

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 69, No. 6

637th Meeting

March 2020



- Guest:
John Gregor
- Cost:
Members: \$60
Non-Members: \$75
- Date:
Tuesday,
March 10th
- Place:
The Coffee House Club
20 West 44th Street
- Time:
Dinner at 6:00 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm

*You must call
718-341-9811 by
March 3rd if you
plan to attend the
March meeting.*

*We need to know how many people to order for
and your dinner choice, either chicken, salmon
or vegetarian pasta.*

John Gregor

5th in the Bud Livingston Lecture Series

John Gregor is a composer, lyricist and playwright whose musical WITH GLEE, opened Off-Broadway at the Kirk Theatre to sold out audiences and rave reviews. WITH GLEE premiered at the New York Musical Theater Festival.

He is also composer and lyricist of PINKALICIOUS THE MUSICAL, based on the book by Elizabeth and Victoria Kann, now in its 13th year Off-Broadway and produced across the world.

His musical adaptation of Gogol's tragicomic short story THE OVERCOAT (Book and Lyrics) has been presented in London at the Bridewell Theatre, Barrington Stage Company and The New York International Fringe Festival.

An accomplished writer of musicals for young audiences, John has collaborated on THE BULLY for Vital Theatre, NY and THE INVENTION OF EDISON at Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera.

John lives in New York and holds an MFA in musical theatre writing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and a degree in musical theatre from Emerson College.



The Battle of Pea Ridge

The Battle of Pea Ridge played a pivotal role in securing Missouri for the Union and opened Arkansas to Union occupation. It played a large role in preserving Missouri's tenuous loyal-state status.

After the Battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri, August 10, 1861, the command structure on both sides in Missouri underwent major overhauls. Union Major General Henry W. Halleck chose Brigadier General Samuel Ryan Curtis to command the force that fought at Wilson's Creek, the newly christened Army of the Southwest. The Confederates also had command issues. Major General Sterling Price and Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch feuded bitterly, and President Jefferson Davis chose Major General Earl Van Dorn to revive the Confederacy's fortunes in the new Military District of the Trans-Mississippi.

Van Dorn's plan to reinvigorate the Rebel cause west of the Mississippi River exhibited his reputation as an aggressive fighter. He planned to attack Curtis's troops in northwest Arkansas and to capture St. Louis, Missouri. The Rebel Army of the West had about 16,000 men available for the upcoming struggle, while the Federal Army of the Southwest had about 10,250. The Confederates had advantages in men and artillery relative to their opponents, greater than any other Confederate force in a single campaign during the entire Civil War.

Van Dorn ordered the Army of the West north toward Fayetteville (Washington County), hoping to destroy the scattered Union detachments that Curtis dispersed around his central position near Little Sugar Creek. The plan failed as Union Brigadier General Franz Sigel's forces in Bentonville (Benton County) escaped to Union lines around Little Sugar Creek. The Confederate men and animals were

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2020 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2020

• **Tuesday** April 14 •
Fletcher Pratt Winner
Donald Miller

• **Tuesday** May 12 •
Scott Mingus

• **Tuesday** June 9 •
TBD

President's Message

I want to thank everyone who was able to attend our meeting last month for our presentation of the Baroness Lincoln Award to Dr. Joseph Fry for his outstanding book, *Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era* (2019). We had a good crowd for his illuminating presentation on a topic that is seldomly discussed among Civil War academics.



With St. Patrick's Day always so close to our meeting date, March has steadily become Irish history month at our Round Table. The last several years have had speakers and topics that have all related to the Irish experience during the war in one form or another. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. Of the approximately 140,000 Irish-born soldiers in the Federal armies, about one-third came from New York. In many ways, the Irish experience cannot be separated from the history of New York City during the Civil War.

This month we have a unique guest, John Gregor. Unlike most of our other guests, Gregor's presentation will be a bit more theatrical as he will be playing his banjo and singing songs sung by the Irish soldiers during the Civil War. He will be entertaining us all night. If you can make it, then please join us at the Coffee House Club on March 10, 2020 for this rare opportunity.

Look forward to seeing you on the 10th.

KRIS J. KASNICKI

Question of the month:

Where did Joseph E. Johnston, C.S.A., once briefly hold off attackers with a dummy gun?

REMINDER

We are well into our 2019 – 2020 season, and if you haven't sent your dues, please do so now. Below are the categories.

Basic Membership:	Single \$100	Family \$120
Silver Membership:	Single \$150	Family \$175
Gold Membership:	Single \$200	Family \$250
Out-of-Town Members (75 miles from NYC):	Single \$50	Family \$60

Send dues to: CWRTNY @ Connors & Sullivan, 7808 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11209
Attn: Cathey Gabriel. Please do not include your dues and dinner payment on the same check.

*Remember any dues in excess of Basic Membership are considered Contributions and Tax Deductible.

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During business hours.

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SPOTLIGHT: MARTY SMITH

This month we have the opportunity to get to know a little more about Martin (Marty) Smith, the battle he finds most fascinating and why he is such a big Grant fan.

Dispatch: When were you president and did you hold any other positions?

MS: I became president of the Round Table in Fall of 2013 and ended my presidency in the Spring of 2015. I feel very honored to have been one of the Club's "Sesquicentennial" presidents along with Charlie Mander, Bill Finlayson and Paul Weiss. For me it was such a pleasure (and responsibility) to cover the Civil War period from September 1863 until June 1865. Before becoming president, I served as the vice president of programs during Bill Finlayson's presidency. It seems like forever now, but I have been in charge of publicity, the Round Table's website, and answering the Club's email for the past 10 years or so.

Dispatch: When did you first become interested in the Civil War?

MS: I first became interested in the Civil War during the 1990's. I recall reading "The Killer Angels" and suddenly and surprisingly got hooked. During that time I remember going up to Maine and stopping by Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's grave and visiting his house. I was in very deep! But that's just how I "first" got interested. Ask me sometime—and I'll be happy to tell you "the rest of the story!"

Dispatch: What do you find most interesting about the CW and who is your favorite player? Which battle do you think is one of the most important of the CW?

MS: For those of you who don't know me, I am a "Grant" man. It turns out that Ulysses and I share the same birthday...and other stubborn, determined, persistent and creative Taurian traits. Since I'm a "Grant" man, it's the Vicksburg Campaign that I find the most fascinating and most compelling of the Civil War. In fact, in April we will be giving the Fletcher Pratt Award to a historian who has written one of the best books ever about Grant and Vicksburg! I'm really looking forward to that. The reason I find the Vicksburg Campaign so amazing is that Grant was totally in command and

left to his own devices and his own imagination to pursue the campaign as he saw fit. And yes, I use the word "imagination" to describe Grant because how else can you explain the creative application of strategy, pressure, force and surprise that Grant applied all during that campaign?

Dispatch: Can you give us some information about your background?

MS: I sell (and help others sell) the greatest financial product that's ever been created: Dividend-paying, cash-value whole life insurance!

I speak at national conferences and seem to be in more demand than ever. I'm busy with work and travel.

Dispatch: Do you have any hobbies that you enjoy doing?

MS: I've been known to pick up my binoculars and go bird-watching... wander out under the stars by the planetarium at night and admire the constellations...enjoy going to the Sterling Mine in Ogdensburg, New Jersey and touching the rocks and gems...and even writing some Civil War historical fiction about my hero—Ulysses S. Grant!

Dispatch: Any last thoughts you would like to share with our readers?

MS: Yes, when I was asked to become the vice president of programs, I resisted. I didn't want to do it. I thought I didn't have the time. But actually, being the vice president of programs is the very best job in the Round Table. You get to call the most famous historians, authors and "legends" of the Civil War era. You discuss what they would like to talk about. You plan for their stay in New York. If they're available, you take them to lunch and have them all to yourself for hours before the meeting. The most incredible thing is that when I called these famous people and introduced myself—everyone said "Marty, thank you for calling! When would you like me to speak at the Round Table?" That's the power of the Civil War Round Table of New York!



Civil War Events During the Month of March 1862

March 3	The Union Army arrives at New Madrid, Missouri	March 14	New Bern, North Carolina captured
March 6	Lincoln asks Congress to provide funds to states willing to begin the gradual abolition of slavery	March 14	Union forces capture New Madrid, Missouri
March 7/8	Battle of Pea Ridge (Elkhorn Tavern), Arkansas	March 18	George W. Randolph appointed Confederate Secretary of War
March 8	CSS Virginia engages and destroys the USS <i>Cumberland</i> and the USS <i>Congress</i>	March 23	Battle of First Kernstown, Virginia
March 9	USS <i>Monitor</i> and CSS <i>Virginia</i> battle at Hampton Roads, Virginia	March 24	Riot at abolition meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio
March 11	Lincoln relieves McClellan from his position as general-in-chief of the Federal Armies	March 26	Engagement at Apache Canyon, New Mexico Territory
		March 28	Battle of Glorieta Pass, New Mexico Territory

From *American Battlefield Trust*

Earl Van Dorn – A Casualty of the Civil War

Earl was born in Claiborne County, Mississippi on September 17, 1820, to Peter Aaron Van Dorn, a lawyer and judge and Sophia Donelson Caffery, a niece of Andrew Jackson.

When he grew up his family relations to Andrew Jackson secured him an appointment at the United States Military Academy at West Point and he enrolled in 1838. In July 1842 he was appointed a brevet second lieutenant in the 7th U.S. Infantry Regiment and began his army service in the Southern United States.

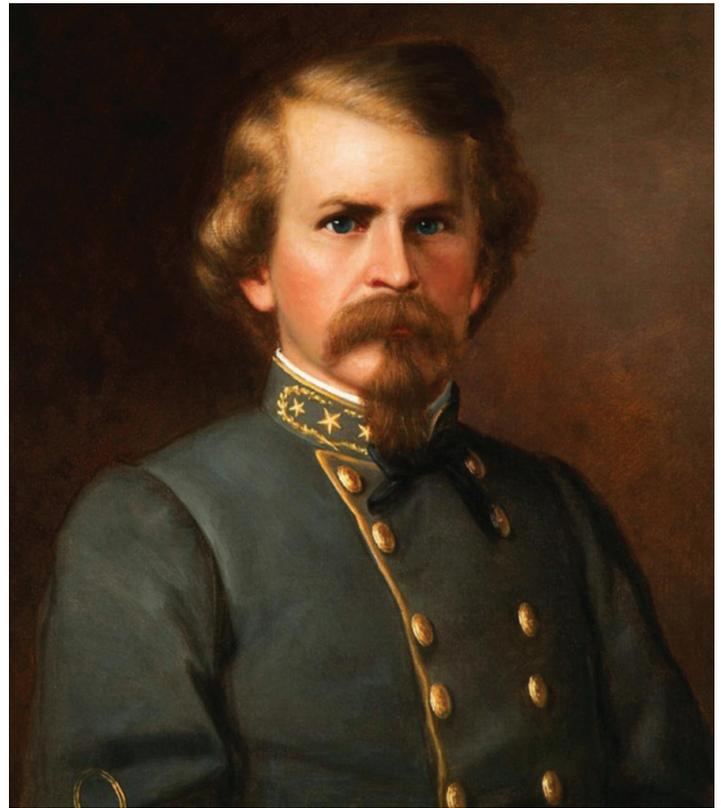
In December 1843, Van Dorn married Caroline Godbold, and the couple would eventually have two children. After fighting in the Mexican-American War, he saw action in Indian Wars with the Seminole in Florida and the Comanche in Texas. However, when the Civil War erupted, he resigned his commission in 1861 to join the Confederacy. After serving briefly as commander of the Mississippi Militia, Van Dorn received a commission in the regular Confederate army as a colonel of infantry in March 1861.



Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, by Kurz & Allison

In January 1862, Van Dorn, now a major general, was given command of the newly-formed Trans-Mississippi Military District. Van Dorn immediately faced a Union invasion of Arkansas. He personally took charge of his two Confederate armies and devised a complex flanking maneuver designed not only to defeat the smaller Union force but also to advance north through Missouri, capture St. Louis and threaten Ulysses S. Grant's armies. Despite his numerical advantage, Van Dorn's two-pronged attack on entrenched Federal positions at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, failed due to delays, lack of supplies, and the loss of his top two army commanders. The Union forces counterattacked and drove Van Dorn's armies from the field.

Van Dorn suffered a similar fate at the Second Battle of Corinth, Mississippi. Again failing to properly reconnoiter the defensive position of his opponent, Van Dorn's attack on General Rosecrans's Federal troops fell short and was eventually repulsed, forcing the Confederates to retreat. Following the battle, Van Dorn was relieved of his army command and reassigned to command General John C.



Confederate General Earl Van Dorn

Pemberton's cavalry. As a cavalry commander Van Dorn would achieve his greatest success in a raid on Grant's supply depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi, on December 20, 1862. Van Dorn's raid thwarted Grant's initial plan to attack Vicksburg and cut the Confederacy in half. On May 7, 1863, Van Dorn was shot dead at his headquarters by a husband jealous of the attentions Van Dorn paid his wife. He was buried at the Wintergreen Cemetery in Port Gibson, Mississippi.

Legends of America by Kathy Weiser-Alexander, updated February 2020.

BOOKS ON THE CIVIL WAR

Congress at War: How Republicans Reformers Fought the Civil War, Defied Lincoln, Ended Slavery, and Remade America, by Fergus Borderwich, publisher is Alfred A. Knopf NY 2020

The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native People in the Fight for the West, by Megan Kate Nelson, Scribner NY 2020

A Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence in the Confederate States of America, by Jubal Anderson Early, First published in 1867 by Charles W. Button, Reissued 2019

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worn out from the march over the Boston Mountains, had had little sleep, and brought few supplies. Despite this, Van Dorn formed an even more ambitious plan. He decided to attack from the rear. He split the Army of the West into two forces, separated by Pea Ridge, one under McCulloch to skirt the western edge of the ridge and come in behind the Federal troops, while the other wing under Price would take the Bentonville Detour around the ridge, then take Telegraph Road south and link with McCulloch at Elkhorn Tavern to attack in the rear. While Curtis did not anticipate such a wide-ranging envelopment, he took precautions by felling trees and making obstructions to delay any Rebel moves around Pea Ridge via the Bentonville Detour.

The Confederate attack began the morning of March 7. Curtis initially believed that the Rebels were trying to slip part of their force around his right flank but that most of the force was in front of him. He dispatched troops under Colonel Peter J. Osterhaus from the Second Division to determine the strength of the Confederates to the west of his army. This sparked the first shots of the battle. After initial success, the Rebel attack at Leetown (Benton County) met disaster as McCulloch decided to reconnoiter the Federal position and was killed by Union troops. Yankee soldiers also gunned down the second-in-command, Brigadier General James McIntosh. The Confederates had huge advantages in numbers and men, but no leaders.

All was not lost for the Rebels. Colonel Louis Hébert led a large force east of Leetown in an attack on still-outnumbered forces. Hébert did not know about McCulloch and McIntosh's deaths and that he was the highest-ranking Confederate officer on this part of the field. He led his force of about 2,000 in an uncoordinated and unsupported attack. His attack ran into dense woods and seemed to make progress. Yankee reinforcements led by Colonel Jefferson Columbus Davis of the Third Division blunted the assault; Hébert got lost in the woods and was captured. Thus the Confederates were down to the fourth-ranking officer on the battlefield, Brigadier General Albert Pike. Pike did nothing to keep the Rebel effort going.

Price's force was late in starting its attack, but once in action the Confederates made great progress. About 10:30 a.m., Curtis became aware of large numbers of Rebels on Telegraph Road, behind him. Colonel Eugene Carr's Fourth Division gave ground grudgingly before Price's superior numbers. In the late afternoon, the Confederates pushed Carr's battered Fourth Division back from the area around Elkhorn Tavern. Missouri rebels led by Colonel Henry Little forced the Federal troops around Elkhorn Tavern south to Ruddick's cornfield. A flank movement by Price's forces against the Fourth Iowa under Colonel Grenville

Dodge failed, but Little's men moving east on Huntsville Road dislodged the Iowans as nightfall ended the fighting.

The Battle of Pea Ridge would be decided the next day. Curtis spent most of the night of March 7 preparing. He rearranged the Army of the Southwest and made sure the men were fed, rested, and supplied with ammunition. The next morning, Union troops were ready to resume combat, but the Confederates were not. Van Dorn needed to reconcentrate the army. In the process, he forgot to bring up the supply trains. Most of the Rebels did not get food or new ammunition. The mistake proved fatal.

The fighting on March 8 was decisive. Federal cannoneers quickly silenced, destroyed, or forced their Rebel counterparts to retreat. As Curtis prepared to attack with the entire Army of the Southwest, Van Dorn realized his supply trains were still in Bentonville. Comprehending he had lost and was in danger of being trapped and destroyed, Van Dorn sent the exhausted army east toward Huntsville (Madison County). The Battle of Pea Ridge was over, and it was a resounding Union victory.

The battle was one of the bloodiest west of the Mississippi. The Confederates suffered about 2,000 casualties. The Union had 1,384 casualties.

Pea Ridge changed the strategic outlook of the Civil War in the trans-Mississippi west. Van Dorn was so demoralized that he took the Army of the West to the east bank of the Mississippi, leaving Arkansas defenseless. This, combined with the Union victory at Pea Ridge, secured Missouri for the Union. Although Confederates made other attempts to take Missouri, the Pea Ridge Campaign proved to be the best opportunity for the Rebels. With Missouri and St. Louis secure, the Union emphasis switched to capturing the rest of the Mississippi River Valley.

From the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*

SUGGESTIONS

The Dispatch welcomes articles, book reviews (non-fiction only) and suggestions. Just send them in to our mailing address.

Answer:

At Munson's Hill, from which the dome of the Capital in Washington was visible.

Civil War Trivia and Fact Book by Webb Garrison