

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 68, No. 7

627th Meeting

February 2019



- Guest:
Barondess Lincoln Award
Lincoln's Last Trial
by Dan Abrams and David Fisher
- Cost:
Members: \$50
Non-Members: \$60
- Date:
Monday,
February 11th
- 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

You must call 718-341-9811 by February 4th if you plan to attend the February meeting. We need to know how many people to order food for.

Barondess Lincoln Award

The winner of our prestigious Barondess Lincoln Award is *Lincoln's Last Trial* by Dan Abrams and David Fisher

Abraham Lincoln's legend was formed well before he became America's 16th president in 1860. Popularly known to his Illinois friends, neighbors and colleagues as "Honest Abe," he was admired as much for his rough-hewn, self-educated, rail-splitting youth as his mature identity as one of the leading lawyers in the state capital of Springfield. There he took on civil and criminal cases, along with minor legal transactions, and polished the oratorical skills that would vault him to the White House, after arguing against slavery in his fabled debates with Stephen Douglas.

The historic outlines are all too familiar but now ABC News chief legal affairs anchor Dan Abrams and author David Fisher deliver the pre-presidential Abe from hazy myth with *Lincoln's Last Trial: The Murder Case That Propelled Him to the Presidency*.

Walt Whitman's Washington Dateline

Reporting on Abraham Lincoln's second inauguration just over a month before Robert E. Lee's surrender, a New York Times reporter juxtaposed the scene of the inaugural ball that took place in the patent office in Washington to his memory, two years earlier, of when the same location housed the wounded and dying.

"Tonight," he wrote. "Beautiful women, perfumes, the violins' sweetness, the polka and the waltz; but then, the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of the old wounds and blood and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away unintended there."

That reporter was the poet Walt Whitman. During the Civil War, The Times employed a large staff to cover the war all across the country, sending information with unprecedented speed by way of railroad and telegraph. The

rapidly evolving and war-torn country provided tales of journalists that were as rich as their reports. A grief-stricken Samuel Wilkeson, the Washington bureau chief, found his dead son on the battlefield at Gettysburg. In Charleston, a correspondent named Jasper was accused of espionage and forced to flee the South in disguise.

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APOLOGY

We have been advised by the legal department of Penguin Press that our citation from *Grant* by Ron Chernow in our December *Dispatch* was inadvertently posted in the wrong place, that is, at the close of the article.

It should have been placed at the beginning of the article as follows, on page one, and appear like this:

"Henry Halleck Leaves the West and the Union is Saved," excerpted from *Grant* by Ron Chernow.

We apologize for this inadvertent error and it will not happen again.

2019 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2019

• **Monday March 10th** •
Niall O'Dowd
Lincoln and the Irish

• **Monday April 8th** •
Fletcher Pratt Award winner
Dr. Timothy Smith
The Real Horse Soldiers

• **Monday May 13th** •
Fletcher Pratt Award

President's Message

It is with happy heart that I am able to deliver our message for this year as we present the Baroness Lincoln Award to David Fisher, whose book *Lincoln's Last Trial* sheds light on how someone who might have been thought to be outgrowing his local issues still cared enough to take a chance and protect the innocent. David Fisher, it will be a pleasure to introduce you to the members of our Round Table.

David Fisher and Dan Abrams are joining the ranks of winners as esteemed as Harold Holzer and Jack Davis, as well as Tony Kushner and Gore Vidal. Even Governor Mario Cuomo has shared this honor.

As we reflect on President Lincoln's legacy, and the ethical decisions he was forced to make, we now have to reflect on what today's world leaders will have to do, with America as the canary in the coal mine for leadership in regards to freedom and global history. Let these meetings be a reminder that things can always be darker than they are now, and that violence in the face of disagreement is never the answer.

Next month we have the pleasure of welcoming a confidante of one of our former presidents, Bill Clinton. Niall O'Dowd was instrumental in Ireland's Good Friday peace agreement, and has written both about the Irish during the American Civil War and Irish-Americans during the great tragedy of September 11th, 2001.

Please enjoy our meeting this month, and we look forward to seeing you in March. God Bless America.

MICHAEL N. CONNORS



Dues are due

If you haven't already paid your dues, please send your checks in now. After October, the price rises to \$60. If we don't hear from you by January 1, we will be obliged to drop your name from our mailing lists. Sorry about that. We now have three yearly dues categories:

	Individual	Family	
Basic	\$60	\$80	
Silver	\$70	\$95	
Gold	\$120	\$170	
Out of Town	\$25	\$35	(75 miles or more)
Student	\$25		

New members please add \$10 initiation fee

You may choose any appropriate amount to send in, but it will be greatly appreciated if you are able to remit the amounts in the second or third categories.

Send dues to CWRTNY 139-33 250th Street, Rosedale, N.Y. 11422
Do not include your dues and dinner payment on the same check.

THE DISPATCH



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**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.

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February During the Civil War

1862

16 – Simon B. Buckner, the brand new commander of Fort Donelson, gives his unconditional surrender to U.S. Grant, as the war takes an ungentleman-like turn.

25 – Union forces storm into Nashville and the capital of a Confederate state is again the capital of Tennessee, U.S.A.

1863

8 – The mailing privileges of the *Chicago Times* are suspended by military order for allegedly making disloyal statements. (The same for the *Brooklyn Eagle*.)

23 – Simon Cameron, former secretary of war, is sent to Siberia. His replacement is the humorless but very efficient E.M. Stanton who had badly hurt Lincoln with insults in ante-bellum days.

1864

20 – Florida's main battle – Olustee, near Lake City- takes place where the CSA, under Joseph Finegan, gives the Union troops a bloody nose.

22 – There is a fight, at Ivey's Farm or Ivy's Hills – whatever you call it as N.B. Forrest humiliates Union forces under W. Sooy Smith.

1865

18 – Payback time for South Carolina as Columbia burns and Sherman destroys everything of military value in the defenseless South.

22 – The Rebel's last major fort is now lost. The Yankees take Wilmington, N.C., without a fight practically ending the need for the Blockade.

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Yet for today's readers, one of the most recognizable wartime bylines isn't that of a correspondent on the front lines, but Whitman's. The poet had only just begun to acquire the popular appeal he would achieve over the second half of his life; at the time of the war, he was working as a government clerk in Washington and volunteering as a nurse. To supplement his salary, he worked as a free lancer for newspapers back in his native New York.

"He is eloquent in his praise of common soldiers, of their dignity, stoicism and dedication to the preservation of the Union," said Kenneth M. Price, co-editor of the Walt Whitman Archive at the University of Nebraska -Lincoln. "Whitman had little patience with bloated accounts of war as grand and heroic. He saw the effects of war up close in the hospitals."

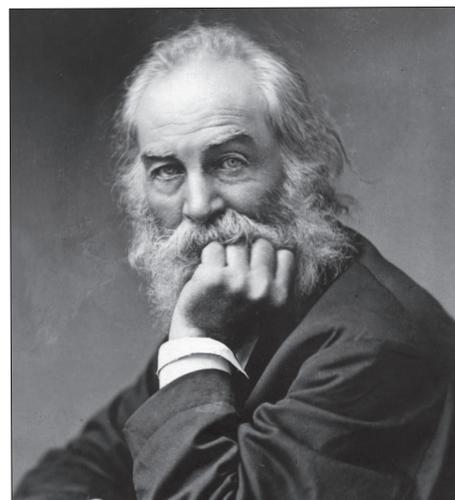
In the 1860s, The *Times* was a leading Republican paper. The editor, Henry Jarvis Raymond, was chairman of the Republican National Committee and a loyal supporter of Lincoln. Raymond's strong conviction in preserving the Union closely aligned with Whitman's own wartime politics, making the paper a natural outlet for his writing. Whitman also wrote for The *Brooklyn Daily Union* and The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, where he once worked as an editor.

Whitman's descriptions of Washington showed a diverse population coexisting in a city he saw as "royal plenty and nature's own bounty - American, prairie-like." "The capital contained multitudes, a broken, but functioning Congress working beneath an unfinished Capitol dome that would house the Statue of Freedom, cast by the slave craftsman Philip Reid.

Bridging the gap between Washington's elite and the everyday soldier was Lincoln. He painted a modest image of the president, "dressed in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty" - yet in his features Whitman described a powerful aura.

"None of the artists or pictures have caught the deep, though subtle and indirect expression of this man's face," he wrote.

"They have only caught the surface. There is something else there. One of the great portrait painters of two or three centuries ago is needed."



Whitman spent his free time listening to soldiers from all over the country, writing their letters and bringing them gifts or food. His literary portraits of the wounded provided readers with a view that focused on healing and commonality.

"Through kindness, small gifts and love he assisted some men through the pain of amputation and the indignities of dysentery," Dr. Price said. "Several soldiers credited him with saving their lives."

The war years inspired some of his most famous works: he would come to be called the "poet of democracy," and in writing for The *Times*, Whitman was piecing together a divided, changing nation.

"I find men here from every State in the Union, without exception," Whitman wrote in 1863. "I now doubt whether one can get a fair idea of what this war practically is, or what genuine America is, and her character, without some such experience as this I have had for the past seven or eight months in the hospitals."

By Will Dudding From the *NY Times* 10/23/2018

NEW RECRUITS

Bill Rini from Roslyn, a friend of Pat Falci, who is interested in Cavalry

Patrick Zwiebel from Williston Park, retired NYPD

Maria Nahmmacher from Staten Island, a friend of Margaret Echanique

Christopher Ritchie from Roxbury, Mass.

DRESS CODE

Ladies and gentlemen: PLEASE

No sneakers, no jeans, no tee shirts. Gentlemen, please wear a collared shirt. Let's dress like we are attending a business meeting.

Thanks, The Management

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 then and since 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 your reservation and we may ask you to pay for those no-show dinners. It is better for you to pay than the club should suffer the loss... 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 make every month.



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