

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 68, No. 3

624th Meeting

November 2018



• Guest:
Peter Carmichael
*The Common Soldier
in the Civil War*

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

• Date:
**Monday,
November 12th**

• Place:
**The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street**

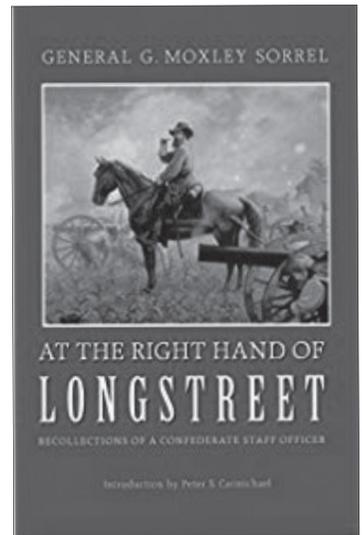
• Time:
**Dinner at 6:00 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm**

*You must call
718-341-9811 by
November 5th if you
plan to attend the
November meeting.*

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

Peter Carmichael The Common Soldier in the Civil War

Peter Carmichael is the Fluhrer Professor of History and the director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. After completing his doctorate at Penn State University under Dr. Gary Gallagher, Professor Carmichael went on to teach at Western Carolina University. His books include *At The Right Hand of Longstreet*, *Lee's Young Artillerist*, and *The Last Generation*.



How Henry Halleck Almost Lost The War

With his faith in George McClellan increasingly shaken, Abraham Lincoln mentioned the controversy swirling around Shiloh. Grant served as a standing rebuke to Little Mac, proof that you could send inexperienced troops into battle and emerge victorious without months of laborious training. Lincoln already pinned hopes on Grant, but he needed reassurance. Edwin Stanton wired Halleck that Lincoln wanted to know “whether any neglect or misconduct of General Grant or any other officer contributed to the sad casualties that befell our forces.” In notably tepid language, Halleck defended Grant from insinuations of misconduct at Shiloh, but Midwest politicians still harried Lincoln about Grant. “Why, after Shiloh,” Lincoln recounted to an editor, “a Republican senator from Iowa denounced him to me as bloodthirsty, reckless of human life, utterly unfit to lead troops, and because I

wouldn't sit down and dismiss him at once, went out in a rage, slamming the door after him.”

On April 11, with Grant still languishing under a cloud, Henry Halleck arrived at Pittsburg Landing to take personal command of the army there. One officer recorded this impression of him: “He was carefully dressed in a new uniform, wearing his sword, and carrying himself erect, with a distant and somewhat austere manner... as he walked down the steamer's gangplank. Clad in a spiffy uniform, Halleck stood out in a muddy atmosphere produced by days of rain and was shocked by the chaos he discovered in the aftermath of battle. When General John Pope arrived with his 30,000-strong Army of the Mississippi, Halleck merged it with the Army of the Ohio under Buell and the Army of the Tennessee to create a unified force of 110,000 soldiers. On April 30, he suddenly demoted Grant to second-in-command of the whole, a thankless job that dealt a serious blow to his pride, leaving him to twist in a cruel limbo without clear authority. Although Grant brooded,

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2018 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2019

• **Monday December 10th** •
James I. (Bud) Robertson

• **Monday January 14th** •
Jay Jorgensen
Lee-Jackson Night

• **Monday February 11th** •
Barondess Lincoln Award

President's Message

Welcome once again from the Civil War Round Table of New York! November seems to have always proven an interesting month during our nation's self-defining conflict. In 1861, the Trent Affair was one of the key moments in our nation's shaping of foreign policy. November of 1861 also marked Jefferson Davis' ascension to the presidency of the Confederacy. However, November of 1862 marked several changes that many would consider providential.

It was in November of 1862 that President Lincoln relieved George McClellan of command, and despite the brief and unfortunate interlude of Ambrose Burnside, that would pave the way for George Meade, and of course, eventually, Ulysses Simpson Grant. On the Confederate front, Stonewall Jackson and James Longstreet were both promoted to lieutenant general in that same month.

However, despite November's seemingly historic focus on the highest echelons of power, our speaker this month will be focusing on the story of the common man in the Civil War. It will be a pleasure to welcome Peter Carmichael for our dinner this coming month. His attention to those who did not necessarily stand tall in history, including his extensive examination of slavery in North America, will be a reminder of a perspective often lost through the lens of time. This seems appropriate, considering that in November of 1865, Minnesota and Wisconsin held votes for black state suffrage.

Once again, our location will be the same for all of the aforementioned meetings; after all, consistency is essential with any campaign. Our theater of choice is New York's historic 3 West Club, 3 West 51st Street in Manhattan. The coming dates are Monday, November 12th and Monday, December 10th, 2018. Let us all hope for a great Fall harvest!

MICHAEL N. CONNORS

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

SUGGESTIONS

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



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.**

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November During the Civil War

1861

2 – The pathfinder finds a new path. John C. Fremont is now gone with the wind.

5 – The CSA has a new commander of the new Department of South Carolina, Georgia and East Florida. Who? Robert E. Lee.

1862

9 – A loss for the Union and a gain for the CSA, Ambrose Burnside, who knows he is not up to the job, is now in command of the Army of the Potomac.

27 – President Lincoln confers with Old Burn and suggests some strategy. His advice is ignored and the fiasco at Fredericksburg is now in the cards.

1863

19 – The very brief but unforgettable Gettysburg address is delivered and is panned by the Democratic press.

28-29 – Longstreet attempts to crack the Cracker Line but fails and the siege of Chattanooga will soon be broken.

1864

8 – In the wartime election it is Lincoln/Johnson 212, McClellan/Pendleton 21. The Union will have long Lincoln a little longer.

30 – Fredericksburg in reverse. J.B. Hood unleashes a massive frontal attack against well-posted Federals (will they ever learn?). Among the Confederate dead are Pat Cleburne and SR (States Rights) Gist- who had the strangest name in the CSA.

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he did not complain openly at first about this painful humiliation. As in his prewar business dealings, Grant was again deceived at first about his true friends.

Grant's sudden elevation had proven a mixed blessing for Halleck. To the extent it boosted his prestige, he delighted in it, but he also feared the emergence of a competitor. Halleck pretended to be Grant's champions while subtly stabbing him in the back. For all his bookish knowledge, Halleck had not experienced the slashing realities of war, whereas the intuitive Grant was now steeped in combat experience. Sherman thought that Halleck, being distant from battle, was too tough on Grant, yet a deeper gulf separated the two men. Obsessed with bureaucratic forms, Halleck could not appreciate the fighting skill of the slovenly, disorganized Grant. "Brave & able in the field," Halleck wrote of Grant, "he has no idea of how to regulate & organize his forces before a battle." In Halleck's topsy-turvy world, it was more important to look and act the part of a general than to win battles and crush the enemy.

On May 11, Grant wrote to Halleck to request that his command be restored or that he wished to be relieved from further duty. He explicitly absolved Halleck of responsibility for his plight, blaming "studied persistent opposition to me by persons outside of the army." Since Grant had meditated returning to the West Coast, his aides maneuvered futilely to obtain a command for him there, which would have removed him from serious action for the rest of the war. Grant informed Julia he would apply for a leave of absence unless he were reassigned to a new command.

Grant was talked out of this wrongheaded decision by two persuasive people: Rawlins and Sherman. By now Rawlins had attained extraordinary power on Grant's staff. As Grant wrote admiringly, he had "become thoroughly acquainted with the routine of the office and takes off my hands the examination of most all papers. I think he is one of the best men I ever knew." Besides protecting Grant from drink, Rawlins gave his staff some semblance of the management order Halleck found so woefully lacking.

But it was Sherman's intercession that conclusively dissuaded Grant from resigning. Once he learned from Halleck that Grant had gotten permission to leave the

department the next morning, he spurred his horse to Grant's tent and saw his camp chests and papers all bound up for departure. The embattled Grant was "seated on a camp-stool with papers on a rude camp-table; he seemed to be employed in assorting letters, and trying them up with red tape into convenient bundles." Distressed by a sense of injustice, Grant disclosed that he was heading to St. Louis. "You know that I am in the way here. I have stood it as long as I can, and can endure it no longer." He added morosely, "If I can't command a brigade or a division, I can carry a musket." Sherman pleaded with Grant to withhold his resignation for two weeks. When his appeal worked, Sherman rejoiced: "Grant certainly appreciated my friendly advice, and promised to wait awhile: at all events, not to go without seeing me again or communicating with me."

Grant stayed in the army and within two weeks Sherman fell under his command, staying there throughout the war. Sherman said flatly that his advice to Grant had been the turning point of the war. Few things secured the fate of the Union as much as the bond of loyalty struck between these two generals who believed themselves wronged by the world's estimation of them.

By May 28, Halleck's huge army had pulled within a mile of Corinth's defenses. Halleck loved the archaic art of the siege and proceeded to institute one with textbook precision. When Grant suggested that, with a well-timed bluff on the left and center of their lines, the right wing of the army could easily overrun Corinth. "General Halleck received the suggestion coldly and treated it as being entirely impracticable," wrote Augustus Chetlain.

Grant's suspicion of Confederate weakness was vindicated on the night of May 29-30, 1862, when Beauregard's army, ravaged by disease and struggling with Shiloh amputees, evacuated Corinth before Halleck could attack. They stole away to Tupelo while duping Union troops with fake guns, dummy cannon, and scarecrows stuffed into rebel uniforms. When Halleck saw towering columns of smoke curling above the town, he imagined Beauregard was being reinforced, whereas Grant drew the correct inference that the Confederates were fleeing, destroying anything that might fall into Union hands.

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Halleck hailed Corinth's fall as a brilliant victory that confirmed his military genius, writing proudly to his wife how the soldiers had dubbed him "Old Brains." Lew Wallace rendered a harsher but more accurate verdict: "Corinth was not captured. It had been abandoned to us; shattered windows, and rotting food dumped into the streets, all valuable supplies having been taken away or incinerated." Grant commiserated with the townspeople. "Soldiers who fight battles do not experience half their horrors," he lamented to Julia. "All the hardships come upon the weak women and children." Grant believed Corinth could have been taken two days after Shiloh if Beauregard's army had been vigorously pursued. If Halleck had possessed the faintest idea of the weakness of the Confederate army holed up there, he thought he could have marched against it sooner.

Excerpted from *Grant* by Ron Chernow

To be continued in December

NEW WAY TO PAY

If you haven't been to the last 2 meetings, you might not know that you can now use your credit card to pay for dinner, dues, and even raffle tickets. We can't yet offer this method for paying by phone or online, but if you're at the meeting, you can use cash, check or credit.

21st Century, we're here at last!



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