

Vol. 12 No. 4  
December 2004

# The Battlefront

*Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table*

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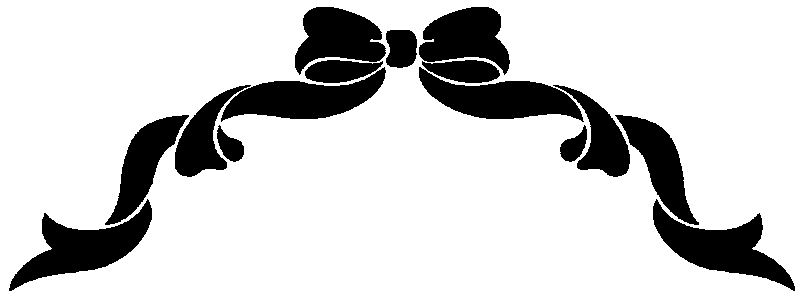
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Route 481 to Exit 7  
Take 298 West  
Take your first Left. Turn onto  
Brittonfield Parkway. The NYSUT  
Building is the Third on the right.  
Parking in the rear. Enter by rear door.

Meetings are held the third Thursday  
of the month from September through  
June.



*You are cordially invited*

*to the*

*Annual Holiday Gathering*

*of the*

*Onondaga County Civil War*

*Round Table*

*Thursday, December 16, 2004*

*7 o'clock in the evening*

*NYSUT Building*



*Dessert Exchange*

*Silent auction with proceeds to be used for restoration  
of General Sumner's grave site at Oakwood Cemetery*

*Concert by Jerry Ernst, 19<sup>th</sup> century music historian  
and talented performer*

## Meet Jerry Ernst

Prepare yourselves for an exciting evening of entertainment at our Holiday Gathering on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Jerry Ernst of Rochester describes himself as an obsessed collector and purveyor of 19<sup>th</sup> century popular songs familiar to the Civil War soldier. His many instruments include a small parlor guitar and an 1859 fretless banjo that he plays in a “knockdown” style. His milieu is the campfire – not the concert hall.



Jerry combines his love of music with reenacting with the 140<sup>th</sup> NYV. One of his five CD's, *Night March to Gettysburg*, is a collection of songs mentioned in letters of soldiers of the 140<sup>th</sup> NYV that were sung by the boys on their overnight march from Hanover to Gettysburg on July 1-2 1863. The CD's will be available to us on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

In June of 2002, Jerry performed brilliantly at the Canal Museum's welcome-home flag party sponsored by Onondaga County. That night we saw for the first time the newly conserved 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade flag and the 149<sup>th</sup> NYV national colors. We've been trying to get Jerry back to Syracuse since. His CD website is as follows: [www.cdbaby.com/jerund](http://www.cdbaby.com/jerund)

## President's Message

Happy Holidays! As I am writing this, the sun is shining. Let's hope that the winter gives us an abundance of sunshine and little snow. I hope that you are all planning to attend our holiday party/meeting and that you will be bringing all kinds of great stuff for our annual Silent Auction. Any articles will be appreciated. It needn't be Civil War related. We enjoy trying to outbid each other no matter what. Please remember that all of the proceeds go towards our restoration project at General Sumner's gravesite in Oakwood Cemetery. We are very slowly building up the restoration fund and we can use your help to get this project moving towards fruition

Our Holiday Fete (as Darothy so aptly named it) is a dessert party. Please bring your most calorie-laden goodies. We will supply coffee and paper goods. It is always a treat to sample everybody's wonderful desserts. Jerry Ernst, a musician who plays great mid 19th century music, will entertain us. I know that you will thoroughly enjoy listening to him and maybe even sing along. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Happy Holidays,  
Mimi Rudy



## Civil War News Stories

11/25/04 from the Hanover, PA *Evening Sun*: The origin and authenticity of a banner supposedly used at a reunion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry in 1889 is being questioned by Gettysburg National Military Park and the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg. The Friends Group recently gave the Park Service \$10,500 to purchase the banner for its museum and archives after Greg Goodell, supervisor of museum services at the park, had established the banner's authenticity. The 42-in-tall canvas banner features a scene of Little Round Top.

The *Portland (ME) Press Herald* published another version of the origins of the banner. Jim Compratt of Canon City, Colo., told the newspaper he created the banner in 2002. His wife sewed the banner on a modern sewing machine and he used latex paint for the letters and background. He then sold the banner to a Kennebunk merchant for \$165. The merchant then sold it to a private dealer for \$300 as a new item. From there a prominent Massachusetts antiques broker sold the banner to the National Parks at Gettysburg for \$10,500. Where's the *Antiques Roadshow* when you need it?

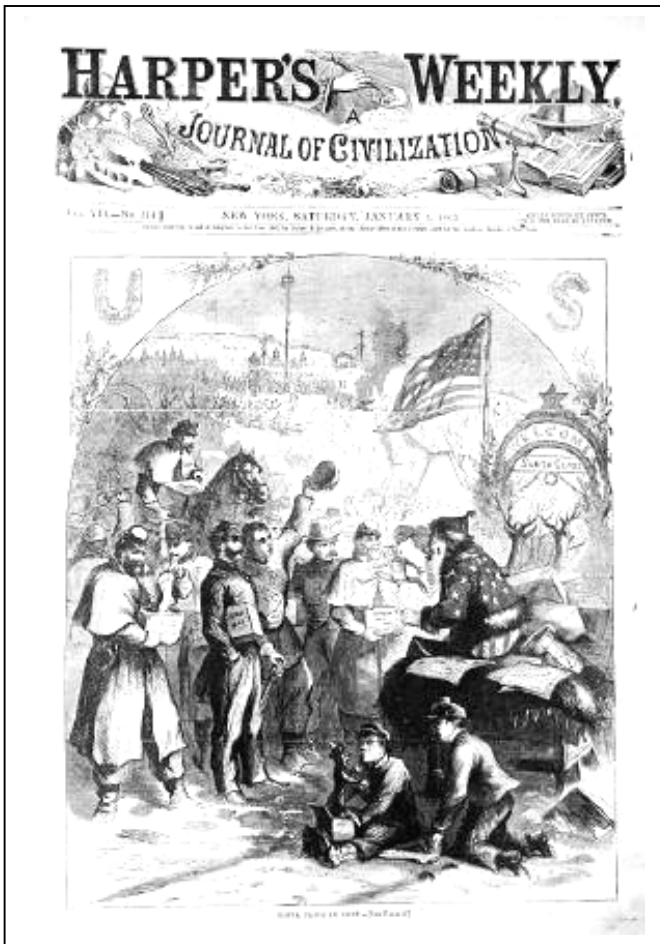
Jim Compratt told the Portland newspaper that the banner is not even a reproduction, just a product of his own imagination. "I just made it up," he said. Kathie Lawhon, a park spokeswoman, said, "We are taking it seriously. But we are not rushing to judgment" Stay tuned!

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10/20/04 from the Oswego *Palladium Times*: Oswego Town Clerk, Theresa Cooper, has begun fund raising to erect a statue to Dr. Mary Edwards Walker (1831-1919). Walker was the first woman to be awarded the Medal of Honor for Meritorious Service during the Civil War.

Born in Oswego, Walker was the second U.S. Woman to earn a medical degree, graduating from Syracuse Medical College in 1855. When the Civil War broke out, she offered her services, working first as a nurse and eventually appointed as assistant surgeon of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Infantry. Walker was also a prisoner of war in 1864, gaining release when she was exchanged for a Confederate officer. From 1890 on, Walker lived in Oswego in the family home on Bunker Hill Road. She is remembered for her unusual style of dress – namely pants, topcoat and top hat. She is also well-known for her refusal to surrender her Medal of Honor when, in 1917, it was revoked after Congress revised the standards to include only "actual combat with an enemy." President Jimmy Carter officially restored the medal to her on June 10, 1977. The medal is now property of the Oswego County Historical Society. In 2000, Walker was inducted in the National Women's Hall of Fame. For more information or to donate, call Theresa Cooper at 315-343-2586.

## EXTRA! EXTRA! Civil War Artist “Father” of Santa



OK, so I exaggerated a bit. However, Thomas Nast (1840-1902) did originate the modern conception of Santa through a series of sketches in *Harper's Illustrated Weekly*. Despite a vivid description of Santa in an 1823 poem, no sketch met with the approval of the public until 22-year-old Nast submitted his to *Harper's*. His drawing so pleased Lincoln that the President took a copy of the magazine around to the military camps to show the Union troops. When word of Lincoln's favorite Santa drawing reached the public, the nation adopted the merry old St. Nicholas. Nast would improve on his Santa, penning his last in 1890.

Nast, born in Bavaria and brought to America at age 6, had been working as an illustrator since he was 15. Known for his barbed wit, he originated the famous political symbols of the elephant and donkey. He is best known for his attack on the Tweed Ring where his vivid symbols of corruption captured the public's imagination. William Tweed once said, "Stop the pictures! I don't care what the newspapers say about me. My constituents can't read." Thus, Nast's art became a vehicle for commentary to all levels of literacy and inspired generations of political cartoonists.

Shown here is Santa Claus in Camp, one of Nast's earliest published drawings of Santa, from the Jan. 3, 1863 edition of *Harper's Weekly*. We see a bearded, big-bellied, stars and stripes wool-suited Santa seated on his reindeer-drawn sleigh handing out warm socks to delighted soldiers and toys to well-behaved children in soldier suits. In the background, a sign welcomes him. The claim that Nast "fathered" Santa is thus accurate, but the assertion overlooks the centuries of German tradition that predate his drawing. However, his Santa is a permanent part of American culture.

### **A Closer Look**

Lincoln once commented that Nast "is our best recruiting agent". In this close up we see why – the special gift in Santa's hand. Santa is entertaining the troops with a dancing puppet. Even the officer is taking a second look - as should we. The puppet strongly resembles Jefferson Davis. Even more bizarre, Davis is in the process of being lynched by Santa. I can hear Lincoln's laughter even now.

Though we see many of our present images of Santa in this illustration/cartoon, today's Santa is without a political agenda. Unlike Edwin Forbes' illustrations seen in previous OCCWRT newsletters, Nast reflects more of what he felt rather than what he saw. His many drawings throughout the CW influenced public opinion in favor of the northern war effort. Boss Tweed and Lincoln understood the power of the visual "comment" from the pen of such a talented artist.



# Onondaga County Civil War Roundtable

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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  
2569 Gardner Road  
Fabius, NY 13063**



by Thomas Nast 1881