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The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

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Meeting Site

April 20, 2006
7 PM

Eastwood Baptist Church
3212 James Street
Eastwood, NY

This From George

Presented by
Eileen Patch

Directions: Route 690 East to Midler Ave
Exit 15. North on Midler to James St.
Right on James. Church will be two blocks
from Midler on the right.

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.

April 2006 Meeting Details

A lifelong resident of the Binghamton, NY area, Eileen Patch is mother of three, grandmother of two, retired director and teacher of a Vestal nursery school, and retired organist and director of a Binghamton church choir. A graduate of Potsdam State Teacher's College, she has served on various boards of directors for Binghamton Youth Symphony, Toastmasters, Lyceum, and Naturalists' Club.

She currently edits newsletters for Broome County Historical Society and Binghamton Civil War Roundtable. She is active in Daughters of Union Veterans, Daughters of the American Revolution, Society of Mayflower Descendants and the Binghamton English Country Dancers.

In 1993 she inherited and transcribed her granduncle's Civil War letters and, after extensive research, wrote annotations which are the basis of her presentation to us on April 20th and for her book, *This from George*. The book is available on the website, www.thisfromgeorge.com

Eileen has given living history presentations for numerous Civil War Round Tables, historical societies, library friends groups, historical museums, and for scholarship students at Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. She also performed at area Apple, Strawberry and Blueberry Fests, Binghamton First Night, a denominational house at Chautauqua Institution, Old Mill Village in New Milford, PA, Wilson Museum at Castine, ME, and many other groups.

In Lieu of the President's Message A Word About the President Rudy's Son

As John Rudy's successful junior year at Gettysburg College draws to a close, he looks forward to another challenge. He has accepted a living history summer internship at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Read on to see if you think John can do the job.

The Park requires the intern to have a "working knowledge of 19th century American history, public speaking skills and research skills along with the ability to organize large amounts of information, work cooperatively with others in a stressful environment, and handle controversial issues with tact and in a professional manner." His duties will be to "pursue specifically assigned research topics, study assigned research materials, assist in preparing and presenting special events, draft written responses to information requests, and research, develop and present interpretive programs." With all that done, he will then deliver public history talks and tours while in costume in the summer heat and humidity of Harpers Ferry.

John's study will focus on "the nationally significant resources of the Harpers Ferry area, which include John Brown, the Civil War, African American history and the Industrial history, Transportation history, and Landscape history of the area."

A "piece of cake" for our now 21-year old round table member whom we have watched grow into a skilled historian. And he's not through yet! Good luck, John.

Thanks to Dr. Norm Dann, Our March Speaker

Now that Dr. Dann has dusted off Gerrit Smith and has shared his insights of Smith with us, we look forward to Dann's forthcoming book: *Practical Dreamer: A Biography of Gerrit Smith*. Many members signed up at the last meeting to have the book shipped directly to them upon publication.

Of the three existing biographies of Smith that Dann mentioned, each has its own deficiency. *Gerrit Smith* by Octavius Brooks Frothingham, clergyman and scholar, was written with the cooperation of Smith's daughter. After its publication, it was re-edited on demand of Smith's family because Frothingham concluded that Smith had prior knowledge of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.

Charles Hammond's *Gerrit Smith-The Story of a Noble Life*, published in 1900, was written to provide an inspirational example for young readers. Like Frothingham, Hammond was a Smith admirer.

Gerrit Smith by Ralph Volney Harlow was published in 1939. Volney was Chairman of the SU History Department in 1928 when Gerrit Smith's daughter donated the papers of Smith and his father, Peter, to the University. After years of research into those papers, Volney developed a negativity towards Smith which influenced his selection of facts and their interpretation. This is hardly what a reader would expect from a professional historian.

The time is right for another look at Gerrit Smith. And that balanced study will appear within the next few months.

Recent Lecture at SUNY Cortland

On or about the 18th of March, your editor received a press release from SUNY Cortland announcing a free lecture by Pulitzer Prize winner and Civil War historian Mark E. Neely, Jr. I immediately emailed this press release to all on our email list alerting you to this lecture and bemoaning the fact that I would be in Gettysburg and unable to attend. Two email recipients did attend and both agreed I was fortunate to have been in Gettysburg. What follows is Dick Crozier's analysis of the lecture:

"Tonight we will see who is the better President: Abraham Lincoln or George W. Bush. But we will have to wait until the end." With that intriguing question Pulitzer Prize winning historian and author Mark E. Neely began his lecture in Cortland on March 23rd. Neely is reputed to be a leading Lincoln scholar and teaches at Penn State. If I may inject myself into this story, I thought this SUNY Cortland *Sipher Lecture Series* presentation titled *Lincoln and Civil Liberties in the Light of September 11* was made for me. I've portrayed such historical personages as the Copperhead Clement Vallandigham and Congressman Alfred Ely, and I have a strong interest in the legal and Constitutional issues involved during the American Civil War. Hearing from the man who wrote *Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* was my dream come true.

Professor Neely began with that promise of things to come, but at the end of the evening never fulfilled the promise. From that initial question he took us to Missouri and referred at length to the martial law that was declared and then informed the crowd of about 100 that President Lincoln ordered Pope to Missouri to restore civilian authority.

According to Neely, General Sherman's "March to the Sea" was absolutely not terrorism although many Southerners to this day describe Sherman's attacks on Atlanta and the civilian population of Georgia as the "Merchant of Terror." Neely asserted, "This was just total war and not terrorism. 9/11 was real terror."

He spoke at length of an isolated and largely unknown plan to attack buildings in New York City by a group of Confederates. Neely called the group "not well trained and they did not have a plan." He spent some time explaining the explosive that the Confederates used (Greek Fire) and then explained that the substance used may or may not have been actual "Greek Fire." How this met the initial premise of the evening, I'm still wondering. During a Q&A session I asked, "Do you think Lincoln was aware that he was creating a precedent for future Presidents?" His simple answer was, "NO." Neely went for the laugh and he got it. I was astounded when Neely asserted, "As much as Lincoln suspended civil rights, perhaps he didn't suspend them enough." I found myself shaking my head at several other moments during the lecture, but I won't bore you with any more details.

I tried to get some clarification as to some of his statements. I asked, "Was Lincoln trying to create a strong Federal Government in spite of the desire of Jefferson and other Anti Federalists to limit the power of the Central Government?" I personally believe President Lincoln knew exactly what he was doing during the Civil War, but Professor Neely thought otherwise. According to the Professor, Lincoln was just trying to save the Union and had very few expectations beyond the final surrender and restoration of the country.

I felt a little vindicated when another attendee asked for a clarification of an answer of a question by a "fellow down front." (me!) Neely observed, "The question sounded like it came from a Copperhead." I agree, but I expected more analysis.

The question "Who was the greater President, Lincoln or Bush?" remains to be answered. Neely never did get back to that point.

Robert Todd Lincoln on Presidential Assassinations

from *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln* Edited by A. Ayres

"Abraham Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln (1843-1926), enjoyed what was perhaps the most distinguished career of any presidential progeny in U.S. history to date. After graduating from Harvard, he served in the Civil War as captain on the staff of Ulysses S. Grant. When the war was over, he attended Harvard Law School and became a corporate lawyer. In 1881 he was appointed by President James A. Garfield to be secretary of war. He served in that cabinet post until 1885. Under President Benjamin Harrison he served as U.S. minister to Great Britain from 1889-1893. Later he resumed his law practice and became president of the Pullman Company from 1897 to 1911, after which he was chairman of the board and director of various banks until his death in 1926.

Robert Todd Lincoln's life was crisscrossed with tragedy. It is a curious footnote to history that he was present as three different presidents lay dying from assassins' bullets. He was by his dying

father's beside in 1865; he witnessed the shooting of President Garfield in Washington, DC in 1881; and he was a guest at the Exposition in Buffalo, NY when President William McKinley was shot in 1901. He wrote laconically, 'There is a certain fatality about presidential functions when I am present'."

April 2006 marks the 141st anniversary of Lincoln's death.

High Honor Bestowed on Round Table Member

by Darothy DeAngelo (her sister)

On a recent trip to the Gettysburg National Park, Battlefield Guide, Sue Boardman (an outstanding wealth of Civil War knowledge), publicly named our Sue Greenhagen as "An Honorary Battlefield Guide."

This designation came about when our Sue reminded Guide Sue that the 29th Ohio monument (with the backward "s") was made of Vermont granite and probably was NOT carved by a little old German stonecutter. Guide Sue readily agreed.

The 2nd star in our Sue's crown came when Guide Sue couldn't remember the 3rd of 3 funereal-themed monuments. She could only come up with the monument for the 67th Long Island regiment (a soldier at funereal rest) and the monument to the 96th New York (a woman weeping over a dead soldier), but she drew a blank of the 3rd. So our Sue offered, "It was the 9th PA Reserves monument called, 'By a Comrades Grave'." Guide Sue was SO impressed that she immediately bestowed the title, "Honorary Battlefield Guide" upon our Sue, right there on Culp's Hill.

This calls for a party...



9th PA Reserves
By a Comrades Grave

A REMINDER: Dues are still being collected for this fiscal year. Thanks to our 42 members who are current.

Research Pays Off

After more than two years of research, round table member and local historian, Darothy DeAngelo, introduced an in-depth presentation on 19th Century writer, "Grace Greenwood."

Born Sarah Jane Clarke in Pompey in 1823, Miss Clarke went on to be known as "Grace Greenwood" and proceeded to become a nationally known writer, poet, publisher, lecturer, and most noteworthy of all, one of the first female newspaper correspondents in America.

During the Civil War, Grace gave her untiring support for the war to preserve the Union and to free the slaves. She toured the country and lectured in behalf of the abolition movement, woman's suffrage, equal pay for equal work, and opposition to capital punishment. She also visited army hospitals and army camps where she read and talked to the Union soldiers. In behalf of the Sanitary Commission, she worked to raise funds for medical supplies and comforts for the soldiers. Her efforts did NOT go unnoticed, and as a result, President Lincoln called her, "Grace, the Patriot."

The lecture, "Grace Under Pressure" was presented at the Fayetteville Senior Center in honor of Women's History Month. This is the newest lecture Darothy has prepared on CNY natives and local personalities.

Grace is the most famous person that nobody's ever heard of.

Gettysburg Council Oks Slots

Gettysburg's borough council voted 6-3 on April 3, 2006 to support a proposed slot-machine gambling parlor near the historic battlefield in exchange for a \$1 million-per-year revenue guarantee. An attorney for the casino applicant, Crossroads Gaming Resort and Spa LP and Crossroads Gaming CEO David LeVan, said the money guarantee is predicated on the borough council's support of its application for a license.

Council President Ted Streeter contends the guaranteed \$1 million per year would help the borough improve its police and social services to deal with an influx of visitors to the casino and potentially reduce property taxes. "If that's selling out, I plead guilty," Streeter told a packed borough meeting hall.

Council member Dick Peterson labeled the million dollar guarantee as an "attempt to buy our votes and will not influence my personal opinion."

The meeting drew dozens of people wearing buttons and T-shirts and carrying signs in support and opposition of the casino. The board had been asked by Chance Enterprises to testify in favor of the project at a public hearing held on April 5th in Gettysburg. In return for the board's support, Chance would guarantee the borough \$1 million a year out of the gaming proceeds.

So, it will be noted in Harrisburg that the Gettysburg borough council IS in favor of the casino.

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

Onondaga County Civil War Round Table
New Membership/Renewal Form

Membership dues of the OCCWRT are:

Please Check one of the Following

- ____ \$20.00 a year
____ O.H.A. members \$5.00
____ 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: Dave Osborn, Treasurer
2 Thistlewood Lane
Fayetteville, NY 13066

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.