

September 2008
Volume 15 Number 1

The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

The President's Corner

The Onondaga County Civil War Round Table has an exciting 15th season ahead starting in September with our own Courtney Tucker who resides in Tully, NY. He will be our first speaker with his presentation of the *Onondaga County Soldiers in the Civil War*. I am sure many of you have often wondered what happened to some of the soldiers who came from this county.

For November Ray S. Messinger, the great-great-grandson of William H. Seward, has agreed to speak before us on his relative. As you know Seward was well-known for being our Secretary of State under Presidents Lincoln and Johnson and for convincing the government to purchase Alaska from the Russians in 1867 for a mere pittance of 7 million plus, a lot of money in those days but nothing by today's standards. We all look forward to hearing about this important person who just happened to reside in our own backyard!

To round out the year of 2008, in December we will have our Christmas Party, but instead of everyone bringing a dessert to pass, I suggest each bring a small dish to pass and the Round Table will supply the desserts. The event will start one-half hour earlier at 6:30 PM to allow an hour for dinner. (Of course anytime during the program you may get more coffee and dessert.) At 7:30 PM the program will begin with a few words about what we have done and what's coming up in 2009. Our speaker will be our own Scott Cauger who hails from Kirkville. More will be mentioned in November's article about his subject.

For the 2008-09 season the Round Table will have two Program Chairs. President Bill Goodwin and Vice President Diane Haller are handling the job that Darothy DeAngelo filled so expertly for many years. The position will be available to an interested member next year. Darothy will be our resident archivist, organizing our papers into a large yearly file. You'd be surprised how thick that file can be. Scott Cauger has agreed to take over the Treasurer's job from Rich Walker who has been traveling extensively.

See you on September 18th,

Bill Goodwin

Waterloo, NY Civil War Weekend

The dedication of Waterloo's Civil War Memorial will be a three day affair -Sept. 19 - 21. A full weekend of activities will include living history, music, illumination procession & ceremony, dedication ceremony, demonstrations including cannon fire, and historical tours. A Blue Gray Ball is scheduled for Saturday evening along with a Sunday morning prayer service. A complete listing of the weekend activities is on the website: www.americancivilwarmemorial.com

New York State Battle Flags

Since 1997 New York State has undertaken the responsibility of conserving its Civil War battle flags along with other flags dating from the War of 1812. This significant collection of 1800 flags is the largest of collection of state CW flags in the country. The website has a listing with photos of the completed flags including the 149th NYSV regimental flag. Check out the website: www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/mil-hist.htm

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.

2007-08 OCCWRT Officers

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Meeting Site

Town of DeWitt Community Room

148 Sanders Creek Parkway
East Syracuse, New York

Courtney Tucker
presents

Onondaga County Civil War Soldiers & Units

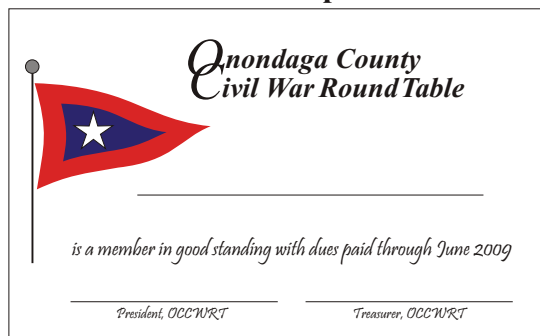
Vignettes of area men, families, and regiments

Thursday, September 18, 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.

Membership Cards



At the August board meeting OCCWRT board members voted to issue membership cards to all 2008-09 dues paying members. They will be issued at each meeting to attendees who pay their 2008-09 dues or sent to those paying by mail and not attending a meeting. Please use the membership form provided in the newsletter for paying your dues. We ended the last season with 48 paid members. Thank you all. A special thanks to M. Kent Russell who got a jump on all of us by paying his 2008-09 dues this past July.

A word about our Round Table logo for our newer members. The logo represents the headquarters flag of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division of General Slocum's XII Army Corps that flew at the Battle of Gettysburg at the headquarters of Brigadier General George Sears Greene's New York Brigade (60th, 78th, 102, 137th and 149th NYSV). This is the brigade that successfully held Culp's Hill on July 2 & 3, 1863 against repeated Confederate attacks and saved the Union right.



3rd Brigade Flag returns from the conservator

The OCCWRT adopted this flag and raised \$7000 to conserve it in 2000 when Onondaga County began its mission to save the county's CW Battle Flags that had been poorly stored in the County Clerk's office for a hundred years. This flag is now one of 10 conserved flags that are still displayed in the County Clerk's office but are housed in museum quality flat files. This was the OCCWRT's first preservation effort and we proudly use a representation of the flag's image as our logo.

Part of our fund raiser for this project included 2 postal cachets. The first dated Sept. 2, 2001 was issued for the rededication of the Clinton Square. The second cachet dated June 14, 2002 was issued for the return of the conserved 3rd Brigade Flag. The historic cachets are still available at \$3.00 each and will be available at our September meeting.

Last Oakwood Cemetery Tour of the Season

Sunday, September 28 at 2 PM starting at the Chapel:

A Ramble - the Curious, Mysterious and Just Plain Oddball. Tours guides will be Jamie Steele and Karl Orlick. For more information call 682-6312.

BYO Cup

It's difficult to change old habits. However, in an attempt to limit the amount of styrofoam cups we generate at each meeting, we ask that you bring your own coffee cup. Yes, we will continue to offer styrofoam cups in case old habits persist.

Point

From a Cornell University Press Release, August 8, 2008: "*The Sage Wednesdays series was created to provide the Cornell campus and the local community with an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss important issues of our time, creating the space for scholarly exploration as well as spiritual meditation.*" The lectures are held in Sage Chapel, a non-denominational chapel on the Cornell campus. The first lecture was given on Sept. 3 and reviewed the following day by Liz Lawyer in the **Ithaca Journal**. What follows is an edited version of Ms. Lawyer's review.

Speaker: Lincoln Not Hero of Legend

Scholars and media reporters need to be more honest about one of the most celebrated figures in American history, author Lerone Bennett Jr. said Wednesday. Speaking in Cornell's Sage Chapel to a crowd of about 40 people as part of the Sage Wednesday Series, Bennett said people have made a hero of a man who doesn't deserve it - Abraham Lincoln.

Lerone Bennett worked for Ebony magazine as an editor for five decades and is the author of 10 books on U.S. racial history. He was born in Mississippi in 1928, graduated from Morehouse College and participated in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. His book, *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*, questions Lincoln's role as the Great Emancipator. Bennett said Wednesday that Lincoln's identity in American history has been warped.

"He was not a great emancipator; he was not a small emancipator, he was not even a regular-sized emancipator, Bennett said, drawing laughs. "The Emancipation Proclamation did not free the slave; the 13th Amendment to the Constitution freed the slaves. If you meet a historian in Ithaca who says the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves, call the police - because you are either dealing with a charlatan or an innocent who needs to be protected from himself."

The Lincoln Bennett described opposed equal rights for blacks and Latinos, and supported the deportation of all blacks living in the states. As a Lawyer in Illinois, Lincoln sent runaway slaves back to slavery. He said it is his mission to open a dialogue on Lincoln and bring about the acceptance of the real person.

"I'm not saying it for black people alone," he said. "You can't understand Lincoln, you can't understand the Civil War, you can't understand religion, you can't understand the American dilemma unless you understand the joy and pain and the glory of the black odyssey in this land."

Bennett said it is the responsibility of the country to "know itself," and of institutions of higher education to teach the truth. "It is a crime to teach young people lies," he said. "Something sinister happens to a people who ask its best minds to lie in public for the republic. Blacks are still fighting for their freedom in a democracy that was not designed to include them. But it has evolved and is still evolving, he said.

"The nomination of Barack Obama for president is of course historically significant. It is historically significant, but not historically sufficient. The nomination of one man is not the end of the game. Ten or 100 elections will not dissolve the accumulated disadvantages of hundreds of years. It is still the beginning of the struggle."

Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream by Lerone Bennett, Jr., Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co, 2000, Pp. 652, \$35.00, ISBN 0-87485-085-1

Editorial Counterpoint

How does one begin to respond to Lerone Bennett's evaluation of Abraham Lincoln? First, as students of the Civil War and readers of the history of that time we should recognize that Mr. Lerone Bennett's recent lecture at Cornell and his accompanying book *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* present a narrow view of our 16th President. Pulitzer Prize winning Civil War author James McPherson in a review of Bennett's book stated, "This book must be taken seriously. Bennett gets some things right...but Bennett gets more wrong than he gets right."

Was Lincoln a racist or an opponent of slavery? Bennett concludes angrily that Lincoln was a racist, but Bennett breaks a cardinal rule of history by using 21st century racial standards to enforce his view even though the concept of racism did not exist in Lincoln's time. To categorize Lincoln as a racist limits the writer's ability as well as the reader's ability to follow the evolution in Lincoln's attitude towards slavery. According to McPherson "Lincoln shared many of the racist convictions of his time. But while he was not a radical abolitionist, he did consider slavery morally wrong, and seized the opportunity presented by the war to move against it. Bennett fails to appreciate the acuity and empathy that enabled Lincoln to transcend his prejudices and to preside over the greatest social revolution in American history, the liberation of four million slaves."

For further in-depth views of Bennett's thesis, I suggest a Google search for book reviews of *Forced Into Glory*. Prominent historians such as Eric Foner of Columbia University, Edward Steers, Jr, an expert on Lincoln's assassination, and Dr. G. Fredrickson, the foremost American scholar on the history of

race from Stanford will illustrate the specifics of what Bennett gets wrong. Fortunately students of Civil War history are the booksellers best friends and are not likely to limit their study of Lincoln to this one book. Bennett spoke to a limited audience of 40. One wonders how many listeners bought Bennett's book as their first study of Lincoln and subscribed to Bennett's personal agenda that seeks to substitute personal opinion for history.

All opinions are welcomed and will receive equal space in future newsletters.

Lincoln 2009 Bicentennial

Activities have already begun to celebrate Lincoln's 200th birthday. I am aware of some that are still in the planning stage within Central New York. C-Span will also offer multiple programs on Lincoln as well. If you know of any local Lincoln activities, let us know by emailing the info to pas1865@verizon.net

Status of Summer Grave Restoration

Work on General Edwin Sumner's tomb has not begun. Viau Construction has been busy at Colgate and Lemoyne this past summer. Viau Construction has assured me that work will begin shortly. Because of the uncertainty of its completion the board will decide whether to delay the dedication to May 2009. Seems likely that will be decision.

FYI -January Jeopardy

Franklin Buchanan, C. S. Navy, commanded the *Merrimac* during its battle with the *Monitor*. The *Merrimac* sank the U.S. Ship *Congress* shortly before its battle with the *Monitor* killing McKean Buchanan of the Union Navy, the brother of the *Merrimac* commander.

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
Civil War Round Table PO Box 175 Tully, NY 13159-0175