



THE LIGHT POST

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE FUTURE OF CWRTS 2

DID YOU KNOW? CW MOURNING RITUALS 2

IN MEMORIUM 3

COMING EVENTS 3

NOVEMBER 1863 IN THE CIVIL WAR 3

FOLLOW US ON THE WEB! 4

CWRT CONGRESS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 4

A PORTRAIT OF VIBRANCY: THE CWRT OF SW MICHIGAN

Engaged and vibrant. Strange to hear these words describe a Civil War round table these COVID-19 days. And yet, they describe exactly the feeling one gets when getting to know the CWRT of Southwest Michigan.

Established in 2013 by Mike Dumke and Ted Chamberlain, this somewhat young CWRT has grown from approximately 35 members to 83 in 2020. President Keith Chapman attributes several reasons for the positive increase. "The secret is we really attempt to get nationally known speakers. We are fortunate to have the dollars to do that."

Located in the town of Saint Joseph, Michigan, the round table meets September through



May. Weather permitting, they fly in speakers from around the country, paying travel expenses and at least a \$200 honorarium – with the bonus of a nice meal post-presentation. During the less desirable winter months, they try to either book more local speakers or they draw on an unlimited wealth of talented and knowledgeable

members. Members Dr. Dennis Rasbach, John Urschel, and Bill Bierly have authored books and done presentations. Chapman says their own Treasurer, Ted Chamberlain, is nationally known for his portrayal of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain at Gettysburg and Appomattox, and his wife Faye portrays

Continued on Page 2



New York Peace Memorial was erected by the state of NY as a tribute to peace and reconciliation between Union and Confederate veterans after the war.

FROM DARK TO LIGHT: THE REVITALIZATION OF THE CHICKAMAUGA & CHATTANOOGA CWRT

Balance is key in keeping any organization thriving. Scales that tip too far in one direction, like a ship, may prevent any attempts to right itself. Civil War round tables are no exception – even one located in the backyards of two of the most famous battlefields of the war.

The original Chattanooga CWRT was formed in the late 1970s. One of its founders, Harvey Scarborough, shared that Civil War books and authors were scarce as compared to today. The mid-80s brought in new leadership which helped transform the table. New speaker contacts, a regular meeting venue, consistent

meeting dates and time all energized the group. The roster was 60 strong. But complacency crept into the inner workings of the table, and 12 monthly meetings year after year presented a challenge. Finally, and sadly, the group disbanded in 2014.

Continued on Page 4



IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

THE FUTURE OF CWRTS

By Mike Movius

It's been six plus months since many CWRTs have been able to meet face-to-face. As a result, CWRT Congress began an online lecture series to keep the fires burning. It didn't come as easily as it may have appeared, but we had fun while delivering some excellent lectures.

Moreover, we modeled remote meeting technology that many CWRTs have

adopted for online lectures, board meetings or preservation campaigns. And, that makes us do the "happy dance" of sustainability.

To date, we have learned that some CWRTs have closed their doors forever in response to the pandemic and the budget problems it has spawned. And, that saddens us. But we have also learned that CWRTs have revived or started new operations dur-

ing this crisis; that some CWRTs have a resurgence in volunteerism within their CWRT; and that some CWRTs have experienced growth in their membership despite the crisis.

So, there is hope no matter the darkness of our meeting rooms. We promise to continue to provide our best advice as we all face the future together.

CWRT OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Chamberlain's wife Fanny. Other speakers include member and retired Gettysburg park ranger Scott Adrian, Dr. Curt Fields as General Grant, Dennis Boggs as President Lincoln, and Patrick Schroeder who portrays both a civilian at Appomattox and a Zouave soldier, although not at the same time. Chapman believes that these living historians are a big public draw, resulting in a steadily-

increasing membership.

To bolster attendance, Secretary LeAnn Krokker is quick to issue press releases to the local newspaper for upcoming presentations.

Members stay engaged. Chapman shared that the State of Michigan does a great job of preserving state battle flags through a program called "Save the Flags." The round table has raised

\$3,000 - \$1,000 per flag - which was donated to the state to "help with the preservation, research, and display" of three battle flags: the 12th, 6th, and 25th Michigan. Field trips to the flag vault to see their adoptive flags are a favorite activity and elicit a sense of pride in the members.

Every June, members look forward to touring battlefields. They've been from

Antietam to Appomattox and Shiloh to Shenandoah, with locations in between. They believe in always hiring the best guides to make the most of the trip.

Although they may not be doing any of this anytime soon, one can feel the vibrancy and engaged commitment lying in wait, ready to go.

Find them at <https://www.facebook.com/cwrtswmi> and their website at www.cwrtswmi.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wartime convention decreed that a woman mourn her child's death for one year, a brother's death for six months, and a husband's death for two and a half years. She progressed through prescribed stages of heavy, full, and half mourning, with gradually loosening requirements of dress and

behavior. Mary Todd Lincoln remained in deep mourning for more than a year after her son Willie's death, dressing in black veils, black crepe and black jewelry. Flora Stuart, the widow of Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart, remained in heavy mourning for 59 years after the 1864 death of her husband, wear-

ing black until she died in 1923. By contrast, a widower was expected to mourn for only three months, simply by displaying black crepe on his hat or armband.

.....Cape Fear CWRT



IN MEMORIUM

Round tables around the world are mourning the loss of these great historians.



ED BEARSS
1923–2020



JAMES "BUD" ROBERTSON
1930–2019

WINSTON GROOM

1943–2020



UPCOMING EVENTS

CWRT Congress Conference

Sept. 17-19, 2021

Philadelphia

The Congress is in the preliminary stages of planning the 2021 conference. It will be held September 17-19, 2021. The Saturday program will be at [Camden County College](#) in Blackwood, New Jersey across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. This will be our fourth conference and we hope to make it the best one yet. Our main focus

will be assisting CWRTs in becoming more attractive to new members. Both the reception Friday evening and the dinner Saturday will be held at the [Adelphia Restaurant & Events](#) in Deptford, NJ. The Sunday tour will take advantage of the many historical sites in Philadelphia and include a guided tour of the [Union League of Philadelphia](#).

If you have ideas or would like to propose a speaker or topic for the Saturday program that is relevant to your CWRT, please email Mike at mike@cwrtcongress.org.

NOVEMBER, 1863 IN THE CIVIL WAR

The Great Russian Ball at the New York City's Academy of Music November 5, 1863

Published in Harper's Weekly, November 21, 1863. Although Russian motives for sending their fleet to visit the Union cities of New York and San Francisco were mixed,

the Union celebrated this apparent show of support from a friendly European power. The fleets remained in American ports through April, 1864.

— Wagner, Margaret E., *Library of Congress Illustrated Timeline of the Civil War*, Little, Brown and Company, NY, 2011



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HELP WANTED

If your round table has a unique situation or is successful in any way, please share with us. Contact Carol VanOrnum at: bobcatvanorum@comcast.net.

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Our Mission Statement

The mission of the CWRT Congress is to provide new and existing Civil War Round Tables with time-tested tools to help them expand their membership, reduce operating costs, have effective governance structures, develop meaningful partnerships and raise sufficient funds for quality programs and historic preservation. These elements should assist CWRTs to become sustainable organizations and to avoid actions that could damage their integrity, effectiveness and efficiency.

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FROM DARK TO LIGHT: CHICKAMAUGA CWRT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Fast forward to 2020 and the Chickamauga & Chattanooga CWRT is back in the water. It's led by Col. Robert Edward "Ed" Lowe, a 26-year Army veteran and member of the Knoxville CWRT. His goal is to revitalize the slumbering round table of his hometown. Drawing knowledge and advice from more experienced round tables, he's taken their wisdom and begun to assemble a group that he hopes will grow into something about which people will be excited. "Key to me is collaborating

with neighboring round tables, working together for a common goal and effort."

Its membership, beginning as a Facebook Group, has grown to 228. And daunting as it is to organize a CWRT in normal times, Ed is doing it during the pandemic and thriving. He's a master at promotion, distributing flyers, appearing on Chattanooga television, and personally welcoming every new member who joins the FB group. He's currently working on a website and took a crash course on Zoom.

Their first Zoom meeting was held on September 3rd, featuring author Steven Woodworth. Ed considered it a success as 55 people attended. He now has Zoom speakers booked through June of 2021.

Ed's goal, as he looks out into the horizon, is to become one of the largest and best Civil War round tables in the country – or at least the South, he adds. We wish him well and are happy to help the Chickamauga & Chatta-



nooga CWRT in any way we can.

Join this Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/329344228425502>.