



November 2008
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The Battlefront

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

November 20th Meeting

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Meeting Site

Town of DeWitt Community Room

148 Sanders Creek Parkway
East Syracuse, New York

Ray Messenger
Presents

The Seward Family Of Auburn, NY

Thursday, November 20, 2008
7:00 PM

Our 15th Year!

Meetings are held at 7 PM on the third Thursday of the month from September through June and are free and open to the public.

This month we welcome Auburn's Ray Messenger, the great-great-grandson of William H. Seward (1801-1872). Ray received a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and an MBA from the University of Rochester. He worked at Eastman Kodak for 28 years, working in engineering, administrative and management positions. He is a priest in the Episcopal Church and served for 10 years as the Rector of Saint James Episcopal Church in Clinton, NY. Both he and his wife volunteer at the Seward House - she as the coordinator of the gardens and he as a docent and President of the Seward House Museum Board of Trustees.

Ray will introduce us to Seward family members and to the Seward House which many of us have visited and enjoyed. The house built in 1816 by Judge Miller, Seward's father-in-law, has been owned by four generations of Seward's from 1816-1951 when William H. Seward III willed the home to Cayuga County so that it might become a museum. The home is a recognized site on New York State's Underground Railroad Heritage Trail. Both William and his wife Frances were known for their anti-slavery views.

William H. Seward served two terms as governor of New York, US senator for more than a decade, Lincoln and Johnson's Secretary of State, and negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia. However, in 1860 he vied with Lincoln for the Republican nomination for President. Doris Kearns Goodwin in her recent book, *Team of Rivals*, set the memorable scene as Seward waited in Auburn for the telegram announcing his nomination:

...a large cannon was hauled from the Auburn Armory into the park. 'The cannoners were stationed at their posts,' the local paper reported, 'the fire lighted, the ammunition ready, and all waiting for the signal, to make the city and county echo the joyful news' that was expected to unleash the most spectacular public celebration the city had ever known. People began gathering in front of Seward's house. As the hours passed, the crowds grew denser, spilling over into all the main streets of Auburn. ...visitors had come by horse and carriage from the surrounding villages, from Seneca Falls and Waterloo to the west, from Skaneateles to the east, from Weedsport to the north. Local restaurants had stocked up with food. Banners were being prepared, flags were set to be raised, and in the basement of the chief hotel, hundreds of bottles of champagne stood ready to be uncorked.

Seward had every reason to be confident of the results. He had already written a first draft of the speech he would make to the Senate resigning his seat to accept the presidential nomination. Seward awaited the results with friends while sitting in his garden.

When the devastating news arrived of Lincoln's nomination, biographer G Van Deusen noted Seward's private reaction. Seward said "half ruefully, half whimsically, how fortunate it was that he did not keep a diary, for if he had there would be a record of all his cursing and swearing when the news arrived."

Yet after a shaky start in Lincoln's cabinet, Seward forged a close working and personal relationship with Lincoln that indelibly shaped Lincoln's presidency. Join us on November 20th as Ray Messenger shares an intimate history of the personal life of William Seward, his wife Frances, his descendants, and his time in Auburn, NY.

Directions to Town of DeWitt Community Room

From 481N take Exit 5W to Kirkville Rd West. Merge onto Kirkville Rd and travel 1.2 miles. Turn right onto Kinne St and travel 0.7 miles. Turn right at Sanders Creek Parkway and travel 0.2 miles to 148 Sanders Creek Parkway, the site of the East Syracuse Fire Department and the Town of DeWitt Community Room.

Thank You for Your Dues

2008-09 dues paid at the September and October meetings: Lisa Bradley, Bob & Kathy Brown, Mike Carpenter, Dave Cuculich, Collyn Conrad and Mom, Gordon Cruickshank, Nancy Edwards, David Fedele family, Bill Goodwin, Diane Haller, Lamont Hahn, Ruth Hotaling, Ted Jones, Martin Joyce, Cheryl LaManche, Kevin Milcarek, William O'Leary, Jane Maher Proper, Richard Scott, Pat Stepanek, Rich & Natalie Trump, Elaine Tucker, M. Kent Russell, Kathy Ryan, Eleanor & James Tyler, Valerie Williams, Marcus & Kristy Lee Witt.

BYO Cup, Please

Obama Inaugural Theme

U. S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies has announced a Lincoln theme for the 2009 presidential inaugural. *A New Birth of Freedom*, words from the Gettysburg address, will be woven into the inaugural ceremonies. Feinstein added, "At a time when our country faces major challenges at home and abroad, it is appropriate to revisit the words of President Lincoln, who strived to bring the nation together by appealing to *the better angels of our nature*. It is especially fitting to celebrate the words of Lincoln as we prepare to inaugurate the first African-American president of the United States."

Civil War Haiku

Poet Melissa Whelan has combined the brevity and precision of a traditional form a Japanese poetry, haiku, to achieve complex imagery and meaning in three un-rhymed lines, the first and third lines containing five syllables each while the second line contains seven. She offers this haiku ode to honor the struggle of all Civil Warsoldiers.

*The blue and the gray
Made a hundred shades of red
The colors of war*

Museum of the Confederacy Expansion

The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia has faced dwindling attendance and revenues for the past few years due to the expansion of modern offices buildings surrounding the Richmond site. Parking is difficult as is finding the Museum itself amid the sprawl of the city. Thoughts of moving the building proved too costly. This past October S. Waite Rawls, museum director, announced plans to create three expansion sites throughout Virginia. The sites include the Fredericksburg area, Fort Monroe, and Appomattox. Each site will have exhibits from the world's largest collection of Civil War artifacts, more than can now be displayed in the limited space of the Richmond museum.

January Jeopardy

This farm on this Virginia battlefield is often referred to by guides as *The Farm with the Arm*. What battlefield and what farm are the guides referencing?

Ellwood Manor near Chancellorsville where Stonewall Jackson's arm was buried.

The Ultimate Fund Raiser

At the September 16th meeting of the board of directors of the Southworth Library in Dryden, NY, a decision to sell a valuable Lincoln document was approved. For more than 80 years the library has owned an original handwritten manuscript of Lincoln's 1864 re-election address given to Congressman John Dwight of Dryden, the first president of the Southworth Library Association, by Robert Todd Lincoln in 1916 in appreciation of Dwight's efforts to secure congressional funding for the Lincoln Memorial. Upon Dwight's death in 1928, his widow gave the document to the library. This document is one of a very few Lincoln speech manuscripts not in a permanent institution such as the Library of Congress.

The document has been kept in a secure, off-site location. It was displayed only once during the bicentennial celebration in 1976. As the value of the document increased, so have the insurance costs increased putting a strain on the library's shoestring annual budget. The document is now at Christie's auction facility in New York city and will be sold at a special sale on Feb. 12, 2009 for the Lincoln bicentennial. The four-page manuscript is expected to sell for more than 3 million. The funds from the sale will be used to expand and modernize the Southworth Library.

What Does a President-Elect Do?

Since the election results on November 4th, the press has speculated about just what President-elect Obama will do in the 11 weeks from the date of his election until he takes his oath of office on January 20, 2009. Will he return to the senate to vote on important financial issues? What must he do to shape his new administration? The country will watch his progress.

Lincoln had 16 weeks as President-elect until his inauguration on March 4, 1860. Those 16 weeks, perhaps the most fateful in our history, have received little attention even in the finest Lincoln biographies until now. Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer has authored a major work on the subject: *Lincoln: President-Elect, Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861*. Holzer traces Lincoln's process of setting the goals that would define his presidency. During this time Lincoln drew the line from which he would not budge - the preservation of the Union. Critics have called Holzer's work "the definitive work on this crucial period in the formation of our greatest president."

Books Away from the Battlefield

The Wall Street Journal recently published a list of the five best books on the Civil War that do not deal with battles. The list is based on the recommendation of Dr. James McPherson. Here are his choices.

The Republic of Suffering by Drew Gilpin Faust

Civil Wars by George C. Rable

Souther Lady, Yankee Spy by Elizabeth R. Varon

The Imagined Civil War by Alice Fahs

Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin

Four Stamp Designs to Mark Lincoln Bicentennial



Railsplitter



Lawyer



Politician



President

The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (ALBC) and the U.S. Post Office joined together in Springfield, Illinois earlier this month to unveil four commemorative stamps honoring Abraham Lincoln's bicentennial. The stamps will be available in post offices throughout the country on Monday, February 9th, three days before Lincoln's 200th birthday, and will be added to personal collections world wide.

Lincoln, once a village postmaster, has already appeared on more than 50 U.S. stamps, more than any other person. The ALBC recognizes that both as President-elect and as President, Lincoln vowed that the U.S. mails would never be interrupted. "Thanks to him, their safe passage became a symbol of the enduring strength of the Union itself." The block of four commemorative stamps illustrates aspects of Lincoln's life as follows:

The first stamp shows Lincoln as a rail-splitter. It includes the earliest known photo of Lincoln, taken in 1846 by N. H. Shepherd, and depicts Lincoln as a young man splitting a log for a rail fence on the American frontier. When he was a candidate for President in 1860, the Republican Party used the image of Lincoln as a "rail-splitter" to enhance his appeal to the workingman.

Lincoln the lawyer is featured in this stamp which includes a photograph of Lincoln taken on May 7, 1858 by A. Byers and shows Lincoln in a courtroom in Illinois, where he practiced law for nearly 25 years, riding a circuit of courthouses across Central Illinois.

The stamp of Lincoln as a politician includes a photograph of Lincoln, dated February 27, 1860, by Mathew Brady, and shows Lincoln debating Stephen Douglas during their 1858 campaign for a U.S. Senate seat from Illinois.

Lincoln as President includes a photograph of Lincoln, dated November 8, 1863, by Alexander Gardner. It depicts Lincoln conferring with generals Grant and Sherman toward the end of the Civil War. The depiction is based on *The Peacemaker* (1868), a painting by George Healy.

The stamp artist, Mark Summers, is noted for his scratchboard technique, a style characterized by a dense network of lines etched with precision. His drawings have been featured in the *New York Times Book Review*. Perhaps you've seen his best known work on the Barnes & Noble shopping bags and banners. And remember, four new Lincoln pennies also debut in February.

Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

New Member/Renewal Form

Membership dues of the OCCWRT are:

Please Check one of the Following

- \$20.00 a year
- O.H.A. members \$10.00
- Seniors and Students \$15.00
- Family rate (2 or more) \$30.00

Dues may be paid at meetings or sent to:

Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

ATTN: A. Scott Cauger Treasurer

216 Windebank Lane

Minos, NY 13116

Please find \$ _____ enclosed in form of

Circle One:

Check M.O. Cash

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Please check if you prefer an emailed newsletter and can receive an Acrobat (pdf) file.

E-Mail _____

The Onondaga County Civil War Round Table was organized in 1994 and is now an incorporated non-profit educational organization. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month from September through June. The purpose of the OCCWRT is to stimulate and encourage interest in the American Civil War, to assist in community service in order to enhance the study and understanding of the Civil War, to provide educational and historical research of the period, and to promote historic preservation.

*Onondaga County
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