

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 71 No. 3

657th Meeting

February 2023



- Guest:
Barondess/Lincoln Award winner Jon Meacham
- Date:
WEDNESDAY, February 15th
- Time:
5:00 pm

*If you plan to attend our February 15th dinner meeting at **Roosevelt House, 4749 East 65th Street**, please call Telephone 718-341-9811, no later than February 10th.*

Barondess/Lincoln Award winner Jon Meacham

Jon Meacham holds the Carolyn T. and Robert M. Rogers Chair in the American Presidency at Vanderbilt University, where he is also a distinguished visiting professor and co-chairs the Vanderbilt Project on Unity & Democracy. A biographer and contributing editor at Time, he lectures widely in the United States on history, politics, and religious faith, and is the Canon Historian of Washington National Cathedral. In 2020, Meacham was a visiting lecturer at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee, where he taught a course on the life and legacy of John Lewis.

Meacham is the New York Times best-selling author of: *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope*; *The Soul of America*; *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush*; *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*; *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, and his latest book, *And There Was Light: Abraham Lincoln and the American Struggle*.

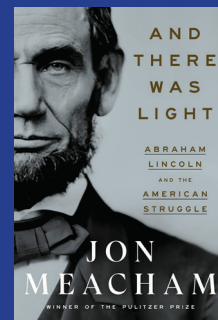


We have a special treat in store for this year's Barondess Lincoln meeting.

On **February 15th**, we'll be having a joint meeting with the Lincoln Group, since we're both honoring the same author. Jon Meacham will be speaking on his book, *And There Was Light*. This is not a dinner meeting; however, we have to charge \$20 to help cover the room rental. There are a few Italian and French restaurants in the area, and, for a less expensive choice, a pizza place on W. 57th St.

Please call 718-341-9811, or email cwrtnyc1@gmail.com. by Feb. 10th to make your reservation.

Hope to see you there.



2023 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2023

• March 2023 •
TBD

• April 2023 •
TBD

• May 2023 •
TBD

President's Message

Paul Weiss



THE DISPATCH



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Civil War Events During the Month of January 1865

January 12	Francis Preston Blair Sr. attempts to negotiate peace with Jefferson Davis	January 23	Joseph E. Johnston opposes Sherman's march through the Carolinas
January 13	Second attack on Fort Fisher, North Carolina begins	January 31	U.S. House passes 13th Amendment abolishing slavery
January 15	Fort Fisher stormed		

Civil War Events During the Month of February 1865

February	Sherman's march through the Carolinas in "full swing"	February 6	John C. Breckinridge named Confederate Secretary of War
February 3	Union and Confederate officials meet to discuss peace	February 17	Columbia South Carolina burned
February 5	Battle of Hatcher's Run (Armstrong's Mill), Virginia begins	February 17	Evacuation of Charleston, South Carolina
		February 22	Wilmington, North Carolina captured

BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN

Dinwiddie County, VA February 5 - 7, 1865

By February 1865, the stalemate around Petersburg had entered its eighth month. Lieut. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant began to stretch the Union battle lines to the west in an attempt to get Gen. Robert E. Lee's under strength army to do the same. On February 5th, Union Brig. Gen. David Gregg's cavalry division rode out to the Boydton Plank Road via Reams Station and Dinwiddie Court House in an attempt to intercept Confederate supply trains. Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren with the Fifth Corps crossed Hatcher's Run and took up a blocking position on the Vaughan Road to prevent interference with Gregg's operations. Two divisions of the Second Corps under Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys shifted west to near Armstrong's Mill to cover Warren's right flank. Late

in the day, Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon attempted to turn Humphreys' right flank near the mill but was repulsed. During the night, the Federals were reinforced by two divisions. On February 6th, Gregg returned to Gravelly Run on the Vaughan Road from his unsuccessful raid and was attacked by elements of Brig. Gen. John Pegram's Confederate division. Warren pushed forward a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Dabney's Mill and was attacked by Pegram's and Maj. Gen. William Mahone's divisions. Pegram was killed in the action. Although the Union advance was stopped, the Federals extended their siege works to the Vaughan Road crossing of Hatcher's Run.

From: battlefields.org



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FAVORITE POEM

In the 1830s, Dr. Jason Duncan introduced Lincoln to the poem "Mortality" (sometimes called "Immortality" or "Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?"). At the time, the increasingly melancholy Lincoln lived in New Salem, Illinois, and had already lost several friends and relatives to death.

*Gradually Lincoln memorized the piece, but did not know the author's identity until late in life. He became so identified with the poem that some people thought he had written it. However, he only wished he had. He once remarked, "I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is." The author, a descendant of reformer John Knox, published the poem in a collection called *The Songs of Israel* in 1824, shortly before his death at age 36.*

Lawrence Weldon, who traveled the law circuit with Lincoln, recalled Lincoln reciting the poem in 1860. He said, "The weird and melancholy association of eloquence and poetry had a strong fascination for Mr. Lincoln's mind. Tasteful composition, either of prose or poetry, which faithfully contrasted the realities of eternity with the unstable and fickle fortunes of time, made a strong impression on his mind."

Mortality

By *William Knox*

Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall moulder to dust, and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved;
The mother that infant's affection who proved;
The husband, that mother and infant who blest,--
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure, -- her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn,
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep,
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint, who enjoyed the communion of Heaven,
The sinner, who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes -- like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes -- even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, we view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking, our fathers would think;
From the death we are shrinking, our fathers would shrink;
To the life we are clinging, they also would cling; --
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the wing.

They loved -- but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned -- but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved -- but no wail from their slumber will come;
They joyed -- but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died -- ay, they died; -- we things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode;
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye -- 'tis the draught of a breath--
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud:--
Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

From: abrhamlincolonline.org

The Fall of Fort Fisher

The End of Confederate Trade
By Danie Landsman



The Battle of Fort Fisher was the largest amphibious operation of the Civil War. *Library of Congress*

By 1864, Wilmington, North Carolina was the Confederacy's last connection to the trade with the outside world. Realizing the importance of this coastal city to the Confederate war effort, Union forces launched an amphibious attack on Wilmington's lone defensive structure, the heavily fortified Fort Fisher, during the winter of 1864.

One of the weaknesses of the Confederacy was its agriculturally based economy. While this provided Southerners with ample amounts of cotton and tobacco, they lacked the industrial means of their Northern opponents. To account for their lack of access to necessary war supplies, the Confederacy would trade cotton and tobacco with the British for the items they needed to sustain their war effort. Due to the coast-wide Union blockade, and the loss of a number of the Confederacy's key ports, Wilmington, North Carolina was the last major Confederate port by the end of 1864. This essential port was defended by the uniquely designed Fort Fisher. Inspired by the design of the Malakoff Tower in Ukraine, the fort was made predominantly out of soil mounds and sand, which proved to be more effective in absorbing cannon

blasts than the traditional brick and mortar. The importance of Fort Fisher was stressed by Robert E. Lee who told the commanding officer, Colonel William Lamb, that if he was to lose control of the fort, Lee would not be able to supply his army.

Realizing that a loss at Fort Fisher would deliver a crippling blow to the Confederacy, Generals Adelbert Ames, Alfred Terry, Charles Paine, and Admiral David Porter, devised a plan to take the fort. In December of 1864, the Federals, led by Major General Benjamin Butler, launched an amphibious attack on the fort, beginning with a Trojan Horse-esque surprise attack. In the middle of the night on December 23rd, the Union Navy floated the USS Louisiana, disguised as a Confederate blockade runner, near the shore of Fort Fisher filled with gun powder. Once they felt the Louisiana was a few hundred yards away from the shore, they ignited the ship. However, due to a serious miscalculation, the ship was more than a mile off shore and the explosion did no damage to the fort. The next morning the Union forces began their bombardment, firing more than 10,000 shells towards the fort. Despite firing such a large

amount of shells, the bombardment was “diffuse and not calculated...so wild that at least one-third of the missiles fell in the river beyond the fort or in the bordering marshes” according to garrison commander, Colonel Lamb. During the poorly executed attack, a team was sent to scout out the land face of the fort and assess the effectiveness of a land invasion. Despite being poorly defended, the Federals ultimately decided not to carry out a land invasion and by the 25th of December, the ill-fated attempt to take the fort was suspended. The naval bombardment only resulted in minor damage to the fort’s sea face.

Refocused and now under the control of General Alfred Terry, the great Union fleet returned to the shores of Fort Fisher the night of January 12th, 1865. Colonel William Lamb recounts of their arrival, “From the ramparts of Fort Fisher, I saw the great Armada returning...sunrise the next morning revealed to us the most formidable armada the world had ever known, supplemented by transports carrying about 8500 troops”. That morning, armada opened fire on the land face of Fort Fisher. The long line of floating fortresses rained shells down on Fort Fisher, causing the very earth to tremble. Unlike the previous attempt, this attack was calculated and methodical, and the majority of the shots hit their mark. This relentless

bombardment went on through out the day and night of the 13th and 14th, making it impossible for the soldiers inside the fort to repair damages to both the land and sea face. As the sun rose on the morning of the 15th, the Union armada redoubled the efforts. By noon that day, the Union attack had rendered all but one gun unserviceable on the land face and reduced the garrison to only 1200 men.

A desperate Colonel Lamb began gathering every soldier still alive to assist in the defense of the fort, including those who were sick and wounded. During the Union attack on land, Brigadier General Adelbert Ames lost control of his men and the attack became wildly disorganized. Nevertheless, Ames and the rest of the Union forces had gotten such a significant hold on the fort, taking all of the batteries on the sea face and maintaining a hold on most of the northern wall, that the remaining Confederate forces raised the white flag and approached the Union lines to surrender the fort. A month after the Union forces captured Fort Fisher, Union soldiers rode into Wilmington. On February 22, George Washington’s birthday, the mayor surrendered Wilmington to the Union. From then on, the Confederacy’s days were numbered.

From: battlefields.org



Weakened Confederate forces attempt to ward off the Federal attack on land. *Library of Congress*