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Telephone CWRT/NY at (718) 341-9811

During business hours.

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Email: [cwrtnyc1@gmail.com](mailto:cwrtnyc1@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.cwrtnyc.org>

## March During the Civil War

### 1862

**10** – The Gibraltar of the Mississippi is evacuated as Confederates pull out of Columbus, Ky., taking most of their guns (138) down river to Island #10. Leonidas Polk's master plan to save Kentucky manages to lose the Bluegrass state to the Union.

**23** – A unique battle in Kernstown, Va., where Jackson's scouts let him down. His smaller force attacks James Shield's larger outfit and gets the worse of it. It is a rare defeat for the eccentric Confederate, and by the hands of a man who had almost duelled with a lawyer named Lincoln back in ante-bellum days.

### 1863

**3** – President Lincoln signs the Draft Act. In the entire war 162,000 were recruited by the draft as 46,000 were held to service and 116,000 furnished substitutes. Despite its defects, the measure bolstered enlistments.

**17** – The Gallant Pelham, a Confederate hero at Fredericksburg, but only an observer at the battle of Kelly's Ford, is killed. He is mourned throughout the South.

### 1864

**1** – Judson Kilpatrick attacks Richmond but pulls away at the last minute, leaving his fellow cavalryman, Ulric Dahlgren, in the lurch, and then in the grave.

**8** – The undistinguished man in a disheveled major general's uniform stands on a sofa so as to be seen in the East Room. Grant and Lincoln finally make their respective acquaintances.

### 1865

**5** – Audie Custer leads an assault at Waynesborough, Va., and embarrasses Lee's "bad old man," Jubal Early, who laments that the greater part of his command was being led off to captivity

**16** – Battles at Averasborough and Smithtown (famous for hams and Ava Gardner) between Slocum and Hardee. The rebels are fighting hard but the end is getting closer and closer.

## The North's Very First Conscription Act

A prime issue in both elections [Connecticut and New Hampshire] was the draft, enacted by Congress on March 3, 1863. Democrats added conscription to emancipation and military arrests in their catalogue of Republican sins. The enrollment Act of 1863 was designed mainly as a device to stimulate volunteering by the threat of a draft. As such it worked, but with such inefficiency, corruption, and perceived injustice that it became one of the most divisive issues of the war and served as a model of how not to conduct a draft in future wars.

In the beginning of 1863 recruitment in the North arrived at the same impasse it had reached in the South a year earlier. The men likely to enlist for patriotic reasons, or adventure, or peer-group pressure, were already in the army. War weariness and the grim realities of army life discouraged further volunteering. The booming war economy had shrunk the number of unemployed men to the vanishing point. The still tentative enlistment of black soldiers could scarcely begin to replace losses from disease and combat and desertion during the previous six months. Like the Confederacy in early 1862, the Union army in 1863 faced a serious manpower loss through expiration of enlistments: 38 two-year regiments raised in 1861, and 92 nine-month militia regiments organized in 1862, were due to go home during the spring and summer of 1863. This prompted Congress to act.

In its nationalizing tendencies the resulting law was similar to the recently passed Banking Act. State governors had taken the lead in the organization of volunteer regiments in 1861-62. The draft was a national process. Congress authorized a provost Marshal Bureau in the War Department to enforce conscription. This Bureau sent to each congressional district a number of provost marshals whose first task was to enroll every male citizen and immigrant who had filed for citizenship aged twenty to forty-five.

This became the basis for each district's quota in the four calls for new troops that Lincoln issued after passage of the conscription act in March 1863. In the first draft (July 1863), provost marshals called up 20 percent of

the enrollees, chosen by lot in each district. In the three drafts of 1864, the War Department assigned each district a quota determined by its pro rata share of the number of soldiers called for by the president, after adjustment for men who had already enlisted in the district. Each district had fifty days to fill its quota with volunteers. Those that failed to do so then held a lottery draft to obtain a sufficient number of men to meet the quota.

If a man's name was drawn in this lottery, one of several things would happen to him next – the least likely of which was induction into the army. Of the men chosen in the four drafts, more than one fifth (161,000 of 776,000) failed to report – fleeing instead to the West, to Canada, or to the woods. Of those who did report to the provost marshal's office, one eighth were sent home because of already filled quotas. Three-fifths of the remaining 522,000 were exempted for physical or mental disabilities or because they convinced the inducting officer that they were the sole means of support for a widow, an orphan sibling, a motherless child or an indigent parent. Unlike the Confederate Congress, Union lawmakers allowed no occupational exemptions. But a draftee who passed the physical exam and could not claim any dependent relatives still had two options: he could hire a substitute, which exempted him from this and any future draft, or he could pay a commutation fee of \$300, which exempted him from this draft but not necessarily the next one. Of the 207,000 who were drafted, 87,000 paid the commutation fee and 74,000 furnished substitutes, leaving only 46,000 who went personally into the army. The pool of substitutes was furnished by eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds and by immigrants who had not filed for citizenship, who were not held for conscription.

There were numerous opportunities for fraud, error, and injustice in the cumbersome and confusing process. The enrollment of men eligible for the draft was only as good as the officials who carried it out – and some of them were venal or incompetent. Enrollers probably missed even more of the floating population than census takers missed. On the other hand, some officials padded their rolls with fictitious names in order to draw their pay without doing the hard work of canvassing door to door. Timid enrollers feared to venture into the Butternut counties of the Midwest, coal-mining districts of Pennsylvania, tough neighborhoods

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in New York, and other hostile places to the draft and the war. Many men "skedaddled" to avoid enrollment. Consequently some districts were under-enrolled while others had padded lists, with resulting inequities in quotas. Governors and Congressmen brought pressure for adjustment of quotas, and some districts had to be reenrolled. Governor Seymour of New York (a Democrat) accused the administration of padding the enrollment in Democratic districts to increase their quotas. Although discrepancies between Republican and Democratic districts did sometimes occur, the usual reason was not a Republican plot but rather a smaller previous enlistment from Democratic districts, leaving a larger quota to be conscripted.

From *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James McPherson

## NEW RECRUITS

**William Slitkin**, who is interested in battles, military units and preservation

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**The Chambersburg Civil War Tours** is featuring the 5th Annual National Ed Bearss Symposium on Military Leadership and Combat April 4-8, 2018, featuring Ed Bearss, Steve Bockmiller, Jim Schmick & others. Call Lark Pressinger at 717- 264-7101 Ext. 206 for information.

Also, **Roads to Gettysburg: Brandy Station and Second Winchester**, July 24-29, 2018 featuring Eric Wittenberg, J.D. Petruzzi, Jerry Holsworth, Steve French. Jeffrey Wert, & others.

And **Mr. Lincoln's City & John Wilkes Booth Escape Tour**, October 10-14, 2018, with Ed Steers and other leading Lincoln scholars. Only 30 seats remain - please register early.



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OF NEW YORK

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