

THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER

PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

[HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/](http://www.pscwrt.org/)

APRIL 2016

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 14, 2016

China Harbor, 2040 Westlake Avenue North, Seattle, Washington **Time:**

Social hour at **6 p.m.**; Dinner served at **7 p.m.**; Program at **8 p.m.**

MENU CHOICES: Mongolian Beef, Chicken, Salmon or Vegetarian

Dinner includes: salad, vegetable delight, General Tso's chicken, fried rice and fresh fruit.

Cost is \$21 for adults and \$10 for minors and college students, payable at the door, but reservations and meal choices are required. See below. \$5 if you are not ordering a meal

To make reservations and meal choices, use one of these options (most preferred listed first):

Click on <http://www.pscwrt.org/about/dinner-reservations.php>

Email **Rod Cameron** at: rodcam@comcast.net

Or lastly, call **Rod Cameron** at **206-524-4434**

Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, April 12, 2016.

NOTE: Remember to turn off cell phones before the meeting so there are no distractions for the speaker. Thank you!



RICHARD SOMMERS WILL DISCUSS RICHMOND REDEEMED: ENDURING LESSONS IN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FROM THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG.

Analyzing the generalship of senior Federal and Confederate commanders, he will assess how Southern commanders were able to prolong the life of their army, their capital, and their country for so long, and how Union commanders eventually succeeded in not only capturing Petersburg and Richmond but also in destroying the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederacy itself. Retired Senior

Historian of the Army Heritage and Education Center, Dr. Sommers is the author of the landmark work, *Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg*, and more than 100 chapters, articles, entries and reviews.

IMPORTANT DISPATCHES

AUCTION! AUCTION! AUCTION! THIS MONTH!!!

This is the one time of the Round Table season when we actively raise funds for us! The nice thing about the annual auction is that not only does your contribution help the organization, but you get something nice to take home as well- as long as you have the highest bid!

As we mentioned in the March “Volunteer”, because of the fact that Historian Richard Sommers will be speaking to us, it will be very important to keep our auction running smoothly and efficiently. Here’s a reminder of our proposed auction schedule:

6:30 Silent Auction Begins

7:30 Silent Auction Ends

7:30 Live Auction Begins- Auctioneer, Dick Miller

8:00 Live Auction Ends

8:00 Introduction of Speaker- Pat Brady

Please note that this means the silent auction will start during the “social hour”. We hope that every member will want to come and participate in the auction, so get there early! Also note that dinner will be served in the middle of all this, so be prepared.

The live auction will be headed up once more by **Dick Miller**. If you have something worthy to place in the live auction please be sure to contact **Stephen Pierce** or **Dick Miller** to let them know what it is.

The PSCWRT is a non-profit organization that relies on member dues, donations and the annual auction- that is it! That is how we can afford speakers like Richard Sommers, so please be generous in bringing items to donate as well as bidding on items. It is all for a good cause.

PLEASE NOTE: A SILENT AUCTION BID SHEET WILL BE INCLUDED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER. Please make as many copies as you need for the items you will be bringing and if at all possible, have them filled out before you arrive! That will save a LOT of time in getting the silent auction tables ready.

May 2016 Meeting: Constitution & Bylaws Amendment, Elections & Appointments

By Mike Movius

We have written this article both to comply with our rules and to inform membership of the election, appointments and proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws.

First to the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. I have proposed that two additional members to the Board of Directors be added: Vice President of Marketing and Vice President of Partnerships. The exact language is as follows (Additions are in italics):

ARTICLE II - OFFICERS AND DUTIES

SECTION 1: The organization shall have the following elected officers: President; Vice President-Successor; Vice President-Programming; Vice President- Editor; Vice President- Membership; Vice President - Social Media; Vice President - Reservations; *Vice President – Partnerships; Vice President – Marketing*; Secretary; and Treasurer who shall serve as the Board of Directors. Only the existing President or the Vice President-Successor shall be eligible to be elected President.

SECTION 2: The President shall be elected for a *two-year* term or until his successor has been elected. Only the existing President or the Vice President-Successor shall be eligible to be elected President. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings of the organization and the Board of Directors. In the absence of the President, the senior officer shall assume the duties of the President. The senior officer shall be the office holder described in this Article with the smallest Section number.

SECTION 9: The Vice President – Partnerships shall be elected for a term of two years or until a successor shall be elected. The duties of the office include seeking relationships with other organizations interested in public education about the American Civil War.

SECTION 10: The Vice President – Marketing shall be elected for a term of two years or until a successor shall be elected. The duties of the office include developing marketing strategies and channels that assist in membership recruitment and partnership opportunities.

Changes to section 1 of Article II is simply the adding of the names of the positions. Section 2 only put a hyphen between two and year. Sections 9 and 10 are new and contain an overview of the duties and responsibilities of those new board positions.

You have heard that Steve Clayton has begun to forge a partnership package that has been extended to the American Civil War Round Table of Australia. You can expect more of that type of work, plus gaining entre into more local organizations.

We have already seen the tremendous result that Susan Martin has affected in the short period since her appointment to the marketing position. Our membership numbers have increased by about 10 percent.

I urge you to accept the constitution and bylaws changes as proposed.

In terms of the elections, the following fill out the slate of candidates: President: Mike Movius; Vice President- Successor: Nick K. Adams; Vice President – Programming: Pat Brady; Vice President- Editor: Mark Terry; Vice-President – Membership: Marilyn Rexilius; Vice President – Social Media: **Vacant**; Vice President – Reservations: Rod Cameron; Vice President –

Partnerships: Stephen Clayton; Vice President- Marketing: Susan Martin; Secretary: Larry Jilbert; and Treasurer: Jeff Rombauer.

In terms of appointments, the following will be appointed to the board of directors as non-voting members: Assistant Treasurer: Stephen Pierce; Auctioneer: Dick Miller; Historical Advisor & Commissioner of Civil War Monuments: Jim Dimond; Lead Ranger: Ed Malles; and Ranger: Dick Miller.

The assistant treasurer, auctioneer positions are pretty well understood. Rangers are those members who work with the membership VP to ensure that guests are welcomed and included. The historical advisor and commissioner of Civil War monuments will oversee the collection, organization, and maintenance of Civil War Memorials in the state of Washington, including all sizes of monuments with Civil War era cannon and inert ammunition, memorial fountains, memorial buildings, memorial windows (stained glass), historical markers, and even small plaques. He will also provide research assistance and to Civil War or Antebellum events in the state.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We thought the following article worthy to publish in full. You never know what treasures you will find until you diligently look!

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/rare-walt-whitman-letter-written-for-a-dying-soldier-found-in-national-archives/2016/03/09/6b172142-e228-11e5-8d98-4b3d9215ade1_story.html

Rare Walt Whitman letter found in National Archives

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post

Pvt. Robert N. Jabo, of the 8th New Hampshire infantry, was dying of tuberculosis in Washington's Harewood Hospital and needed to write to his family. The Civil War had been over for months. Most soldiers had gone home. And Jabo's wife and six children were no doubt wondering where he was. But he was sick and illiterate. So a cheerful, bearded man who regularly visited hospitalized soldiers offered to write a letter for him.

"My dear wife," it began, "you must excuse me for not having written. . . . have not been very well." The letter explained that it was penned by "a friend who is now sitting by my side."

And in a postscript, the friend identified himself: "Walt Whitman."

The rare Whitman "soldier letter," one of only three known to exist, was discovered last month by a National Archives volunteer who is part of a team preparing Civil War widows' pension files to be digitized and placed online. "It doesn't get much bigger, in my eyes," said Jackie Budell, an archive specialist who oversees the project. "It's just simply stunning. . . . We're not going to find another one like this, probably, for a while." Whitman, the American poet, journalist and essayist, was known for making the rounds of the local hospitals, where he would dispense snacks and money. He would also sit with wounded and dying soldiers and write letters

for them. “I do a good deal of this, of course, writing all kinds, including love letters,” Whitman wrote in a dispatch for the New York Times in 1864.

“Many sick and wounded soldiers have not written home to parents, brothers, sisters, and even wives . . . for a long, long time,” he wrote. “Some are poor writers, some cannot get paper . . . many . . . dread to worry the folks at home — the facts about them are so sad to tell.”

“I always encourage the men to write, and promptly write for them,” he wrote.

A century and a half later, few of those letters have surfaced.

But late on the afternoon of Feb. 3, volunteer Catherine Cusack Wilson found one.

Wilson, a librarian in Falls Church, was sorting through pension files in the preparation room at the archives building in downtown Washington when she pulled the Jabo file from its large brown envelope.

Her task was to look through the papers to make sure nothing had been wrongly filed and check to see whether any document was damaged and needed conservation.

The files often contain letters from soldiers to their families, which Wilson said she loves to read.

Frequently, soldiers wrote to say that they were sending home money or to describe camp life. “It’s fascinating to me,” she said in a telephone interview last week.

Last month, she said, “I’m looking through the file, and I see this letter, and I start reading it,” she said. “You don’t expect anything, but you look forward to finding something.”

The letter was written on both sides of a plain sheet of lined paper, which was probably Whitman’s. It was written with a pen in neat, legible script, probably on Jan. 21, 1866.

“I am mustered out of the service but am not at present well enough to come home,” it says on the front side. “My complaint is an affection of the lungs. . . . I hope you will try to write back as soon as you receive this and let me know how you all are.”

Wilson, of Arlington, turned the letter over.

“Well I send you all my love, and must now close,” it ends. “Your affectionate husband . . .”

Two lines down, came the surprise: “Written by Walt Whitman, a friend.”

“Ah!” Wilson said she exclaimed. “Look what I found!”

Wilson, one of 25 volunteers, showed the letter to Budell, who was at first cautious. “Part of my job is authenticating such finds,” Budell said.

She contacted David S. Ferriero, who heads the National Archives.

Ferriero is a huge Whitman fan, and as a young Navy hospital corpsman during the Vietnam War, he wrote letters home for wounded Marines.

He sent a scan of the letter to Whitman scholar Kenneth M. Price, at the University of Nebraska, where he is co-director of the Walt Whitman Archive and an expert on Whitman's handwriting.

Price noted the unique way Whitman wrote the letters x, d, and I, as well as how he often used a plus sign instead of the word "and."

Whitman's signature at the end of the letter resembles other Whitman signatures, Price said in an email.

And the fact that the letter turned up in the archives, and not on the market, makes "forgery . . . extremely unlikely," he said.

Price determined that the letter was Whitman's. It will now be housed in a vault at the National Archives with other valuable documents.

Jabo was a French Canadian who lived in Clinton County, N.Y., on the Canadian border, Budell said. He was in his 40s, and his real name appears to have been Robert Narcisse Gibeau, she said.

But the last name also appears some places as Gebo, and Whitman used the first name, Nelson, when signing the letter for him.

Jabo first enlisted in the 96th New York infantry regiment but was discharged after a year because of a disability, Budell said.

He spent several months at home and then signed on with the 8th New Hampshire as a "substitute," an arrangement in which he was probably paid about \$300 to serve in place of another.

"He obviously is a man with six kids at home who needs the money," Budell said.

But he remained sickly and cycled through a series of hospitals, suffering from back trouble, typhoid, diarrhea and bronchitis, according to his file.

He was discharged from the army in October 1865, seven months after the war ended, but was still too sick to go home, Budell said. She added that Jabo was probably illiterate because he signed his name with an X on other documents.

"What happens is he spends his time still in D.C. hospitals," she said. "And, of course, his wife is probably still wondering what's happened to him. . . . So Walt would be his saving grace to say, 'I can write this letter for you home to your wife.'"

It must have been an intimate moment.

Perhaps Whitman coached the soldier, Budell said. Jabo might have said, "I'm not sure what to say to my wife," she said. "Maybe [Whitman's] kind of helping pull out his thoughts."

To Adeline Jabo, Whitman wrote on her husband's behalf, "I hope it will be God's will that we shall yet meet again."

The letter likely wound up in the Jabo pension file because it was needed to prove that his illness was related to his military service. That was required for his wife to get a pension.

One other such Whitman letter is in the Library of Congress, and another is in private hands.

Budell said Wilson's discovery suggests that many more may be in the national Archives' 2 million Civil War pension files, most of which have never been thoroughly examined.

On Dec. 19, 1866, 11 months after Whitman sat at Jabo's bedside, the soldier died alone and penniless in Washington's Providence Hospital, where he had been moved as a "charity case."

Seven years after his wife first applied in 1867, she got her war widow's pension.

It was about \$12 a month.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER will not be published this month. Rick is out of town and sends his regrets...safe journeys, Mr. President!

THE LAST WORD

We Are Blessed...

By Mark Terry

As a member of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table, I really think we are lucky and blessed. To think that we can share a passion with each other, hear differing points of view about the most fascinating time in our national life, meet authors and historians who spend a great deal of their time thinking, writing and talking about it to thousands of other just like us is truly amazing.

In fact, we are now in our 30th year of successful operation without government assistance, with very few regulations to abide by and with leaders who not only have our best interests at heart, but who have the character to never betray us in any way.

That brings me to the reason why we have an annual auction. Many of you bring items, yet many don't. Many spend their hard-earned dollars, but many don't. Many seek an extraordinary deal, and others won't. The reason why we have the auction is to share our love and passion, to learn different aspects of the Civil War era and to do all that through some of the best minds in America. The auction means opportunity and life for our small society.

So, on April 14th, bring a couple items...not just those things you want to ditch, but items worthy of your character and reputation. And, when you get there, spend a couple dollars more than you can get away with. Think of the auction as your investment in yourself. Because it's truly you who will benefit.

DUES & DONATIONS

The PSCWRT season goes from September to the following May. Dues should be paid in September. Dues are payable either at the meeting or by mail: \$20 per individual, \$25 for a couple. Also, donations are gratefully accepted. These will help secure speakers for our meetings. Please note that all donations are tax deductible as the PSCWRT is a 501(c)3 organization. Mail to: Jeff Rombauer, Treasurer, 22306 255th Ave. SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038-7626. Call 425-432-1346 or email: jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com.

We welcome your article or research submissions for the newsletter, but they may be edited for space. The deadline for the May 2016 Washington Volunteer is Monday, April 25, 2016. Please have it in Mark Terry's hands via email or snailmail by then. Thank you!

2015-2016 OFFICERS

Elected:*

President: Rick Solomon, ricksolo@ricksolo.com

Vice-President-Successor: Mike Movius, webmaster@pscwr.org

Past-President: David Palmer, davidpalmer7@comcast.net

Vice-President-Programming: Pat Brady, 206-246-1603, patsbrady@comcast.net

Vice-President-Editor: Mark Terry, 425-337-6246, markimlor@comcast.net

Vice-President- Membership: Marilyn Rexilius, marilyn.rexilius@frontier.com

Vice President-Social Media: Mike Movius, webmaster@pscwr.org

Vice President-Reservations: Rod Cameron, 206-524-4434, rodcam@comcast.net

Treasurer: Jeff Rombauer, 425-432-1346, jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com

Secretary: Larry Jilbert, 253-891-4022, LJilbert.CJilbert@comcast.net

**All, except for Past President, an automatic position.*