

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 69, No. 5

636th Meeting

February 2020



- Guest:  
**Barondess-Lincoln Award**  
Joseph A. Fry
- Cost:  
**Members: \$60**  
**Non-Members: \$75**
- Date:  
**Thursday,**  
**February 13<sup>th</sup>**
- 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  
February 6<sup>th</sup> if you  
plan to attend the  
February meeting.**  
**We need to know  
how many people  
to order food for.**

## Joseph A. Fry

**4th in the Bud Livingston Lecture Series**



Joseph A. (Andy) Fry is a distinguished professor of history emeritus at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 1970 and 1974 and his B.A. from Davis and Elkins College in 1969. He joined the UNLV faculty in 1975 and retired in December 2013. He taught courses on U.S. foreign relations, history of the American South after 1850, U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and the U.S. history survey.

Fry has published six books: *Henry S. Sanford: Diplomacy and Business in Nineteenth Century America* (1982); *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (1992); *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (2002); *Debating Vietnam: Fulbright, Stennis, and Their Senate Hearings* (2006); and *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie* (2015); *Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era* (2019). He has published articles in *Diplomatic History*, the *Pacific Historical Review*, and various other journals and collections. He is the series editor for *Biographies in American Foreign Policy* published by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. To date, 18 volumes have appeared.

Fry's current research focuses on *Lincoln, Seward, and U.S. Foreign Relations in the 1860s*.

## Lincoln, Seward and Foreign Relations During the Civil War Era

The Civil War marked a significant turning point in American history—not only for the United States itself but also for its relations with foreign powers both during and after the conflict. The friendship and foreign policy partnership between President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William Henry Seward shaped those US foreign policies. These unlikely allies, who began as rivals during the 1860 presidential nomination, helped ensure that America remained united and prospered in the aftermath of the nation's consuming war.

In *Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era*, Joseph A. Fry examines the foreign policy

decisions that resulted from this partnership and the legacy of those decisions. Lincoln and Seward, despite differences in upbringing, personality, and social status, both adamantly believed in the preservation of the union and the need to stymie slavery. They made that conviction the cornerstone of their policies abroad, and through those policies, such as Seward threatening war with any nation that intervened in the Civil War, they prevented European intervention that could have led to Northern defeat. The Union victory allowed America to resume imperial expansion, a dynamic that Seward sustained beyond Lincoln's death during his tenure as President Andrew Johnson's Secretary of State.

Fry's analysis of the Civil War from an international perspective and the legacy of US policy decisions provides a more complete view of the war and a deeper understanding of this crucial juncture in American history.

## 2020 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2020

• **Tuesday March 10** •  
TBD

• **Tuesday April 14** •  
**Fletcher Pratt Winner**  
TBD

• **Tuesday May 12** •  
TBD

## President's Message

I was very happy to see such a large turnout at our first meeting at the Coffee House Club in January for our Lee/Jackson Night. I wanted to thank Jay Jorgensen for his wonderful presentation regarding the portrayal of Lee in literature throughout the years.

February is Black History Month and we would be remiss in not acknowledging the countless lives and sacrifices made by United States Colored Troops (USCT) towards the Union victory and the preservation of our nation.

The United States War Department issued General Order Number 143 on May 22, 1863, establishing the Bureau of Colored Troops to facilitate the recruitment of African American soldiers to fight for the Union Army. Almost immediately thereafter, the Confederacy announced that former slaves fighting for the Union would be considered fugitives engaged in vile insurrection and summarily executed. USCT soldiers suffered extraordinary violence at the hands of Confederate soldiers, who singled them out for mistreatment. They were often the victims of battlefield massacres and atrocities at the hands of the Confederates, most notably at Fort Pillow in Tennessee, at the Battle of the Crater in Virginia, and at the Battle of Olustee in Florida.

Despite these hazards, by the end of the war in April 1865, the 175 USCT regiments constituted about 180,000 men, or one-tenth of the total manpower of the Union Army. About 20% of USCT soldiers died, a rate about 35% higher than that for white Union troops. Despite heavy casualties, many fought with distinction with 16 USCT soldiers receiving the Medal of Honor and numerous others receiving other honors. We must always remember the critical role played by USCT in forging a new birth of freedom for our nation.

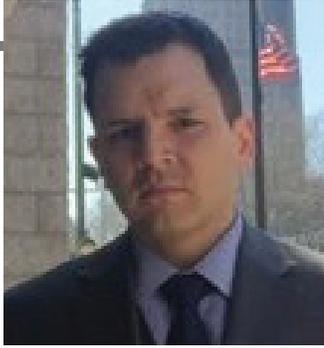
This month we also have the presentation of our annual Barondess/Lincoln Award. Barondess/Lincoln Award is presented each February to any person or institution for contributing to the greater appreciation of the life and work of Abraham Lincoln. The award is named in memory of a founding member of our Round Table, Benjamin Barondess, and has been presented annually since 1962.

This year our winner is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, Joseph A. "Andy" Fry, for his book "Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era." Dr. Fry is an expert in the historical analysis of U.S. foreign policy, and his latest book is more than just an examination of one of the greatest political partnerships in US history. It is also an insightful study on how the course of the nation's greatest domestic crisis revolved around its delicate relations with foreign powers.

If you want to see Dr. Fry being presented with the Barondess/Lincoln Award and discuss his fascinating new book, please come to our next meeting on Thursday, February 13, 2020 at the Coffee House Club.

I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

*KRIS J. KASNICKI*



# THE DISPATCH



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## 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.**

<b>Basic Membership:</b>	Single \$100	Family \$120
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<b>Silver Membership:</b>	Single \$150	Family \$175
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<b>Gold Membership:</b>	Single \$200	Family \$250
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### Out-of-Town Members

<b>(75 miles from NYC):</b>	Single \$50	Family \$60
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**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.

## SPOTLIGHT: PAUL WEISS

This month we have the opportunity to discover a little more about Paul Weiss. Paul has been a member of the club since 1999, and as many of you may know, Paul is not only a Civil War enthusiast, but also an avid fan of jazz as well.

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

**PW:** I served as president from 2015 -17; prior to that, I was VP of Programming and VP of Operations.

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

**PW:** When I was a young boy. It may have even connected with me being a Yankee fan (from about age 5) and just being attracted, at first, by the name. Like many others, I later read Bruce Catton's books and got hooked.

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

**PW:** I'm a "Battles & Leaders" guy and am most interested in the tactics, strategy, and weapons. It's hard to pick one favorite, maybe Sherman and Thomas in the North; Cleburne and Longstreet in the South. My view on key battles has shifted over the years. It's difficult to positively state that one battle, or even a campaign was decisive. Some favor Antietam, some Vicksburg, some Gettysburg, but I find myself leaning toward Sherman seizing Atlanta because of when it happened - just before the 1864 election. It provided a huge boost for Union morale and pretty much assured Lincoln's reelection. Without that, McClellan might have won, which would have led to an uneasy ceasefire/peace and a separated country.

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

**PW:** Born in Brooklyn, raised on Long Island, and a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. Through ROTC, I went on active duty as an Infantry Officer for about four years, including one in Vietnam. After the service, I eventually started working with the Department of Veteran's Affairs (the "VA") and wound up staying with them for the next 35 years. I am now happily retired.

**Dispatch:** Do you think your experiences in Vietnam affect how you view the Civil War?

**PW:** Very much so. I have a deep appreciation of how difficult it is to control large bodies of troops through various types of terrain and weather, and how noisy and confused a battlefield can be, even for a small unit action. Under all the adverse conditions they faced, its often amazing to me how much the officers and men on both sides accomplished

**Dispatch:** We understand that you are a jazz enthusiast; what sparked your interest in jazz? Who is your favorite jazz artist?

**PW:** When I was at Pittsburgh, there is a section - Shadyside - that had small jazz clubs, kind of like the Village here in New York. I liked what I heard and have been a fan since. Favorite jazz musician is Charlie "Bird" Parker, and favorite jazz vocalist is Ella Fitzgerald, "The First Lady of Song".

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

**PW:** You can't fully appreciate the war until you tour the battlefields, and walk the actual terrain where soldiers, fought, bled, and (too often) died. And, to keep those Battlefields preserved, SUPPORT the American Battlefield Trust.



## Civil War Events During the Month of February 1862

February 3	President Lincoln declines an offer of war elephants from the King of Siam	February 22	Jefferson Davis inaugurated as President of the Confederate States of America. He had been serving as the Confederacy's provisional president since February 1862
February 6	Surrender of Fort Henry, Tennessee	February 23	Federal troops occupy Fayetteville, Arkansas
February 7/8	Battle of Roanoke Island, North Carolina	February 25	Federal troops occupy Nashville, Tennessee
February 10	Union forces destroy the Confederate "Mosquito" fleet at Elizabeth City, North Carolina		
February 11-14	Union ironclad gunboats attack Fort Donelson, Tennessee		
February 15	All-out Confederate counter-attack at Fort Donelson		
February 16	Fort Donelson surrenders unconditionally to Ulysses S. Grant		
February 20/21	Battle of Val Verde, New Mexico Territory		

From *American Battlefield Trust*

### Question of the month:

**On what occasion did Lincoln first suggest that it might be advisable to issue an emancipation edict?**

# The Civil War on Roanoke Island

## Fort Raleigh National Historic Site

The outbreak of the Civil War did not initially affect the people living on Roanoke Island. Isolated physically by water from the mainland and psychologically away from the mainstream of Southern society, the Bankers continued on with their lives in a large measure oblivious to what was tearing apart the rest of the country. While many individuals throughout North Carolina actively supported the Confederate cause, this was not necessarily the case in the Outer Banks, especially on Roanoke Island. The people of Roanoke Island were described as “rather indifferent” concerning the war. They wished to be merely left alone, even though some owned a considerable amount of slaves. However, the Union’s blockade of the South would see its formative stages implemented on the North Carolina coastal region, bringing this sense of unawareness to an abrupt halt.

Both the Union Navy and the forces of the Confederacy realized that the Outer Banks and Roanoke Island were not only the key to any initial penetration of the Southern defenses in North Carolina but also the back door to the strategic naval base at Norfolk, Virginia. Additionally, Roanoke was at the epicenter of the Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds and a key to the inland waterway traffic. Initially, the Confederacy was able to have a number of its warships, blockade-runners, and privateers sally forth from the Outer Banks area. Vitaly needed goods flowed into the Confederacy through the porous North Carolina coastline. Confederate forces also managed to capture several Union prizes before the strength of the Union Navy was brought to bear. Consequently, the Confederacy massed men and equipment to defend the Outer Banks and Roanoke Island while Union forces concentrated for the first major naval offensive of the war.

These actions led to the Battle of Roanoke Island and the subsequent Union occupation of Roanoke Island led, in turn, to the establishment of a Freedmen’s Colony on the island.



Contemporary depiction of Burnside’s Union fleet landing at Roanoke Island, February 1862.

*Library of Congress*

### BOOKS ON THE CIVIL WAR

*Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, by David W. Blight, Simon & Schuster \$13.39

*They Were Her Property: White Women Slave Owners*, by Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, Yale University Press, Hard-cover \$22.22

*It Wasn’t About Slavery: Exposing the Great Lie*, by Samuel W. Mitcham Jr., Regnery Publishing, \$20.49

### COFFEE HOUSE UPDATE

Those of you who missed January’s meeting didn’t get to check out the comfortable welcoming atmosphere of our new venue. We were greeted by the friendly staff, offered a lovely smorgasbord of appetizers, along with wine and other libations from the bar, and had a tasty, satisfying dinner. The entrée choices for this month are rack of lamb, salmon and the vegetarian/pasta option.

The Club asks that you let us know your choice in advance (when you call or email your reservation) so they can have the right numbers prepared.

We think you’ll really enjoy our new home. Give it a try.



## Benjamin Porter: Tragedy at Fort Fisher

By Ronald S. Coddington, historian and editor of the magazine, *Military Images*.

A compact column of bluejackets and Marines charged across a narrow strip of sand towards Fort Fisher on the afternoon of Jan. 15, 1865. Conspicuous in the tight-knit vanguard of the 1,400-man strike force was the commander of the flagship *Malvern*, Ben Porter, his gloved hands holding the admiral's banner aloft.

Porter, it was said, was that rare leader who men would follow to their death. Fierce and fearless, his ability to inspire and rally his command in the heat of battle verged on the supernatural. He was, at age 20, the beau ideal of a naval officer.



Lieutenant Benjamin Horton Porter of U.S. Navy in uniform with sword. Between 1861 and 1865. Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division.

He had skyrocketed to recognition barely two years earlier with a tour de force along the North Carolina coast. In early 1862, then 17-year-old Porter volunteered for amphibious operations against Confederates holed up on Roanoke Island. Placed in command of a battery of six howitzers, he and his crew joined 10,000 infantry and established a beachhead on the island during the evening of February 7. Porter's guns were the only artillery on the field.

At daylight the next morning Porter and his howitzer battery moved forward in double-quick time with the main skirmish line towards enemy artillery and infantry. To keep pace with the skirmishers, his crew dragged the guns with ropes, paused to fire a single round, and then grabbed the ropes and repeated the exercise. "I advanced the pieces after each fire until they were in the open space directly in front of the rebel battery, where we made a stand under a most destructive fire from the rebel infantry," Porter stated in his after action report.

The Confederate fire struck with deadly accuracy. One of the howitzers was left with a single man standing. Porter jumped in and together they worked the gun until a bullet struck his crewmate. "A slug passed into his throat, from which the blood streamed out; he looked in my face, choked, fell down and died. This made me madder than ever, and I went in on my muscle," Porter wrote to his mother. He continued the fight with utter disregard for his own life as he furiously loaded, fired and swabbed out the howitzer while the fighting raged.

The Union ultimately won the day. Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, the commander of the expedition that would become known by his name, and a subordinate, Brig. Gen. John G. Foster, informed Rear-Adm. Louis M. Goldsborough of Porter's gallantry. The admiral, who led the supporting naval fleet, later sent a commendation letter to Navy Secretary Gideon Welles. "The battery under his command," Goldsborough stated, was "handled with a degree of skill and daring which not only contributed largely to the success of the day, but won the admiration of all who witnessed the display."

Goldsborough added, "Mr. Porter was but 17 years of age, and in my belief no father in the land can, with truth, boast of a nobler youth as a son."

*Library of Congress*

### SUGGESTIONS

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

### Answer:

**En route to the funeral of Edwin M. Stanton's newborn baby, July 1862.**