

# THE DISPATCH

The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc.

Volume 65, No. 8

599th Meeting

April 2016



• Guest:  
**Dr. E.C. (Curt) Fields, Jr.**

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

• Date:  
**Wednesday,**  
**April 13<sup>th</sup>**

• 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  
April 6<sup>th</sup> if you  
plan to attend the  
April meeting.*

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

## A NEW WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

During the July following his inauguration, Abraham Lincoln sent a message to Congress opposing secession threatened by Southerners. The message said in part, "With rebellion thus sugar-coated they have been drugging the public mind of their section for more than thirty years, until at length they have brought many good men to willingness to take up arms against the government." The Hon. John D. Defrees, the government printer, was disturbed by the use of the word "sugar-coated." He finally went to Lincoln, with whom he was on good terms, and told him that a message to Congress was a different affair from a speech at a mass meeting in Illinois- that the message became a part of history and should be written with that in mind.

"What's the matter now?" Lincoln inquired of the printer.

"Why," said Defrees, you have used an undignified expression in the message." He read the sentence aloud and suggested Lincoln replace the word.

## Dr. E.C.(Curt) Fields, Jr.

Our April guest, Dr. E.C. (Curt) Fields, Jr., is an avid and lifelong student of the Civil War. His interest in playing General Ulysses S. Grant was driven by that study and his deep respect and admiration for the general. Dr. Fields is the same height and body style as Grant and, therefore, presents a convincing, true-to-life image of the man as he really looked.

Dr. Fields holds a B.A. and Master's Degree in Education from the University of Memphis. He later earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Curriculum from Michigan State University. He is a career educator having taught at the Junior and Senior high school levels, and he then served for 25 years as a high school administrator.

## Election Slate

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"Defrees," replied Lincoln, "that word expresses precisely my idea and I am not going to change it, The time will never come in this country when the people won't know what "sugar-coated" means.

From *Words From The White House* by Paul Dickson

## 2016 • MEETING SCHEDULE • 2016

• May 11<sup>th</sup> •

Fletcher Pratt Award winner

James McPherson

*Embattled Rebel - Jefferson Davis as  
Commander-in-Chief*

• June 8<sup>th</sup> •

Chris Bryce

*Grant's Overland Campaign*

• September 14<sup>th</sup> •

TBA

## President's Message

Perhaps, in fiction, only a Horatio Alger could have imagined a figure like Ulysses Simpson Grant (the subject of our revised April schedule) and written a story that resembled his real life career.

Graduated from West Point in 1843, Grant soon served under both General Zachary Taylor and General Winfield Scott in their respective operations during the war with Mexico. He conducted himself with both competence and courage, receiving two citations for bravery and a brevet promotion to captain. Trouble would follow, however, when, in the peacetime Army at remote posts in northern California, at least one incident of off duty inebriation forced him to resign his commission in 1854 in lieu of court-martial. As we all know, his subsequent attempts at various civilian careers all ended in failure.

After the April 1861 attack on Ft. Sumter, Grant sought to serve his country again in the Army and accepted a position from Illinois Governor Richard Yates to recruit and train volunteers. He tried to get a field command in the Regular Army, but was either ignored or rebuffed by old acquaintances (such as current Major General George McClellan) who recalled Grant's "Old Army" reputation as an unreliable drunk.

With the help of influential Illinois politicians like Representative Elihu Washburn, Grant was eventually appointed Colonel of the Illinois 21st Volunteer Infantry, a troubled unit that needed its discipline restored. Grant was successful in doing so, and, again, with some political help, was rewarded with a promotion to Brigadier General in August 1861, and put in command of the Union troops in and around the Mississippi River town of Cairo, Ill.

From there, Grant went on to increasing success (flavored by a few setbacks) in a series of battles and campaigns with which we are all familiar, until finally being appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the nation's armies, answerable only to the civilian leadership, the Secretary of War, and the President himself. After the Union victory in April 1865, and especially after President Lincoln's assassination the same month, Grant was, without a doubt, the most popular figure in the country (outside the South, of course!). He would be elected President twice, by large margins, and was the youngest man elected to that office until Teddy Roosevelt, four decades later.

Following his untimely death from cancer in 1885, millions of ordinary citizens turned out for his funeral procession, and would turn out again in unprecedented numbers when his body was entombed in that magnificent edifice overlooking the Hudson River. In four years, he went from a lowly clerk working for his father, to a position only held before by General George Washington. How? For Lincoln, it was easy, "This man fights!" A recent biographer wrote, "The common thread is strength of character – an indomitable will that never flagged in the face of adversity. Sometimes he blundered badly, often he oversimplified; yet, he saw his goals clearly and moved toward them relentlessly."

So, PLEASE JOIN US ON APRIL 13!

We will both entertained and enlightened by Dr E. C. Fields, Jr, a professional educator, living historian, and noted portrayer of President Lincoln's favorite general, who will both demonstrate and describe Grant's "indomitable" leadership and what he did to become, arguably, the most successful general in American history.

CALL (718) 341-9811 TODAY, and reserve your place for what will be an unforgettable presentation!

*Paul Weiss*

## 59th Annual Battlefield Tour

*Join Us As We Continue Down The "Bloody Roads South" For...*

### Grant's Overland Campaign 1864 — Part 2!

Friday to Sunday...October 14-16, 2016

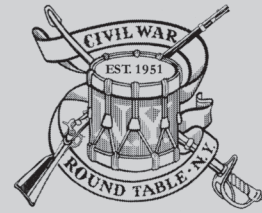
This year the Round Table will continue to travel the same roads South to **NORTH ANNA, COLD HARBOR** and **PETERSBURG** with the already battered, bruised and bloodied armies of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee after their colossal struggle in The Wilderness and Spotsylvania. This year's Tour Guides **BOB KRICK** from the Richmond National Battlefield and **CHRIS BRYCE** from the Petersburg National Battlefield will complete the dramatic story of Grant's Overland Campaign and dig deeply into the offensive strategy and defensive tactics of its heroic commanders.

#### To Reserve Your Place:

Send your \$100 check (made out to "CWRTNY Tour") and your complete contact information with your phone number, cell phone and email address to:

Martin Smith/CWRTNY Tour,  
158 West 81 Street #24,  
New York, NY 10024.

# THE DISPATCH



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## April During the Civil War

### 1861

**1** – Gustavus Fox sailed from NYC to Fort Sumter on the *Baltic* to see first-hand the situation there. This same vessel will bring the war's first heroes back from South Carolina. But where did they go to? See answer on page 4.

**20** – The Federals evacuate the Gosport Navy Yard and do a dismal job on scuttling the *Merrimack*, which is given a new birth as the *Virginia*.

### 1862

**6** – After seeing the Union army skedaddle towards the Tennessee River, the future Wizard of the Saddle warns that if the Rebs do not follow up their victory the Federals will be reinforced and we'll be whipped "lak hayell" in the morning. Exactly what happens.

**16** – President J. Davis approves an act calling for the conscription of white males for a period of three years service, a measure that will be overseen by the individual states. Zeb Vance and Joe Brown do not particularly like this as it violates their states' rights.

## Excerpts from *Revenge for the Carpetbaggers*

by old schoolmate Samuel T. McSeveney, of the history department of Vanderbilt University  
*New York History* January 1992

During 1875, the appointment or promotion of a number of ex-Confederates in the government of New York City touched off a political controversy in the metropolis. Coming as they did during the waning days of Republican Reconstruction in the South, the political successes of these ex-Rebels, Democrats all, quickly provided opponents with opportunities to wave the Bloody Shirt...

On January 1, 1875, the *New York Times*, covering the incoming administration of Mayor William H. Wickham, a Tammany Democrat, reported without editorial comment Wickham's announcement of the appointment of Burton N. Harrison as his private secretary and chief clerk. The newspaper identified Harrison as the former secretary to President Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States of America. Indeed, Harrison had been captured with Davis by Federal troops during May 1865. Released from captivity early the next year Harrison assisted Davis's counsel in efforts to secure the imprisoned Confederate president's freedom. Charles O'Connor, Davis's chief defender and a prominent New York Democrat, and Davis's wife, Mrs. Varina Howell Davis, advised Harrison to study law with the view to gaining admission to the New York bar. Which he quickly did. Harrison subsequently served not only as secretary to Mayor Wickham but (briefly) as chairman of Tammany's general committee. He also played roles in various presidential campaigns from 1876 through 1896...

Continuing its attack, the *Times* attributed J. Fairfax McLaughlin's rise from assistant deputy to deputy county clerk, to the patronage of Major William Quincy, a Confederate war veteran and fellow New York City office-holder. According to the newspaper, Quincy, "an early secessionist," had served in the Confederate army throughout the war, mostly on the staff of General James Longstreet, but also for a brief time at Libby Prison, in Richmond. Although Quincy had not behaved as badly toward Union prisoners as the notorious Captain Henry Wirtz at Andersonville Prison, the *Times* claimed, he

### 1863

**13** – Fighting continues sporadically at Snicker's farm in Va., Milky Way, Tenn., and Kit Kat, Ark.

**16** – The Confederates light up the sky along the bluffs at Vicksburg but Davis Porter's web-footed men make it past the Rebel guns and anchor near Hard Times on the west side of the Mississippi. This action is made memorable by Leonard Bernstein in his musical, *West Side Story*.

### 1864

**4** – MG Phil Sheridan comes East from the West to succeed Davis McM. Gregg who succeeded Alfred Pleasonton.

**8** – Panic ensues among federal forces as Nathaniel Banks, a prime political general, botches up the fight at Sabine Crossroads and his forces are thrashed by Jefferson Davis's former brother-in-law, Richard Taylor.

### 1865

**1** – General R.E. Lee tells George Pickett to hold Five Forks at all hazards One could hazard a guess that this never happens.

**3** – By mid-afternoon, Jefferson Davis and most of his cabinet reach Danville, Va. J.P. Benjamin heads for the wilds of Florida, acts the part of a French-only speaker, and makes his way to England, where he eventually becomes Queen's Counsel.

had been "very dictatorial and offensive in his treatment of them." After the war, the article concluded, Quincy, "like many other Confederate officers, had come to New York City to seek his fortune in the Tammany ranks." Quincy served as an order of arrest clerk in the sheriff's office and as secretary of the Tammany Hall general committee...

Anti-Tammany Democrats joined in the attack on the selection of ex-Rebels for municipal offices. In an address before the Democratic faction that he chaired, Ira Schafer professed his support for "universal amnesty and peace" and his hospitality toward Confederate veterans who chose to make New York City their home. All the same, he protested that during the prevailing economic hard times, Union veterans were forced to take municipal street work at reduced wages, even as the officers of the rebellion held high places in city government. Schafer compared the wages of city common laborers with the salary of Burton Harrison, "the private secretary of Jefferson Davis, the trusted counselor of the rebel court." He pointed to the presence in the sheriff's office of Major William Quincy "while many of the men who starved and pined in the Libby prison are now...begging for alms..."

Roger Pryor, a lawyer and journalist, served Virginia in the United States House of Representatives during 1859-1861, the climactic years of sectional conflict, and was a delegate to the ill-fated Democratic national convention of 1860 in Charleston, South Carolina. An ardent secessionist, he played a fire-eater's role during the final stages of the crisis at Fort Sumter – and lived long enough to become the last survivor among those involved in the fort's surrender.

Pryor served the Confederacy in its Congress, then its army, until capture late in the war. With the coming of peace, the Virginian moved to New York City, where he briefly wrote for the *Daily News*, the journalistic organ of Fernando Wood's Mozart Hall, a Democratic faction that opposed the war.

Abandoning journalism for the law, Pryor practiced with distinction before the bar for nearly a quarter-century. His northern legal career involved him with other Civil War figures, both Union and Confederate. He traveled to Mississippi to participate in the defense of Radical Governor Adelbert Ames against impeachment. In the end Ames had to resign in order to avoid removal by the

continues on page 4

## Book Review

### **Our Man In Charleston** by Christopher Dickey

For years, nations have been appointing consuls in various cities other than the national capital to represent their interests and help with minor problems. Among the Americans who served as such were major literary figures, namely Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Great Britain's consul in Charleston, South Carolina, before and during the Civil War, was an otherwise obscure diplomat named Robert Bunch. Bunch fitted in well there as did many other British citizens who cultivated relationships with many of its leading citizens.

December 1861 brought secession and by the end of the year Bunch's assignment was no longer in the United States. He remained at his post and continued his role of reporting on political developments – crucial because Britain was divided over what course of action to take – with some influential statesmen favoring recognition of the Confederacy and by inference, her war aims (see *World on Fire*). One can speculate as to what would have been the consequence of this course – but it was not to be and Christopher Dickey gives Bunch much of the credit for sending reports which raised questions about Confederate policies and their chance of winning. He leaves no doubt that Bunch, who opposed slavery, but managed to live in a city committed to it, was a key factor in Britain maintaining a relatively neutral stance.

Bunch, a very minor personage in the total picture of the Civil War remained in America for many years. Later he would obtain other diplomatic assignments, none of which placed him in such a vital role, but would appear to reflect the British government's respect for him. Civil War study groups generally do not emphasize his role but Dickey's biography and chronicle for the period have to be factored into the extent which he influenced his government's ultimate position in the war. This book is not only interesting but provocative and is a splendid addition to the literature of the period.

Tom Ryley

### **Excerpts from *Revenge for the Carpetbaggers*** continued from page 3

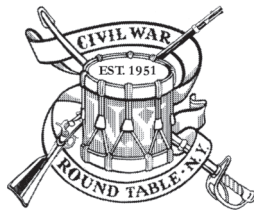
Democratic legislature. (Ames had retained Pryor as a counsel on the recommendation of his own father-in-law, former Union general Benjamin F. Butler). Pryor represented Theodore Tilton in the latter's legal action against the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher...

In 1880, Congress's restoration of Pryor's political rights prompted a Brooklyn Republican to praise the ex-Confederate as "one of the first to acknowledge the situation with grace and dignity after the surrender" and for having "won the respect and confidence...of all his fellow-citizens," an endorsement with which the editor of the New York *Tribune*, a Republican paper, concurred. During the 1890s Pryor held judgeships on the Court of Common Pleas of New York City and County, and the New York Supreme Court. Former Union General Daniel Sickles, a fellow Democrat, who had served with Pryor in Congress before secession, was among those who sponsored Pryor's judicial career.

[editor's note: For a wonderful book on Pryor's life, read *Surviving the Confederacy* by John C. Waugh]

## Answer

Fort Hamilton in the town of New Utrecht (not part of Brooklyn until the latter part of the century).



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