

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



News Letter

October 2008
Volume 58, Number 2

This From George Civil War Letters of Sergeant George Magusta Englis

You could call it one man's perspective on his American Civil War experience or a biography of a short life. Letters written home from assignments with the 89th NY Regiment of Volunteer Infantry reveal the personality and values of George Magusta Englis. Like peeling layers from an onion, each letter puts the reader closer to the soldier's soul. Using timely phrases such as "On to Richmond," and "All for the Union," he most often closed his letters "This from George."

Because a grieving mother saved the Civil War letters her son wrote home from his service in the 89th NY, Eileen Patch of Endwell, NY inherited them. She transcribed, researched and annotated the 59 letters. Dressed as her great grandmother, Sarah Englis in historically accurate 1880s clothes, Ms. Patch will look back 20 years to the war and read excerpts from the soldier's letters.

October 2008 Meeting

Date:	Tuesday, October 14, 2008	Place:	Officers' Club
Price:	Dinner \$29.00 per person Lecture only \$5.00		Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, DC
Agenda:	6:00 pm Social Hour:	Cash Bar	
	6.45 pm Dinner:	Roast Chicken	
		Vegetable of the Day	(Vegetarian meals are available upon request in advance.)
		Roast Red Potatoes	
		Chocolate Cake	
	8:00 pm Speaker:	Eileen Patch	
	Topic:	This From George	
		Civil War Letters of Sergeant George Magusta Englis	

Guests are always welcome to attend our meetings.

The deadline for reservations is Monday, October 13, 2008. Please send them to:

Mr. John Restall
3324 Glenmore Dr.
Falls Church, VA 22041-3317

Phone: 703-578-1942
Email: restall@joimail.com
If reserving a dinner by email, make
such you receive a confirmation email.

As the Round Table must pay for all meals ordered, members and guests
are obligated to pay for the meal in the event they do not attend.

PLEASE NOTE IMPORTANT SECURITY NOTICE ON PAGE 2

Officers and Board of Governors for 2008-2009

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Membership in the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia is open to anyone interested in the study of the American Civil War or American history. Our program year runs from September through June of the following year. Dues are \$30.00 per year (\$15 if you join after January 31, 2009) and should be mailed with a membership application form (available on our web site or from the address below) to:

CWRT of DC Membership Committee
Kenneth R. Rice
4110 N. 17th Street
Arlington, VA 22207-3005

Checks should be made out to **The CWRT of DC**. Membership includes a subscription to the monthly newsletter which contains notice of dinner meeting dates, speakers, and topics; information on field trips, and various Civil War related articles. Dinner meetings are held from September through June on the second Tuesday of each month at the Fort Leslie J. McNair Officer's Club in Washington, DC. Guests are always welcome at our meetings.

For further information about the Round Table, to submit a newsletter article, or present a program to the Round Table, please contact the newsletter editor.

IMPORTANT SECURITY NOTICE

We have been entering and leaving through the P Street gate. Please be prepared for a short delay getting through the gate when you arrive. This is for both vehicles and pedestrians. They will ask for a picture ID, search bags, and cars without a current DOD sticker.

Newsletter by Email

This newsletter is now available by email as an alternative to US mail. All recipients of this newsletter are requested to choose the email version of the newsletter. This will reduce newsletter expenses and allow the money to be used for things like battlefield preservation. To receive this newsletter by email, please indicate so on your membership form, or email the newsletter editor. The newsletter is published on our web site listed below. The newsletter editor's address is:

Kenneth R. Rice
4110 N. 17th Street
Arlington, VA 22207-3005
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Visit our web site at: <http://users.erols.com/kennrice/cwrtdc.htm>

President's Column by Tom Devaney The Civil War - Part I

For my first column as President of the D.C. Civil War Round Table, let me discuss the culture that permitted the Civil War to happen at all and what that means to American history and us as Americans today. As a republic that has endured for more than two centuries under the same form of government, the U.S. has faced, adapted to, and endured many challenges, nearly all of which have been addressed within the framework of a constitutional government. The exception to this rule is the Civil War, when 11 states refused to abide by the result of a fairly conducted presidential election with an unambiguous winner and instead left the union to form their own republic.

Historians have offered different explanations for this breakdown in an otherwise tremendous American success story. Perhaps the best answer is that the war reflected a failure of American citizens themselves. In the 1840s-50s, they took for granted the durability of the republic, instead emphasizing their own private economic interests and moral visions.

This was exactly the behavior that had worried the country's founding fathers, who created a government based on the tenets of classical republicanism. Republics, they knew, are held together not by authority imposed from above, but rather from below, by the citizens themselves. Historically, republics have tended to fall apart. They die when their citizens prove unworthy of citizenship and through laziness or self absorption let the republic fall into dictatorship or anarchy.

According to Machiavelli, the prerequisite for having a political voice in a republic was civic virtue, the ability to see beyond their own narrow self-interests to the good of the larger republic. He and others thought that citizen-soldiers were indispensable to a sound republic, that military service could verify one's

willingness to sacrifice for the republic and instill civic virtue.

American revolutionaries tied civic virtue to property ownership, but by 1820, most of these property requirements had vanished. By 1830, there was a growing sense that white men possessed the wisdom needed for good self-government simply because they were common people. This was the triumph of Jacksonian, or what's been called "the white man's," democracy.

East Cavalry Battlefield Tour with Marc Thompson on October 4

A day trip is planned for Saturday, October 4, with the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table to explore J. E. B. Stuart's route to Gettysburg and the cavalry battle on July 3, 1863 at the East Cavalry Battlefield. Marc Thompson will be our tour guide. Marc plans stops in Union Mills, Westminster and Hanover before reaching the East Cavalry Battlefield. The bus pick-up locations will be the Gordon Road Commuter lot in Fredericksburg, VA and Forest Glen Metro Stop in metro DC. The cost of the tour is \$55 and includes bus, lunch, tour guide and handouts. If you are interested in joining us, please send your registration in ASAP. If you have questions, contact either Susan Claffey at sclaffey@gsabc.com or (202) 654-2907, or Jim Hurdle at hurdle.jim@verizon.net or (703) 525-3681.

Our guide, Marc Thompson, has been a speaker for our group and led several of our day tours as well. Marc is the current President of the Rappahannock Civil War Round Table in Fredericksburg, VA, has worked as a volunteer tour guide and historian with the National Park Service at Chancellorsville Battlefield for over 10 years, and was also President of the Omaha Civil War Round Table. He has addressed Civil War Round Table organizations in several states and led battlefield bus tours throughout Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Eileen Patch

Eileen Patch was born Eileen Mae Knapp in Johnson City, New York. As a child, she visited the family farm in Corbettsville, where her grandmother, Sarah Englis Knapp, grew up. Although she was too young to remember her grandmother, cousins told her about Sarah's brother George, who went to war in 1861.

Eileen Patch inherited the 57 letters the family saved from those George wrote home during the Civil War. This inheritance and her long-time interest in family history led to an intense study of her great uncle's war experience, including trips to battlefield sites and research at military archives. The study led to her first book, **This From George**.



Eileen Patch dressed as her great grandmother, Sarah Englis.

The letters, many signed "This from George," are a brief history of service in the 89th New York Regiment from 1861 until 1865 as seen through the eyes of a Corbettsville farm boy. They gradually reveal the personality and

values of Sergeant George Magusta Englis; each letter puts the reader closer to the soldier's soul.

Eileen Patch has a BS in elementary education from SUNY Potsdam and raised three children with her husband, F. David Patch. She founded a private preschool and has worked as an organist and choir director. She has edited club newsletters and written magazine articles.

Celebrate Auburn: A Commemoration Of The 145th Anniversary Of The Battle Of Coffee Hill At Auburn.

Join The Piedmont Environmental Council for an afternoon celebration of the history of Auburn and the Battle of Coffee Hill, considered one of the most significant battles in Fauquier County. The celebration will be from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm on Saturday, October 11, 2008, at Weston, 447 Weston Road, Casanova, Virginia.

Sit on historic Weston's lawn and learn more about Fauquier County's place in the Civil War and the daring tactics of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry during their harrowing two days in Auburn. Activities will include a Civil War encampment, talks by local experts on the Battle of Auburn and Fauquier's role in the Civil War, period games for children, period musicians, displays of local Civil War artifacts, and a cavalry demonstration. Justin LaMountain and Greenman Forest Management will also demonstrate horse-logging at this event. Food available for purchase, or feel free to bring your own picnic and eat on Weston's beautiful lawn. Admission is free. For more information, call or email Maggi MacQuilliam at 540-347-2334, ext. 29.

Directions to this event: From Warrenton - take Meetze Road south out of town. Turn left onto Casanova Road (RT 616). At bend in road, make a left onto Weston Road (RT 747) and follow into Weston.

25 Years Ago

Christopher M. Calkins spoke to the Round Table on October 11, 1983. His topic was "The Petersburg Campaign, June 15, 1864 – April 2, 1865." Christopher Calkins was a historian at the Petersburg National Battlefield, and the author of **Thirty-six Hours Before Appomattox**. He also led the Round Table's field trip that fall to the Petersburg Battlefield.

50 Years Ago

On October 14, 1958, Sir Stanley Spurling of St. Georges, Bermuda, spoke to the Round Table about the "Confederate Blockade Running From Bermuda." Sir Stanley was personally acquainted with three men who participated in the Confederate blockade running, and owned the richest collection of known prints of Confederate blockade runners.

Calling All Civil War Connoisseurs, American History Buffs, And Citizens Of All Ages!

The National Park Service invites you to attend, "Secessionists, Smugglers and Spies!" on Sunday, November 2 at 1:00 pm and again at 2:30 p.m., at Oxon Cove Park in Oxon Hill, MD.

Through a series of vignettes, visitors will step back in time and experience Civil War history in southern, Maryland. Oxon Hill Farm, part of Oxon Cove Park will be the scene where visitors embark on a quarter mile walking tour. Participants will encounter a run-away slave, a secessionist and land owner, a spy, a group of African American infantry representing the four regiments who trained at Camp Stanton in Benedict, Maryland, and smugglers. Visitors will witness a group of Confederate prisoners being escorted to Point Lookout by Union soldiers. A member of the U.S. Calvary with his horse will appear in the exhibit area along with Underground Railroad and Civil War items.

Reservations are encouraged as space is limited for this event.

Please contact Park Ranger Marilyn Cohen-Brown at (301) 839-1176 for reservations and additional information.

"No Unnecessary War For A Dishonest Vessel"

From our October 1958 newsletter.

The capture of a Confederate blockade runner by another built in the same British shipyards almost precipitated a foreign war a decade after Appomattox. The capture resulted in the deaths of veterans of the Civil War, Confederate and Union, before a Spanish firing squad. Executed were the skipper of the *Virginus*, Capt. James Fry, once of the U. S. Navy but later of the Confederate Navy, and Gen. W. A. C. (Whack) Ryan, formerly of the N. Y. Volunteers. Fry took the ship job of running arms to insurrectionist Cubans because his wife and seven children couldn't live in New Orleans off the dole of cheese and crackers. Ryan took the job because he loved uniforms and fighting. They were captured aboard the *Virginus*, off Jamaica in British waters, by a Spanish man-of-war, the British-built *Tornado*. A British ship of war, the *HMS Niobe*, followed them into Santiago harbor. Before British guns pointed on the city could stop the executions, 36 men with Captain Fry and General Ryan lay dead in front of the shot-pocked wall.

Down in New Orleans citizens voiced a protest at a mass meeting, of which the vice chairman was Confederate General James Longstreet who gave the nod to General Pickett at Gettysburg and who sent his men earlier in the attack at Peach Orchard. Over in Spain protested Union General Daniel Sickles, who lost a leg fighting Longstreet's men at Peach Orchard. Possible war with Spain was averted by President Grant's Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, who wrote the epitaph: "No unnecessary war for a dishonest vessel."

James McPherson Coming To DC

Author James McPherson will be coming to D.C. on three occasions to speak about his new book, **Tried By War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief**.

The first event will be on October 20 at 7:00 pm at Politics & Prose, 5015 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC. For more information, please contact Mike Giarratano at 202-363-7663 or events@politics-prose.com.

The next event will be on November 11 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm, at the Smithsonian, Ripley Center, Ste. 3077, 1100 Jefferson Dr. SW, Washington, DC. sponsored by the Smithsonian Associates. For more information, please contact Faye Browning at 202-633-8595 or brownfa@si.edu.

The third event will be on Thursday, November 20, at 7:30 pm at Borders Books, 8027 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA. Directions: Located on Route 7, one quarter mile west of the Beltway across from the main entrance to Tysons I Shopping Center. Parking is available in the underground garage - two hours free with store validation. For more information, please contact Brandon Coats at 734-477-4926 or bcoats@bordersgroupinc.com, or 703-556-7766 at the store.

Mariners' Museum Bus Tour October 18, 2008

As part of their fundraising efforts to support the annual high school scholarship, the Rappahannock Civil War Round Table will sponsor a day-long bus trip to the Mariners' Museum in Newport News. The highlight of the tour will be a special guided tour of the USS Monitor Exhibit by members of the NOAA dive team that retrieved the USS Monitor turret now under conservation and restoration.

In addition to the USS Monitor Center, the museum contains the Chesapeake Bay Gallery, Age of Exploration, Admiral Nelson Touch, Defending the Seas, Great Hall of Steam, International Small Craft Center, and the Crabtree Miniature Ships.

During the ride down Marc Thompson will conduct a seminar on the Battle of Hampton Roads and review the associated Civil War land engagements and political actions of this time period.

The bus will depart the Gordon Road commuter lot at 7:30 am; stop at the I-64 rest area; and arrive in Newport News at 10:00 am. The tour group will break into 2 sections. Each section will alternate a 2.5 hour tour of the USS Monitor Exhibit and a 2.5 hour tour by docents of the Mariner Museum. After a box lunch at Holly Tree Overlook on Lake Maury, the groups will switch tours for the afternoon. We will visit the Gift Shop from 4:00 to 4:30 pm; then return to the Gordon Road commuter lot around 7:00 pm.

The \$80 fee includes bus, box lunch, museum fee and a \$30 tax deductible donation to the RVCWRT Scholarship Fund. After October 4th, the fee goes to \$85 per person.

Get Serious about Preservation!

This past June, the DC Round Table awarded its annual Ed Bearss Preservation Award to the Friends of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The award, totaling \$1000, was given to the group at the request of the man himself – Ed Bearss. As all of you know, this is something the Round Table does every year to honor Ed and to repay him, in some small way, for speaking to us and leading our field trip for free – yes, without compensation.

We're not alone. Ed donates his time to many groups in order to spark interest in the Civil War and to build momentum to preserve the Civil War landscape. This is an important time, because more of that landscape is disappearing every year. Therefore, now is the time to save it.

Your dinner reservation form has a spot to make a contribution. In addition, the Bearss' Bear, to collect money for the same purpose, is on the table at every meeting. Think what five or ten dollars from each of you every month would add up to at the end of the year. Added to the monies that we manage to set aside from book raffles, etc., we could contribute more than \$1000 to battlefield preservation.

There are many deserving Civil War preservation efforts out there, some large like the Civil War Preservation Trust, and some small like the Friends of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Ed manages every year to choose those who are most deserving, so let's help him out and help out a good cause. Literally, we are the people who can help save history.