

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 70 No. 8

April 2022

History of 'In God We Trust'

The motto IN GOD WE TRUST was placed on United States coins largely because of the increased religious sentiment existing during the Civil War. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase received many appeals from devout persons throughout the country, urging that the United States recognize the Deity on United States coins. From Treasury Department records, it appears that the first such appeal came in a letter dated November 13, 1861. It was written to Secretary Chase by Rev. M. R. Watkinson, Minister of the Gospel from Ridleyville, Pennsylvania, and read:

Dear Sir: You are about to submit your annual report to the Congress respecting the affairs of the national finances.

One fact touching our currency has hitherto been seriously overlooked. I mean the recognition of the Almighty God in some form on our coins.

You are probably a Christian. What if our Republic were not shattered beyond reconstruction? Would not the antiquaries of succeeding centuries rightly reason from our past that we were a heathen nation? What I propose is that instead of the goddess of liberty we shall have next inside the 13 stars a ring inscribed with the words PERPETUAL UNION; within the ring the allseeing eye, crowned with a halo; beneath this eye the American flag, bearing in its field stars equal to the number of the States united; in the folds of the bars the words GOD, LIBERTY, LAW.

This would make a beautiful coin, to which no possible citizen could object. This would relieve us from the ignominy of heathenism. This would place us openly under the Divine protection we have personally claimed. From my hearth I have felt our national shame in disowning God as not the least of our present national disasters.

To you first I address a subject that must be agitated.

As a result, Secretary Chase instructed James Pollock, Director of the Mint at Philadelphia, to prepare a motto, in a letter dated November 20, 1861:

Dear Sir: No nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins.

You will cause a device to be prepared without unnecessary delay with a motto expressing in the fewest and tersest words possible this national recognition.

It was found that the Act of Congress dated January 18, 1837, prescribed the mottoes and devices that should be placed upon the coins

of the United States. This meant that the mint could make no changes without the enactment of additional legislation by the Congress. In December 1863, the Director of the Mint submitted designs for new one-cent coin, two-cent coin, and three-cent coin to Secretary Chase for approval. He proposed that upon the designs either OUR COUNTRY; OUR GOD or GOD, OUR TRUST should appear as a motto on the coins. In a letter to the Mint Director on December 9, 1863, Secretary Chase stated:

I approve your mottoes, only suggesting that on that with the Washington obverse the motto should begin with the word OUR, so as to read OUR GOD AND OUR COUNTRY. And on that with the shield, it should be changed so as to read: IN GOD WE TRUST.

The Congress passed the Act of April 22, 1864. This legislation changed the composition of the one-cent coin and authorized the minting of the two-cent coin. The Mint Director was directed to develop the designs for these coins for final approval of the Secretary. IN GOD WE TRUST first appeared on the 1864 two-cent coin.

From: treasury.gov

70th Anniversary Dinner

We're planning a 70th Anniversary dinner for the Round Table on Wed., May 11th. There will be music, a talk from Fletcher Pratt winner Steve Davis, and maybe one or two surprises. We need to figure out how to plan this, so can you let us know if you'd be interested in attending?

Leave a message at 718-341-9811 or cwrtnyc1@gmail.com. (This is not a reservation – just a general head count.)

2022 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2022

• April •
TBD

• May 11th •
70th Anniversary
Celebration

• June •
TBD

President's Message

April is said to be "the Cruellest Month", and so it was - in many ways - during the Civil War. It was, of course, in April that the war began and also ended, and much else (both good and bad) happened in-between.

When the seven states of the lower South seceded from the Union, they took over most of the Federal installations within their borders rather easily. There were, however, two notable exceptions, Fort Pickens in Florida, and Fort Sumter, located in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina.

On April 12, 1861, having their final demand for immediate surrender rejected by Sumter's commandant, Major Robert Anderson, the 70 Confederate guns surrounding the fort opened fire. More than a day (and 4,000 artillery rounds) later, Sumter signaled their willingness to surrender. The formal ceremony turning over the fort was held on the 14th.

When word of the bombardment reached Washington, President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops from the states to put down the insurrection. Things then started happening very quickly. On the 17th, the Virginia Convention, which two weeks earlier had rejected secession 89-45, reversed their decision, now voting for separation from the Union, 88 -55.

On the 19th, responding to Lincoln's call for troops, the 6th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was attacked by a pro-Southern mob while marching through Baltimore. Four soldiers and nine civilians were killed- with many more wounded. President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of Confederate ports from Texas in the Gulf to South Carolina on the Atlantic. North Carolina, and Virginia were soon added after they seceded.

A year into the war (that many thought would end in a few months, at worst), in April 1862, Confederate Western Theater commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, ordered his 40,000 troops to attack about an equal number of Federals (under General U.S. Grant) in their camps on the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing. The resulting blood bath at the two day "Battle of Shiloh" - a victory for the North - saw more men killed than the total slain in all the battles, in all the wars fought by Americans up to that day. The Federals lost over 13,000, with 1,784 killed; the Confederates over 10,000, with 1,723 killed, including General Johnston; casualty figures that shocked the people of both North and South.

In the East, at about the same time Johnston stated marching toward Grant, General George McClellan began landing his 100,000+ men near Ft. Monroe, Virginia to begin his ultimately unsuccessful "Peninsula Campaign". Three days after Shiloh, the Confederate Congress approved the war's first (but not last) Conscription Act.

This month also saw "The Great Locomotive Chase", celebrated in song and story, and, shocking the South, the capture of their largest port and city, New Orleans, by the bold actions of Admiral David Glasgow Farragut.

The big news in April 1863 was General Grant moving his Army of Tennessee down to Louisiana side of the Mississippi to meet up with the Union boats that had steamed south, past the fearsome river batteries of Vicksburg, so the troops could be ferried over to the Mississippi side. As Grant later wrote, this put his army on dry land on the same side of the river as Vicksburg, which "All the campaigning, labors, hardships, exposures, from the month December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object."

April 1864 saw the failure of Union General Nathaniel Banks campaign to ascend the Red River, from which he barely escaped with his army intact. Newly promoted Union General-in-Chief U.S. Grant announced there would be no further prisoner exchanges with the Confederates, and, if resumed, "no distinction whatever will be made in the exchange of white or colored prisoners".

After four long years incredible loss and sacrifice on both sides, the "great civil war" finally came to an end. The "Battle of Five Forks" (on April 1) in which, after a long siege and many bitter battles at Petersburg, the Federals caved in the Confederate right flank, setting up a general assault on their trench lines, and the evacuation of the Confederate government from Richmond.

The Confederate capital was occupied by Union troops on the 3rd, and most remarkably, visited by President Lincoln the very next day. The Army of the Potomac, led by General Phil Sheridan's Cavalry caught up with and surrounded the remnants General Lee's once proud Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, where Lee famously surrendered to Grant on the 9th.

Mobile, Alabama, the last major unoccupied Southern city, surrendered on the 12th. President Lincoln, tragically, only had a few days to savor the Union victory as he was murdered on the 14th while attending a play by actor and Southern sympathizer, John Wilkes Booth.

After a false start on the 18th, where his terms of surrender were far too generous (and for which he received much criticism), General W.T. Sherman and his longtime opponent, General Joseph Johnston, finally worked out an acceptable surrender agreement on the 26th.

Lost in all the news of victory, peace and assassination, in a last spasm of death, and, perhaps a fitting coda for the war, the heavily overloaded Mississippi riverboat "Sultana", was steaming north toward Memphis when almost 1,400 Union troops heading home, including many recently released from the Confederate hellhole prisoner facility, Camp Sumter, at Andersonville, Georgia, were killed when the boat's boiler exploded - possibly from sabotage.

Although the war may have ended in April 1865, this month we are continuing our 70 years discussing that conflict and all its ramifications, with a program honoring the bicentennial of General U.S. Grant's birth.

Whether live or via Zoom, hope to see you there!

Paul Weiss



THE DISPATCH



Founded January 24, 1951

The Dispatch is published monthly, except June, July, August, and December, by

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

139-33 250th Street,
Rosedale, N.Y. 11422
Telephone CWRT/NY at (718) 341-9811

During business hours.

OFFICERS

President Paul Weiss
V.P. Programs Michael N. Connors
V.P. Operations Joan McDonough
Secretary Pat Holohan
Treasurer Michael Connors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Term Expiring 2022

John Allen
William Finlayson

Term Expiring 2023

Beth Connors
Dan McCarthy

Term Expiring 2024

Kris Kasnicki
Carolyn Roxon

Member at large

Dave Licalzi:

Editor Pat Holohan

Copy Editor/

Club Liaison Joan McDonough

P.R. Martin Smith

Merchandise Paul Weiss

Email: cwrtnyc1@gmail.com

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

Civil War Events During the Month of April 1864

- 8 Battle of Mansfield (Sabine Crossroads), Louisiana (Red River Expedition)
- 9 Battle of Pleasant Hill, Louisiana (Red River Expedition)
- 12 Capture of Fort Pillow, Tennessee by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest
- 20 Plymouth, North Carolina captured
- 22 The motto “In God We Trust” first stamped on U.S. coins
- 23 Engagement of Cane River Crossing, Louisiana (Red River Expedition)
- 25 Action at Mark’s Mills, Arkansas on Steele’s Camden Expedition
- 26 Union fleet trapped by low water on the Red River near Alexandria, Louisiana
- 28 Skirmishes at Princeton, Arkansas on Steele’s Camden Expedition
- 30 Engagement at Jenkins’ Ferry, Arkansas on Steele’s Camden Expedition

Question of the month:

What Confederate general was a constant suffer from migraine and dyspepsia?

Battle of Plymouth (1864) by Jonathan Martin

In the midst of the Civil War, the Confederate army succeeded capturing the county seat of Washington County in April of 1864. Referred to as “the most effective Confederate combined-arms operation of the Civil War” by historian William S. Powell, the Battle of Plymouth was the result of both Brigadier General Robert F. Hoke’s infantry division and the naval support of the Confederate ironclads, the *Albermarle* and the *Neuse*.

The Union army had set up their eastern headquarters of North Carolina in Plymouth and the town of New Bern in 1862, and the North led several offenses from their bases in these towns. Plymouth was strategically located close to the Roanoke River, making naval warfare a necessity to capture the town. In hopes to regain a stronghold in Carolina’s waterways, the Confederacy conspired to build two ships, the *Albermarle* and *Neuse*, in 1862. Once the two naval vessels were completed, General Hoke developed a plan to attack Union forts off the coast of North Carolina. Plymouth was the first town Hoke decided to invade.

On April 17, 1864, General Hoke, along with 10,000 infantrymen, started the advance on Plymouth. Henry W. Wessell commanded only 3,000 men in Plymouth, but the Union forces repelled many of Hoke’s ground forces. Early the next day, Hoke increased artillery fire on the Union Fort Gray and Battery Worth, and the Union ship, the *Bombshell*, soon gave way to the heavy Confederate bombings.

Although Hoke continued his pressure on the Union defenses, the ground soldiers needed help in taking Fort Gray. The *Albermarle*, captained by James Cooke, answered the call of duty. Unusually high river levels on the Roanoke allowed the *Albermarle* to scamper past Fort Gray without alerting the Union forces during the early hours of April 19th. However, the USS *Southfield* and *Miami*, met Cooke’s vessel and a naval battle ensued. Although the *Miami* was considered the most powerful ship on the river, the *Albermarle* managed to sink the *Southfield* as the *Miami* retreated from the engagement.

General Hoke finally had naval artillery support, and Confederate troops attacked Plymouth from the east and west on April 20th. General Wessell

refused to accept his predicament as General Hoke surrounded Fort Williams, the last defense in Plymouth. Union forces remained in Fort Williams even though both Hoke’s artillery and the *Albermarle* bombarded their defense throughout the entire morning. Finally, General Wessell surrendered, and Hoke’s victory renewed Confederate war vigor in North Carolina.

The victory at Plymouth opened Washington County back to the Confederacy, and much-needed naval stores were made available to the army once again. In addition, the Roanoke River was freed from Union blockades, allowing for a trade and military transportation route for Confederate forces.

Sources

“Battle of Plymouth.”

William S. Powell, ed. Encyclopedia of North Carolina (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC 2006).

“Battle of Plymouth.”

North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program website. A Division of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. (accessed November 30, 2011).

From: *North Carolina History Project*, northcarolinahistory.org

SLATE

President –
Paul Weiss
VP of Programs –
Beth Connors
VP of Operations –
Joan McDonough
Secretary – **Patricia Holohan**
Treasurer – **Michael Connors**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Term ending 2023 –
Michael C. Connors/
William Finlayson
Term ending 2024 –
Kris Kasnicki/
Carolyn Roxon
Term Ending 2025 –
John Allen/
Daniel McCarthy

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

by Walt Whitman

1
When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky
in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning
spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2
O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides
the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul
of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3
In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the
white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped
leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the
perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the
dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves
of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4
In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the
settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother
I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st
surely die.)

5
Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the
violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing
the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its
shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the
orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6
Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening
the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities
draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd
women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of
the night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces
and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the
sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices
rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around
the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where
amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

From: www.poetryfoundation.org (Abridged)

Grant Ceremony

The Sons of Union Veterans are once again hosting the Grant Memorial Ceremony on April 24th at 11:00. The Grant Monument is at Riverside Drive and 122nd St. There will be music, speeches, and wreath-layings.

The Military Commission and Bethlehem Attorney Doster's Defense of Lincoln Assassination Conspirators Atzerodt and Powell

Alan Y. Lowcher

438 High St., Bethlehem, PA

"Sic Semper Tyrannis!" With those words and a woman's scream from the Presidential Box, the audience at Ford's Theater was plunged into chaos. Several physicians examined the unconscious President and pronounced the wound mortal. It would be unseemly for the President of the United States to die in a house of entertainment – on Good Friday, no less. But the doctors agreed that Lincoln would never survive the carriage ride to the White House. The President was carried out onto Tenth Street, Union officers scanning the scene for someplace – anyplace – to take the dying Chief Executive. From across the street, a voice called out "Bring him in here," and Lincoln was carried into a boarding house and laid in the bed of Louisa Peterson, who was away at the Bethlehem Female Seminary. The President died in her bed at 7:22 AM on Easter Saturday, April 15, 1865. Telegraphers flashed the news around the country. Wednesday, April 19th was designated as a national day of mourning.

Secretary of War Stanton directed the search for Lincoln's assassin – and the perpetrators of the brutal assault on Secretary of State Seward – from the Peterson house. With the full weight of the military and police brought to bear, it was only a matter of days until the Lincoln conspirators – John Wilkes Booth, David Herold, George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell (a/k/a Payne), Mary Surratt, Dr. Mudd, Edman Spangler, and two early signers on in the plot to kidnap Lincoln but who were not involved in the plans to assassinate Lincoln – Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen – were identified, caught, and incarcerated, except for Booth who died of a gunshot at the Garrett farm in Virginia. Another conspirator – John Surratt, Jr., Mary's son -- had fled to Canada. He would elude capture for a year and was tried before a civilian court in 1867, the U.S. Supreme Court having held in *Ex Parte Milligan* that trying civilians in a military court was unconstitutional when the civilian courts were functioning. The statute of limitations having run on the lesser charges, Surratt was released when the jury could not unanimously agree on the remaining murder charge.

Stanton favored convening a military commission to quickly try and execute the conspirators. The commission met for the first time on May 8, 1865. All of the defendants except Atzerodt and Powell were represented by attorneys. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania native Brevet Brigadier General William E. Doster was hired by Atzerodt's brother to defend George. The commission appointed Doster to represent Powell, who could not secure his own counsel. Doster was a Yale graduate and obtained his law degree from Harvard. He served with the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry and rose quickly to the rank of Lt. Colonel. His military career was cut short when he contracted malaria after the Gettysburg campaign. In 1865 he was honored with the rank of Brevet Brigadier General "for gallant and meritorious service in the field." Although his illness kept him out of the saddle, Doster turned his combative skills to good use practicing law in Washington City in 1864.

Faced with an eye-witness identifying Powell as Seward's attacker, and weapons, an escape map, and Booth's bank book found in a trunk in Atzerodt's hotel room – Atzerodt was assigned to assassinate Vice President Johnson -- Doster surely realized that his clients would be

convicted. All he could do was try to persuade the commission to spare their lives. In the case of Atzerodt, Doster argued that he was too much of a coward to be that heavily involved in the conspiracy. Atzerodt, after all, failed to carry out Booth's instructions to kill the Vice President. Instead, he downed several drinks at the Kirkland House bar, mere feet from Johnson's room, and then made his way out of Washington City. Doster might also have highlighted his client's lack of intelligence: Atzerodt made a bee-line for a relative's house in nearby Maryland. His trail was not hard to follow. Doster's defense of Powell portrayed the former Confederate soldier as an abused, innocent farm boy turned murderer by the recently concluded cruel war. Doster also argued that Powell suffered from a kind of insanity. After all, Powell was heard to scream as he ran from Seward's home, "I'm mad! I'm mad!" In the end, Doster's eloquent pleas on behalf of both clients came to naught. Atzerodt and Powell were hanged together with David Herold and Mrs. Surratt.

However, that is not the end of the story. In 1978, a historian examining Doster's legal files came across a May 1, 1865, "confession" made by George Atzerodt to the Provost Marshal of Baltimore. Atzerodt's statements directly linked Mrs. Surratt and Dr. Mudd to Booth's original plot to kidnap Lincoln and spirit him to Richmond. More tellingly, Atzerodt confirmed Booth's instructions to Mrs. Surratt – after Booth's plans turned from kidnapping to assassination – to make ready the rifles that she had hidden in her Surrattsville tavern for Booth to pick up after assassinating Lincoln. Inexplicably, the Provost Marshal turned over Atzerodt's statement to Doster, not Secretary of War Stanton. Doster suppressed Atzerodt's statement and never spoke of it. Had he revealed it, the evidence of Mrs. Surratt's guilt would have been that much stronger, and Dr. Mudd – who escaped the death penalty by one vote – surely would have hanged alongside Mrs. Surratt and the others. An unanswerable question remains: Had General Doster chosen to reveal the "confession," could he have made a plea deal with the military commission to spare Atzerodt the death penalty in exchange for Mudd's life?

And what of Louisa Peterson's bed? Peterson's father sold the house for \$4,500 to a speculator who hoped that the government would buy it for a museum. The bed upon which President Lincoln died was sold for \$80. According to Louisa's brother Fred, who gave an interview to the Chicago Historical Society in 1926, the family could have sold the bed many times over. The story of Miss Peterson, her bed, and its connection to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania would never have been known except for a letter that Louisa wrote in 1864 asking about her trunk that had not arrived home yet from school. The letter, found in the Moravian Archives, included details about Peterson's family that led to the "Bethlehem" connection to the household where Lincoln died.

Answer:

Braxton Bragg (b. NC)

From: Civil War Trivia and Fact Book by Webb Garrison