

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 69, No. 7

644th Meeting

April 2021



If you can't use a computer to Zoom and want to listen in by phone, leave your phone number at 718-341-9811 and we'll call you with the Zoom phone number and id codes.

• Guest:
John Marszalek
on **William Tecumseh Sherman**

• Date:
Wednesday,
April 14th

• Place:
Zoom

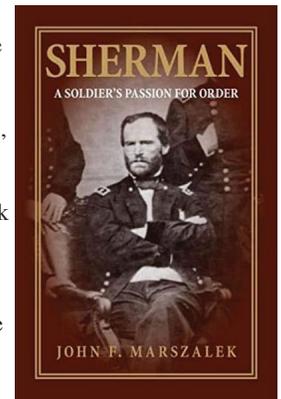
• Time:
at 7:00 pm

John Marszalek

John F. Marszalek retired in 2002 as a Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus. He taught courses in the Civil War, Jacksonian America, and Race Relations. He produced over twenty doctoral and masters graduates, a number of whom are published scholars. He is the author or editor of thirteen books and over two hundred fifty articles and book reviews. *Sherman, A Soldier's Passion for Order* was a finalist for the Lincoln Prize, and his first book *Court Martial, A Black Man in America* was made into a Showtime motion picture and reissued as a paperback under the new title *Assault at West Point*.

President Bill Clinton presented the family of the wronged black West Point cadet a posthumous Army commission during a White House ceremony. Along with Charles D. Lowery, he edited *The Encyclopedia of African American Civil Rights*, which the Library Journal named one of the best reference books of 1992. Three of his books have been History Book Club Selections. His latest book is *A Black Congressman in the Age of Jim Crow, South Carolina's George Washington Murray* (2006). He continues to lecture widely throughout the nation and has appeared on the major television networks. He serves on the board of advisors of the Lincoln Forum, the Lincoln Prize, the national Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, and the Monitor Museum (Newport News, Virginia). Canisius College named him a distinguished alumnus, he received the Richard Wright Literary Award (life time achievement by a Mississippi author), and the Mississippi Historical Society presented him its highest award, the B.L.C. Wailes Award for national distinction in history. He and his wife, Jeanne, have established Library Fund Endowments at Mississippi State University and Canisius College. He is a U.S. Army Vietnam veteran. Since January 2004, he has served in the part-time position of Director and Mentor of Distinguished Scholars, the holders of Mississippi State's most prestigious undergraduate scholarships. He is presently researching a book on the development of the mythology surrounding Robert E. Lee and William T. Sherman.

From: history.msstate.edu



2021 Slate

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Anyone who wishes to present an alternate slate must mail it to the RT address by April 2nd. The election will be held at the May meeting.

The 2020 Fletcher Pratt Award goes to Stephen Davis

for his 2-volume exploration of John Bell Hood's generalship – Texas Brigadier to the Fall of Atlanta and Into Tennessee & Failure. The Committee, headed by Patrick Falci, along with Paul Weiss and William Finlayson, considered Mr. Davis' descriptive narrative of Hood's ambitious wartime experiences to be fascinating and illuminating. We hope to present the award at our 70th anniversary meeting this fall, in person, if possible.

Question of the month:

Who was the highest-ranking civilian to volunteer for military service during the Civil War?

2021 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2021

• **April 14th (Zoom)** •

John Marszalek on
William Tecumseh Sherman

• **May 12th (Zoom)** •

TBA

• **June 9th (Zoom)** •

TBA

President's Message

April is now upon us and we have left the winter behind for the greener pastures of spring. Hopefully, we will soon be able to return to normal. Firstly, I wanted to thank Chris Kolakowski for being able to step in and speak at our March meeting. We were lucky to have him in the room and available to give us such a quality presentation in such short notice.



It will certainly be an honor to have Chris back when we are able to host him in person again.

This month's guest speaker is not only one of America's greatest living historians, but also our great friend and returning guest, Dr. John F. Marszalek. Although many of you know of Dr. Marszalek from his many years at Mississippi State University, he is actually a born and bred New Yorker. He is a native of Buffalo and taught at Canisius College prior to his departure to the south. In 1973 he accepted a teaching position with Mississippi State where he would excel to eventually become the William L. Giles Distinguished Professor in 1994. After twenty-nine years as a professor, Marszalek retired in 2002 to become a Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus. He currently serves as the Executive Director and Managing Editor of the Ulysses S. Grant Association and The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant project.

His presentation for our April 14th meeting is entitled "General William Tecumseh Sherman: Myth and Reality" and I encourage everyone to watch via Zoom. Remember, there is no need to sign in or email to reserve a spot. The link is open and available to anyone for free and will be sent via email at the beginning of the month. Thanks.

KRIS J. KASNICKI

New Book Releases

Meade at Gettysburg: a Study in Command by Kent Masterson Brown, Hardcover \$35 Amazon, pp488, to be published June 7, 2021

William Still: The Underground Railroad and the Angel at Philadelphia by William C. Kashatus, Hardcover \$35 Amazon, pp368, to be published April 1, 2021

Answer:

Hannibal Hamlin, vice president of the United States.

THE DISPATCH



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Civil War Events During the Month of April 1863

- April 7** Naval attack on Charleston, South Carolina
- April 11** Siege of Suffolk, Virginia by Confederates begins
- April 17** Union Colonel Benjamin Grierson's Raid from La Grange, Tennessee to Baton Rouge, Louisiana begins
- April 21** Generals Jones and Imboden begin Confederate raid on the B&O Railroad, Virginia (now West Virginia)
- April 24** Confederate government passes a tax in-kind on one-tenth of all produce
- April 30** Battle of Chancellorsville begins near Fredericksburg, Virginia

Battle of Chancellorsville

On April 27, 1863, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker launched a turning movement designed to pry Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia out of its lines at Fredericksburg. The maneuver was successful and by April 30, elements of Hooker's Army of the Potomac had reached the crossroads of Chancellorsville, nine miles in Lee's rear. Outnumbering Lee two to one, Hooker stood poised to strike a fatal blow to the Confederates. Apprised of Hooker's march, Lee left a covering force at Fredericksburg and marched west. Fighting erupted on May 1 with the Federals ultimately retiring back to Chancellorsville. Now with the initiative, Lee would divide his army again and send Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on a march to strike Hooker's right flank. The following evening, Jackson's men assailed Maj.

Gen. Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps and caved in the Union line, but Jackson was wounded by friendly fire and died eight days later. Lee renewed his attack early on May 3 and dislodged Hooker from Chancellorsville. At the height of victory, Lee was forced to divide his army a third time to confront Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's VI Corps which had broken through at Fredericksburg. The Confederates brought Sedgwick's advance to a standstill at Salem Church. Stalled on two fronts, Hooker decided to retreat and abandon his campaign on the night of May 5. The battle, considered Lee's greatest victory, inspired him to launch a second invasion of the North.

From: *American Battlefield Trust*



O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

by WALT WHITMAN

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip
is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize
we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people
all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel
grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

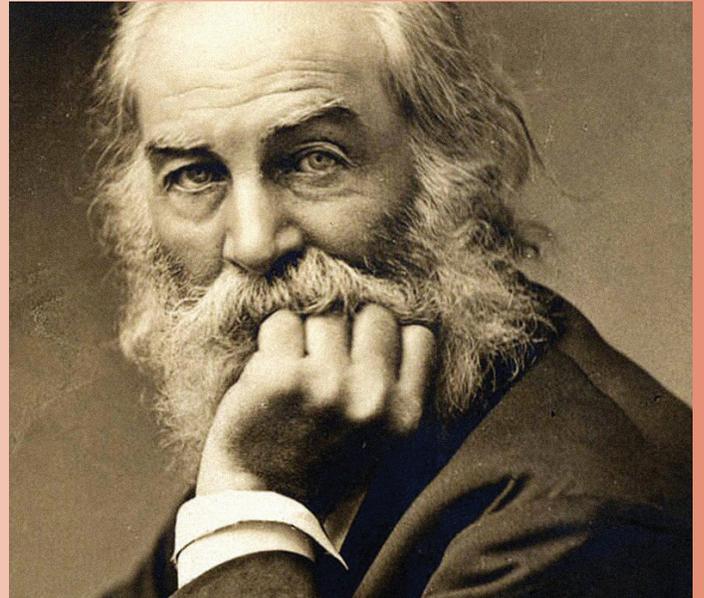
O Captain! my Captain! rise up and
hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—
for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—
for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass,
their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips
are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm,
he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound,
its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes
in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

From: *discoverpoetry.com*



The Battle of Suffolk

April 24, 1863 in Suffolk, Virginia

In early 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee dispatched Gen. James Longstreet and 2 divisions of the Army of Northern Virginia to the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, an area that stretched between the James and Cape Fear Rivers. The initial purpose was to protect Richmond from an anticipated Union advance from the southeast. But when no such advance occurred, Longstreet changed the mission into a great foraging expedition.

On April 11, 1863, Longstreet's 2 divisions marched to Suffolk, Virginia, where Gen. John J. Peck commanded a Union garrison of 25,000 men.

While part of Longstreet's 20,000 man force scoured the countryside, filling their wagons with foodstuffs for Lee's army, the rest began building fortifications and laying Suffolk under siege. The Confederates reoccupied Fort Huger, an old earthwork fort on the Nansemond River that the Confederacy had abandoned when the Union captured Suffolk in 1862. Attempting to cut off Union river communications with Suffolk, they established other batteries along the Nansemond River, some of them

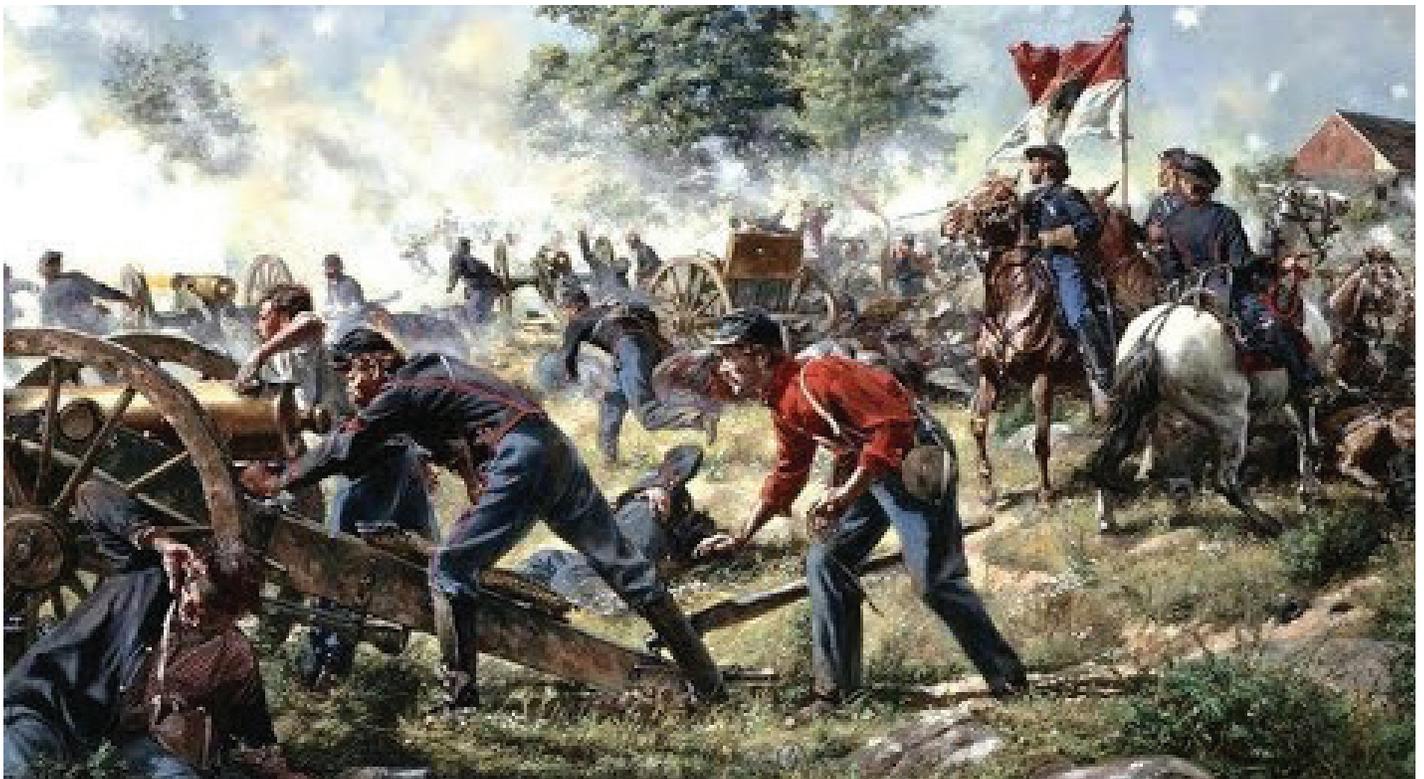
positioned near the Norfleet house just upriver from Fort Huger.

On April 24, the Union ships *Mount Washington*, *West End*, and *Stepping Stones*, under the command of Lt. William B. Cushing, attempted to run past the Norfleet batteries to Suffolk. Confederate artillerists showered the ships, crippling the *Mount Washington* and forcing all the ships to retreat. The Union suffered 15 men killed and wounded and lost a crucial stretch of the Nansemond River. One Confederate battery was severely damaged.

Throughout the next morning, Union artillery across the river from the Norfleet house battered the Confederate position. Four more Confederate guns were silenced before the contest ended.

Several days later, Union raiders captured Fort Huger, but then abandoned it, and Confederate regained possession of the important position. Neither side attempted a major offensive for the rest of the month

From: *American Battlefield Trust*



SPOTLIGHT: DAN JACOBS

For the April issue, we thought it would be a good time to get to know more about one of our longest members — Dan Jacobs. And further, Dan has probably been on more CWRT/NY trips than anyone else. Forty-two to date, the last one being the 2019 trip to Antietam/South Mountain.

Dispatch: When did you first become interested in the Civil War and what sparked that interest?

Dan: I became interested in the Civil War back in the late '50's, when my mother gave me as a birthday present a copy of Bruce Catton's "A Stillness at Appomattox". Who could not be moved by that superb narration and unforgettable prose? During my college years and career start, it took a while before I eventually joined CWRT/NY in 1975.

Dispatch: Do you have relatives that served in the Civil War?

Dan: No, I do not have any relatives who served in the Civil War. My earliest American ancestry dates to just post-Civil War in the 1870s.

Dispatch: Which battle do you think is one of the most important of the CW?

Dan: Some students would say Antietam because of the importance of the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, but I do not believe that occurrence necessarily "sealed the doom" of the Confederacy. Rather, I would submit as the "most important", The Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864. That battle did seal the fate of the Atlanta Campaign in its entirety and when the city fell on September 2nd, that pretty much assured the re-election of President Lincoln.

Dispatch: Which movie do you think portrays the Civil War best?

Dan: The movie that I believe portrays the Civil War best I'd prefer to answer in 2 parts: for simply military and battlefield reality, "The Red Badge of Courage", ca 1951, with Audie Murphy, and for a deeper meaning for what the war was really all about, "Twelve Years A Slave". If that film doesn't give a viewer a look at one of the two important objectives of the Union war effort. I can't imagine what would.

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

Dan: I'm a native of NYC, born and raised on the THEN pretty gritty Upper West Side of Manhattan. Graduated from University of Maine, and Columbia MBA. (Seems like 100 years ago!!) Worked many years in Wall St. for several firms, none of which have retained their individual entity identifications to this day. Until the pandemic closed us down, in my retirement I was (and still am whenever we get recalled) a volunteer docent at the American Museum of Natural History. (I can answer all your questions about dinosaurs and other fossils!!)

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

Dan: I would like to share my total admiration for the CWRT/NY for its outstanding work in furthering the study of the war, the superb battlefield tours, and the incomparably great guests we always obtain for lectures. I'm absolutely convinced of the importance of Civil War study in terms of its continued relevance today, as recent events have clearly demonstrated.

