# The Dispatch

Newsletter of the Harrisburg Civil War Round Table

Welcome to our fellowship forum where we discuss our past, emphasizing remembrance, education & preservation.
Meetings are held at Central Penn College Conference Center and virtually on Zoom

## Friday, December 4 – Kevin J. Weddle

## Lincoln's Tragic Admiral: The Life of Samuel Francis Du Pont



Join us on Friday, December 4, as Army War College Distinguished Fellow and celebrated military historian Dr. Kevin J. Weddle recounts the career of Civil War era Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont. Once revered as one of the US Navy's finest officers, Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont is now remembered—if at all—for resisting technological advancement and for leading the disastrous ironclad attack on Charleston in April 1863. Although he was lauded for helping to win an early Union victory in South Carolina, the failed attack on Charleston destroyed his career and reputation. Dr. Weddle will challenge this reduction of Du Pont's legacy to reveal that, although Du Pont championed technological innovation, he opposed the use of the new ironclads to attack Charleston. Only when his objections were overridden did his use of these modern vessels bring his career to a tragic end. Dr. Weddle will expose this historical misunderstanding, while also pinpointing Du Pont's crucial role in the development of US naval strategy and his work in modernizing the navy between the Mexican War and the Civil War.

Dr. Weddle is a graduate of the US Military Academy, a combat veteran, and served over 28 years on active duty in the US Army before retiring as a colonel. He earned a Ph.D. in history from Princeton. He is the author of the award-winning *Lincoln's Tragic Admiral: The Life of Samuel Francis Du Pont* and the critically acclaimed and best-selling *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution*, winner of six national and international literary awards including the Gilder Lehrman Prize in Military History. He also leads military and civilian groups to battlefields around the world including Normandy, Gallipoli, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and many others.

Those who are unable to attend this engagement in person are invited to tune in to the lecture and Q&A session via Zoom. Click on the following link:. https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86484286637. No password in required. To dial in by phone, call 1-301-715-8592 or click on the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meetings/86484286637/invitations?signature=-cPcDP9sX8zOg1wWVqY6qa-UVM-XJMBIJOvu8LrOIWE. The meeting ID # is 864 8428 66376.

***Zoom participants should join the meeting by 7:00 pm.***

5:30 pm—Doors Open
6:00 pm—Call to Order
6:15 pm—Dinner
7:15 pm—Presentation
8:30 pm—Square Table

*Buffet Dinner Selections*

Honey-Glazed Ham, Lemon Cod Fish Filet, Scalloped Potatoes, Honey-Glazed Carrots, Mixed Field Greens, Soup du Jour, Assorted Cookies

Cost: $35 per person;
pay at the door or on our website: harrisburgcwrt.org/events

***Dinner reservations must be made no later than noon on Sunday, November 22***

Email: Michael Margolius at:
membership@harrisburgcwrt.org

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rev.myers2013@gmail.com

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## President's Pen



*"Success is not in my hands; to do my duty is."*
*-- Rear Adm. Samuel Francis Du Pont*

I sometimes resist technological advancement. I find myself asking: Do I really need to learn this? Is it worth my time? Will I actually use it?

The Union Navy's Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont is sometimes remembered as someone who resisted new technology. But history suggests otherwise. He recognized that the new ironclad ships could not be used in the ways his superiors envisioned. We sometimes confuse the promise of new technology with what it can actually deliver. Du Pont's story reminds us that embracing innovation also means understanding its limitations.

Join us Friday, December 4, as Dr. Kevin J. Weddle, Distinguished Fellow at the Army War College and celebrated military historian, explores Du Pont's life and career. Once considered one of the Navy's finest officers, Du Pont is now chiefly remembered for the disastrous ironclad attack on Charleston in April 1863. Yet he actually opposed the attack, believing the ships were not suited for the mission. When his objections were overruled, the failure devastated his career and reputation.

Dr. Weddle will offer a fresh perspective on Du Pont's contributions to naval strategy and modernization between the Mexican War and Civil War.

A West Point graduate, combat veteran, and retired Army colonel, Dr. Weddle earned his Ph.D. from Princeton. He is the award-winning author of *Lincoln's Tragic Admiral* and *The Compleat Victory*, which received six national and international literary awards.

I hope you'll join us for another opportunity to look beyond familiar historical narratives and discover a more complicated story. ***Dinner reservations are due by noon on Sunday, November 22.***

Rebecca




***Ranger Christopher Gwinn delivered a tremendously moving account of the reunion of Civil War veterans at Gettysburg in 1938 at our annual Veterans Day engagement.***

## Meeting Schedule Campaign 68

**1/22/27**
*The Final Days of George Gordon Meade*
John Hoptak

**02/19/27**
*The Not-So-Secret Underground Railroad*
Cooper Wingert

**03/12/27**
TBA

**04/16/27 - Nye-Sommers Lecture**
*The Vicksburg Campaign*
Curt Fields presenting as General U.S. Grant

**05/7/27 - Memorial Day Event**
*The Origins & Creation of Arlington National Cemetery*
Allison Finkelstein

**06/4/27 – Annual Business Meeting**
*Clara Barton: The Life & Legacy of a Civil War Icon*
Carolyn Ivanoff presenting as Clara Barton

## Reserve Seats Now for Spring Field Trip to New Market, Virginia

Our spring field trip, entitled "Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market," will take place on Saturday, May 15, 2027, on the 163rd anniversary of the battle, with Hershey native Keven Walker as our guide. Cost per person is $95.00. You can easily reserve a seat on the bus on our website using our new online registration system. It is quick and easy to use. Just go to https://harrisburgcwrt.org, click on the Events & Field Trips tab at the top of the home page, and scroll down to the spring field trip where you can register and pay a $25.00 deposit by credit card or PayPal to reserve your seat. Or you can contact our Field Trip Reservationist, Steve Williamson, at 717-580-0443, and he can sign you up. Your deposit will hold your seat with the $70.00 balance due not later than April 15, 2027. As this newsletter went to press, there were still 20 seats available on the bus, and we anticipate those seats will fill up fast, so ***"Don't delay, register today!"***

## Upcoming Events

- **Wednesday & Thursday, November 18 & 19**: Dedication Day events in Gettysburg, including a procession from the David Wills house to the National Cemetery, followed by a ceremony at the cemetery. For more information, go to: Program Schedule – Lincoln at Gettysburg
- **Thursday, November 19, 7:00 pm:** The 64th annual Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture will take place at the Majestic Theater in Gettysburg. Dickinson College history professor Dr. Matt Pinsker will speak on *Twelve Score and Ten: Lincoln, Gettysburg, and America 250*. The lecture will be followed by a narrated performance of Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. Tickets are required but are free. Call the Majestic Theater Box Office at 717-337-8200.
- **Thursday, November 19, 7:30 pm**: Hershey CWRT hosts Madeleine Feierstein, who will speak on the Civil War prisons of Alexandria, VA. Meeting takes place in the VVA hall, 8000 Derry Street, Harrisburg.
- **Friday, December 4, 5:30 pm:** HCWRT December engagement and holiday party. See page 1.
- **Saturday, December 5, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm:** USAHEC military used book sale held at the Cumberland County Historical Society at 21 N. Pitt St. in downtown Carlisle. Tremendous selection!
- **Saturday, December 5, 11:00 am:** The National Civil War Museum will host their CEO, HCWRT member Wayne E. Motts, who will speak on foreign "Soldiers of Fortune" at Gettysburg.
- **Saturday, December 5, 6:00 pm:** The annual Memorial Illumination will take place at Antietam. Memorial Illumination.
- **Sunday, December 13, 1:30 pm:** The Camp Curtin Historical Society will hold a meeting at the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg featuring historian Cory Pfarr, who will discuss the topic of his latest book, *The Federal Signal Service at Antietam: Stations, Officers, and Battlefield Intelligence on America's Bloodiest Day.*

## Still Searching for a New Treasurer

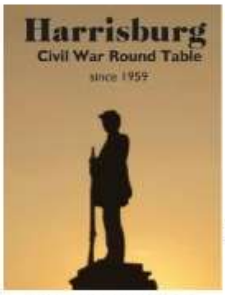
Any member who is interested in assuming the duties of Treasurer for the Harrisburg CWRT should contact our Past President, John West, who heads our Nominating Committee, at 412-217-1234 or john@johnfwest.com. Whoever steps into this role will inherit a well-oiled machine, can turn to other members who have served in the Treasurer position for advice and assistance, and will have the assistance of our bookkeeper. The continued financial health of our organization depends on filling this critical position.

If you can balance a checkbook, you can do this job.

**Please volunteer!**



***Dr. Brad Gottfried guided our fall field trip participants during a visit to Manassas, Virginia, in October to study the First Battle of Bull Run.***




130th PA Monument
Antietam National
Battlefield

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Harrisburg Civil War Round Table
P.O. Box 115
Dillsburg, PA 17019-0115

**December 2026**

## The Harrisburg Civil War Round Table

Where we discuss our past, emphasizing remembrance, education & preservation. **All Are Welcome.**
Meetings are held at Central Penn College Conference Center, 600 Valley Road, Summerdale, PA

Follow the Harrisburg Civil War Round Table on Facebook

## Harrisburg Civil War Round Table Enlistment Form

### Annual Dues

- ❒ Individual $30
- ❒ Family $45
- ❒ Full Time Student $5

### Donations*

- ❒ $25
- ❒ $50
- ❒ $100
- ❒ Other _____ (specify)

Individual or Family Name _____

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Phone _____ Email _____

Contacts:
For questions email: Michael Margolius, Membership Chair, membership@harrisburgcwrt.org
Mail checks to: Harrisburg Civil War Round Table, P.O. Box 115, Dillsburg, PA 17019-0115

*If your donation is made in memory or in recognition of someone, please provide name(s) here: _____