



# THE FLAGBEARER

....News from the New Bedford Civil War Round Table

Please note that we changed our November meeting date to **Tuesday November 15**. This will avoid any conflict with having a meeting during Thanksgiving week.

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We have enclosed an invitation to our annual December Holiday dinner / party / book raffle. Please send in your requests for reservations and tickets as soon as possible. I do need to tell Me and Ed's Restaurant how many of you are attending the dinner on Dec 13th. Last year we had an attendance of about 41. It's a great social evening and I hope you will bring friends, and guests...Bob Lytle

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Our thanks to James B. Conroy for a great October presentation on Lincoln.. It was wonderful to see so many of you purchase his newest book, - Lincoln's White House: The People's House in Wartime

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## Greater New Bedford Civil War Round Table

**Tuesday, November 15, 7:00 pm\***

**Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Military Museum**

**\*NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE**



### Meet our November 15 Speaker: Megan Kate Nelson

Megan returns to the New Bedford Civil War Round Table speaker platform. She is a writer, historian, and cultural critic. She earned her BA in History and Literature from Harvard University. And she received her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Iowa, and has taught at Texas Tech University, California State University at Fullerton, Harvard University, and Brown University. Based in Lincoln, Massachusetts, she writes for the New York Times "Disunion" blog, JSTO Daily, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and The Civil War Times. She is the author of Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War (University of Georgia Press 2012 ) and Trembling Earth: A cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp (University of Georgia Press 2005). She also maintains the blog Historista. Her third book is Path of the Dead Man: How the West was Won-and Lost during the American Civil War.



*I follow her Facebook posts and find her travels throughout the United States and Europe to be fun and enlightening.*

*Her presentation November 15 will again feature the Civil War in the Southwest.*

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*Have you sent in your 2017 dues? Our new Treasurer, Martin Flinn would be most appreciative if you did.*

*I have also included an announcement from the Greater Boston Civil War Round Table about the annual 4 Days in May bus trip. Nine of us from New Bedford were on the trip last year. Think about making the trip. Great fun !!!!!*

## Civil War Signal Corps

Both the Union and Confederacy developed an Army Signal Corps during the Civil War. The job of the Signal Corps in both the North and South was to quickly and accurately relay information and orders between the commanders of different units within the two forces. The main way they did this was through the use of a flag system called wig-wag (not to be confused with semaphore), which was invented by Albert J. Meyer, an army surgeon, shortly before the war.



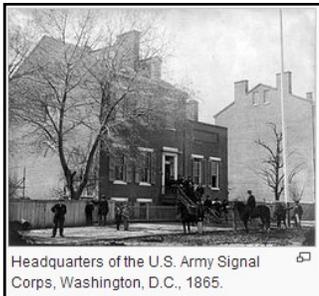
Albert J. Meyer, first chief signal officer.



Standard Issue Civil War Signal Corps Kit, complete with flags and torches.

In wig-wag, either a single flag (during the day) or lantern (at night) was moved in set patterns

to the right or left to represent letters, abbreviations, and word substitutes. There were seven flags of varying sizes and colors that could be used depending on the distance the message was to be passed and what the terrain was like. Wig-wag was a faster way to communicate than sending a courier on horseback and was especially useful in areas where a telegraph system was not set up. Both sides used codes to try to keep their messages secret, but they were often able to crack the other's codes, until the Union instituted the use of a cipher disc.



Headquarters of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, Washington, D.C., 1865.

Source: Fold 3 Blog



U.S. Army Signal Corps station on Elk Mountain, Maryland, overlooking the Antietam battlefield.

## 1863 United States Flag



**The 35-Star Flag:** This flag became the Official United States Flag on July 4th, 1863. A star was added for the admission of West Virginia ( June 20, 1863 ) and was to last for 2 years. The two Presidents to serve under this flag were Abraham Lincoln ( 1861-1865 ) and Andrew Johnson ( 1865-1869)

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**The Civil War Trust announces the successful conclusion of the unprecedented campaign to preserve, restore and interpret Gen. Robert E. Lee's Headquarters during the battle of Gettysburg.**

**The effort protects the small stone house—known as the Mary Thompson House—and adjacent lands that served as a combat command center during one of the most decisive battles in American history.**

**To realize this vision, the Civil War Trust launched a \$5.5 million national fundraising campaign in 2014 to acquire and restore the Lee's Headquarters site.**

**Eventually, this site will be donated to the National Park Service for incorporation into the existing military park.**

Source: Civil War Trust



A recent photo of the stone home, known as the Mary Thompson House, at Gen. Robert E. Lee's Gettysburg headquarters. (Lynn Light Heller)