

THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 67, No. 6

617th Meeting

February 2018



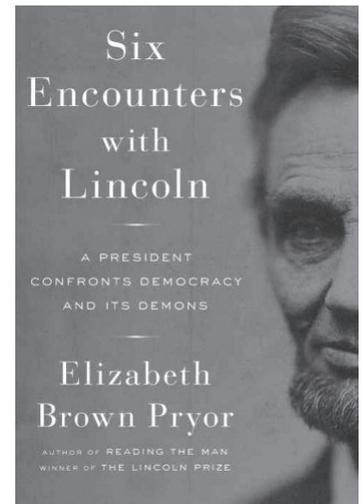
- Guest:
Barondess Lincoln Award
Elizabeth Pryor Brown
- Cost:
Members: \$50
Non-Members: \$60
- Date:
Monday,
February 12th
- Place:
The Three West Club,
3 West 51st Street
- Time:
Dinner at 6:00 pm,
Doors open 5:30 pm,
Cash Bar 5:30 – 7 pm

You must call 718-341-9811 by February 5th if you plan to attend the Febuary meeting. We need to know how many people to order food for.

Barondess Lincoln Award Elizabeth Pryor Brown

The winner of our prestigious Barondess Lincoln Award is Elizabeth Pryor Brown for *A President Confronts Democracy*, who, unfortunately, was killed in an accident in Richmond, Va. in 2015. Her sister, Beverly Louise Brown, will accept our award and deliver a talk about her sister's book.

Elizabeth was a diplomat and a historian. She finished her secondary school education in Summit, NJ, attended Northwestern University, worked for the United States Park Service, and received degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of London.



President Lincoln's Chiropodist

Isachar Zacharie, a practical and talented chiropodist of the 19th century, served President Lincoln as his foot doctor and as a confidential agent during the Civil War.

A colorful but controversial character, Zacharie undoubtedly "possessed unusual skill and personality, and was not lacking in ambition and aggressiveness."

He published an English and an American edition of a book on diseases of the foot in which he envisioned the podiatry of the future – a recognized profession concerned with prevention as well as treatment of foot ailments.

In 19th century America, such were the dreams of a visionary. Science was not notable for progress, indeed it was stagnant; and the healing profession was not held in high esteem. Southern physicians and medical schools were preoccupied with pseudoscientific alarms concerning the anatomic, physiologic and emotional differences in the races. Even in this critical milieu, chiropody was held to be "an unworthy surgical skill."

Zacharie was born in England in 1827 and was 20 when his family migrated to America.

Chiropody in the 19th century, like medicine, in 17th and 18th century America, was acquired under a preceptor. (The first school of chiropody was established in New York in 1912). Clues to Zacharie's preceptor are found in his book and in impressive testimonials issued in 1863. Sir Astley Cooper (1768-1841), in a testimonial dated June 27, 1837, records that "Zacharie studied the profession of chiropodist under me." Since Zacharie was 10 years old in 1837, this is an indication that he pirated names and altered dates to suit his immediate purpose.

Chiropodists made their first appearance in American cities along the Atlantic coast about 1840. Like ancient physicians and philosophers they were itinerants. They heralded their arrival in local newspapers with respectable recommendations and remained until the demand for their services were exhausted.

Zacharie's earliest testimonial, dated August 27, 1846, signed by six Baltimore physicians, recommended him for his method of curing corns and bunions. Among the authors of his testimonials were Senators Henry Clay, Lewis Cass and John Calhoun,

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2018 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2018

• **Monday March 12th** •
Curt Fields
*Grant Announces his Bid
for the Presidency*

• **Monday April 9th** •
John Fazio
Decapitating the Union

• **Monday May 12th** •
Fletcher Pratt Award
Ron Chernow for *Grant*

President's Message

As mentioned at our last meeting, we have the sad duty to inform you of the passing of Edward H. Bonekemper on December 9, 2017. Marty Smith introduced him to the New York Civil War Round Table, and he became one of our favorite historians. He was scheduled to return as speaker for our upcoming September meeting.

His wife, Susan, informed us that his sudden illness was entirely unexpected. He had difficulty breathing and was admitted to the hospital. Shortly thereafter he passed away.

His presence will be missed, but his scholarship will always be with us.

I know that when I went to high school, historians seemed to accept the theory that Grant was a butcher; that he had simply overwhelmed Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. This theory was elevated by the suggestion that Grant's triumph was born of sheer numbers and brute force.

Professor Bonekemper helped change this view of American history. He continuously championed the cause of Ulysses S. Grant as a military genius, something that luminaries such as General David Petraeus have seconded.

He was a guest on my radio show a number of times. He was gracious, polite, and to the point. I will miss him, as I am sure we all will. However, we are grateful that his writings live on and can still be purchased and read. Once more, Requiescat in Pace.

- *How Robert E. Lee Lost the Civil War*
- *McClellan and Failure: A Study of Civil War Fear, Incompetence and Worse*
- *Ulysses S. Grant: A Victor, Not a Butcher: The Military Genius of the Man Who Won the Civil War*
- *Grant and Lee: Victorious American and Vanquished Virginian*
- *Lincoln and Grant: The Westerners Who Won the Civil War*
- *The Myth of the Lost Cause: Why the South Fought the Civil War and Why the North Won*
- *The 10 Biggest Civil War Blunders*

MICHAEL N. CONNORS



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 the meeting. Because 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 a reservation, and if you have a pattern of not fulfilling your reservations, we may ask you to pay for dinner. 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 use every month.

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Founded January 24, 1951

The Dispatch is published monthly, except July and August, by

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

8 – At this stage of the war, Ambrose Burnside was nothing but a success as he captures Roanoke Island, giving the Federals control of Pimlico Bay, a first rate base on the Atlantic coast for operations against North Carolina.

15 – Federal troops almost lose their grip on Fort Donelson but Grant rallies them in order to stop the Confederate attempted flight east to Nashville. He soon will order an immediate and unconditional surrender which his old friend Simon Buckner will grudgingly accept.

1863

3 – French Minister M. Mercier discusses French mediation on the war with Secretary of State Seward, who politely says non.

8 – The circulation of the Chicago *Times* is suspended for alleged disloyal statements. The order is later rescinded.

1864

20 – The battle of Olustee, or Ocean Pond, near Lake City, Florida. Federal General Truman Seymour gets a black eye from Confederate Joseph Finegan in the only major battle in the Sunshine State.

22 – Sooy Smith is sorry he bumped into Bedford Forrest. He retreats ignominiously towards Memphis where Jeffrey Forrest, the Wizard of the Saddle's brother, is killed.

1865

3 – The Hampton Roads Peace Conference gets nowhere as Lincoln and Seward argue about terms with Alex Stephens, Joseph Campbell and R. M. T. Hunter.

17 – Columbia, South Carolina, goes up in flames. Sherman's bummers claim Wade Hampton started it by burning cotton bales. Confederates insist it was drunken negroes and soldiers, along with released prisoners.

Fort Jefferson at the Dry Tortugas

It was a confluence of the Monroe Doctrine, the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, and the United States' emerging designs on Mexico and Central America, along with its continual rivalry with Great Britain, that eventually made the Dry Tortugas a key post in the national coastal defense system.

In 1845, under the Polk administration, Florida became a state, and the Tortugas, located near the vital shipping line that ran from the Mississippi River through the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic, were ceded to the federal government and designated a national military reservation. That same year work began on the first fortification on 17-acre-Garden Key, named Fort Taylor. Fort Jefferson (renamed in 1850) was envisioned as part of a sweeping master plan for coastal defenses that took shape in the aftermath of the War of 1812, including local Forts Hamilton and Wadsworth.

Plans for the new fortress got underway after the U.S. Congress declared war on Mexico in May 1846. It was based on a detailed design drawn up by young lieutenant Montgomery Meigs (future quartermaster general of the U.S. Army), based on an earlier plan by chief of Army engineers B.G. Joseph Totten.

By 1861, Fort Jefferson, though still under construction, was armed to the teeth with 43 eight-inch Columbiads, eight field guns, and 24 24-pound howitzers. On July 4th of that year, two companies of New York Zouaves and two artillery batteries arrived to add more muscle to the defenses. But then Meigs had built a drawbridge over the surrounding moat, making an attack from without even more difficult..

Despite these formidable armaments and defenses, not a single shot would be fired in combat at the facility during the war. Fort Jefferson's principal service during the Civil War would be as a military prison.

Shortly after their conviction and sentencing by the military tribunal in Washington, D.C., Dr. Samuel Mudd, Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlen and Edman Spangler, were placed in chains below desks on the U.S.S. *Florida*. Only after they had been out to sea a number of days were the prisoners informed of their destination. They arrived at the Dry Tortugas on July 24, 1865.

Though the Lincoln conspirators were its most notorious prisoners, they were neither the first nor last to be immured on Shark Island. Nor were they the first, nor the last, to decry the squalid conditions and not infrequent episodes of torment and violence at the hands of their jailors. Prisoner ranks included those convicted of military infractions

like desertion and bounty jumping, along with others found guilty by military tribunals of violent crimes such as robbery, rape and murder.

In *Memoirs of a Lincoln Conspirator*, Samuel Arnold devotes no fewer than 77 of 151 textual pages of his experiences and observations during his three and a half years as a prisoner. The vision that emerges is akin to a dread combination of the savagery of the forsaken island in the novel *Lord of the Flies* and the prison stockade at Andersonville.

Unsanitary, pestilence-breeding conditions were exacerbated by the fort's crude sewage disposal methods which involved little more than dumping garbage and human waste directly into the sea. Instead of being swept away by the tides, the effluence often backed up in the fort's filthy moat instead. Adding to the misery, particularly in the warm months, were the infestations of mosquitoes, scorpions, biting flies, bed bugs and rats. Not surprisingly, the military guards often channeled their anger, hostility and frustration not only on the prisoners but on each other as well.

In April 1865, Emily Holder, wife of Joseph B. Holder, resident physician at Fort Jefferson, in the Gulf of Mexico, 70 miles southwest of Key West, recalled the reaction when news of the Lincoln assassination reached the island. "Half-hour (cannon) pronounced it a day of mourning, and a weight hung over us for days; we could not throw it off. Every joy and victory seemed dwarfed by this horrible act, and we could talk or think of little else."

Thomas Reid, in *America's Fortress*, added: "A few of the convicts tried to celebrate Lincoln's passing, but the sentry fired a round over their heads and they were subsequently tied up outside the guard house. Private Whitney recorded that one of the prisoners celebrating Lincoln's murder " was strung up so long that he died soon after being cut down. I honestly confess I have very little sympathy for him..."

As they listened to the cannons boom that mournful day, little did Emily Holder and her fellow denizens at Fort Jefferson realize that they would soon come face to face with four of the men convicted of complicity in Lincoln's murder.

Emily Holder frequently came into contact with the conspirators. She remembered Dr. Mudd as "restless and brooding...He imagined all sorts of indignities and persecutions, when, in fact, they (the conspirators) were treated to the same conditions and surroundings as the soldiers."

Holder liked Arnold. As she recalled: "The youngest of the prisoners so won the sympathies of the colonel's wife (Colonel Charles Hamilton) by his illness and thorough submission, that she prevailed on the colonel to put him at some duty more congenial. He was installed as a clerk in the office, and without doubt the young fellow had many a lunch from the

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and many others. William Cullen Bryant wrote that “Dr. Zacharie is a skilled surgeon.”

Zacharie listed his office as 760 Broadway and claimed a diploma from the Academy of Medicine at Havana for which there is no confirmatory evidence. Another claim that Zacharie graduated from the Bellevue Medical School class of 1850. The school was established in 1861.

(editor’s note: This sounds like the resume of Professor Harold Hill of *The Music Man* fame

By Harry Bloch, M.D.

Bud’s friend, Doris Lehman’s father

More on this fascinating character in another issue

SUGGESTIONS

**The Dispatch welcomes articles,
book reviews (non-fiction only)
and suggestions.**

Just send them in to our mailing address.

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home table the colonel knew nothing about, or was willing to trust the generous heart of his wife.”

At one point Mrs. Holder also had a chance meeting with Edman Spangler, who also left a favorable impression: “I could not resist speaking to him. He said, with perfect good nature: “They made a mistake sending me down here. I had nothing to do with Booth or the assassination of President Lincoln, but I suppose I have done enough in my life to deserve this, so I make the best of it.”

Dr. Mudd was not so sanguine. By his own accounts, he deeply resented being put under the charge of members of the 82nd U.S. Colored Infantry, which had been posted to Fort Jefferson. In mid-September of 1865, after only a few months on the island, he attempted to escape. Most likely through bribery, he managed to board an outbound ship and conceal himself below decks beneath some loose planking. But his absence was discovered during a routine muster before the ship left and a quick search thwarted his plans.

In 1869, when President Andrew Johnson pardoned the three surviving conspirators (O’Laughlen died in the yellow fever epidemic) confined at Fort Jefferson, the most infamous period of the prison’s long history drew to a close. Mudd, Spangler and Arnold were among the last state prisoners to be held there.

Excerpted from by Bob Allen’s article in the *Surratt Courier* November 2017



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OF NEW YORK

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