



February 2005
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The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

2004-05 OCCWRT Officers

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Meeting
Thursday
February 17, 2005
7 PM

Location
Onondaga Historical Association
321 Montgomery St.
Syracuse, NY

Speaker:
Dennis Connors
Curator of History

Meetings are held at 7 PM on the third Thursday of the month from September through June.

First Time Ever

Our presentation this month is a real coup for the OCCWRT. We will host Dennis Connors, Curator of History at the Onondaga Historical Association, who will share with us as his first public audience the contents of the letters between a Syracuse abolitionist, Dr. Alfred Mercer, and a Texas soldier, Sidney E. Moseley. Entitled, "An Exceptional Exchange with the Enemy," Mr. Connors will discuss how this unusual communication took place and what the contents of the letters disclose about the writers and their stand on the Civil War. Acknowledging that the "home front" is often ignored when studying the Civil War, the round table is very pleased to host a professional historian who has researched and documented this topic which has a unique Syracuse connection.

For this meeting, we'll be the guests of the OHA at the museum at 321 Montgomery St. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Call 428-1864 or 682-6312 for additional information.

Darothy DeAngelo, Program Chair

Treasurer's Report from Dave Osborn

General Fund \$1652.31 Preservation Fund \$1922.67

37 Paid Members * 2004-05

Dr. & Mrs. Wm Billingham	Ruth Hotaling	M. Kent Russell
May Casper	Diane Haller	William Ryder
Brian Cooney	Mary Hosking	Kathy Snell
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Bill Goodwin	John Murray	Valerie Williams
Bob & Nancy Graham	William O'Leary	S. Edward Wilson Jr.
Beth Greenfield	Dave Osborn	* Fiscal year is Sept-June
Sue Greenhagen	Paul & Linda Pflanz	

President's Message

I hope that you are enjoying our light winter. I do believe that we will have to pay for it sometime soon. As we get towards the spring of the year I look forward to teaching my class about New York in the Civil War. As we study what part our state played in the conflict, I always bring the copies of my great grand-uncle's letters to class. These always make a hit and they fulfill the requirement of using primary sources in our history classes. You should see the faces of the students when they realize that these are the actual letters written over 100 years ago. It really is something to behold.

The reason I share this teaching moment with you is to let you know how excited I am about this month's presentation by Dennis Connors. He will be giving us a look at primary source material and we can experience the time through the correspondence between North and South.

We are also looking forward to our Adopt -a- Position gathering in Gettysburg. Hopefully many of you will join us! We really do get a lot of work done, learn some new things, and have a great time. Remember, spring happens earlier down there.

We continue to celebrate our tenth year as a vibrant organization and I would like to thank you for your support.

See you at the meeting,
Mimi

Battlefield For Sale

Historic Morris Island, all 840 acres with only 125 acres above tidal fluctuations, is for sale for 12.5 million dollars. On this island black troops of the 54th Mass led by Robert G. Shaw charged the principal land defense, Fort Wagner, and suffered 25% casualties in July 1863. This action was immortalized in the movie *Glory*. Union troops planned to gain a foothold on the island as a first step in their attempt to capture Charleston, SC.

A developer who owns the island has tired of fighting zoning battles for approval of 20 homes on the 125 acre high ground. So while he negotiates with conservation groups who want to buy the island, he has put it up for sale on eBay. As of Feb. 5th, if you typed in "private island Charleston" on eBay you could view the details of the beach front property with an incredible view of Charleston Harbor including Fort Sumter. The Morris Island Lighthouse, owned by the state, is not part of the sale. Once standing on the island, it now stands several hundred yards out in the Atlantic Ocean. Jim Campi of the Civil War Preservation Trust commented that he would like to get down to real bargaining based on fair market value rather than based on a \$12.5 million pipe dream.

From *The State*, a SC newspaper

Cyclorama ²

In the 1880's Paul Philippoteaux (1846-1925) along with sixteen artists created four Gettysburg cycloramas. Two have been lost. One is now housed in the Cyclorama building at Gettysburg. The other, consisting of 14 panels and weighing **six tons**, has been in storage at Wake Forest University since 1996, donated by artist Joe King shortly before he died. This is the painting that was last shown at the

1933 World's Fair in Chicago and was lost shortly after that. King spent 30 years searching for it, finding the panels in 1965 behind a smoke-blackened wall in the back of a Chicago warehouse. He bought it and brought it to Winston-Salem where it was unrolled at a football stadium. It measures 376' long, 17' longer than the one at Gettysburg, and 22 feet high with the top 20 feet of the painting's sky cut off years ago probably to make it easier to ship for exhibitions. In 1993, one panel of the painting was displayed



Gettysburg Cyclorama
in storage at Wake Forest University

at Scales Fine Arts Center on the Wake Forest campus. WFU wants to keep the painting intact, refusing to sell it to potential buyers who wanted to chop the painting into smaller pieces for resale. National Park Service representatives from Gettysburg looked at the cyclorama paintings several years ago. Meanwhile the 14 rolls remain in the vault and may never be seen due to millions needed for conserving and housing. Cycloramas were the 19th century version of our IMAX theaters and required buildings as much as 5 stories high and a football field wide. Motion pictures put the cycloramas out of business.

From the *Winston-Salem Journal*

General Grant Earns His Nickname and Settles a Debt February 12-16, 1862

Combined operations of Union naval forces under Commodore Andrew Foote and Union troops under Brig. Gen. Ulysses Grant moved against Confederate positions under A. S. Johnston on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers in early February 1862—perhaps on Anna Ella Carroll's suggestion (see Jan. newsletter). Such cooperation between the army and navy was limited in the eastern theater. Foote attacked and took Fort Henry on the Tennessee on Feb. 6, 1862, with most of its garrison escaping to nearby Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, the Confederate's major defense of Nashville. Though Foote's attack of Fort Donelson was repulsed, Grant's bold assault of Donelson ended with its surrender.

Grant had given the North its first major victory of the Civil War, opening the way into the heart of the Confederacy. General Albert Sidney Johnston was forced to withdraw his troops farther into the South, leaving Kentucky and Middle Tennessee without an army to defend it. The major results of the withdrawal were the capture of Nashville and the positioning of troops that would lead to the Battle of Shiloh. The completeness of the victory created jubilation throughout the North. Grant was nominated by the president as major-general of the volunteers, to date from Feb. 16, 1862, the date of the surrender of Fort Donelson.

Grant's direct counterpart at Fort Donelson was a friend from West Point, Brig. Gen. Simon Buckner (1823-1914). At dawn on Feb. 16th, Buckner sent a proposal to Grant for discussion of surrender terms. Back came Grant's blunt reply: "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately on your works." Buckner was put out by these "ungenerous and unchivalrous" words. He had lent Grant money to help him get home after his resignation from the army in 1854. With no other choice, Buckner surrendered his twelve thousand men, nearly a third of Johnston's army, and Grant would forever be known as "Unconditional Surrender" Grant. Perhaps to show his chivalry, Grant offered "his purse" to Buckner at his surrender.

After the war, the friendship was resumed. Buckner offered Grant financial assistance in his last days (Grant refused) and was a pallbearer at Grant's funeral.

Kudos to John Rudy

The round table has missed John since he left for Gettysburg College in September of 2003. We always knew he would do well during his college years. But even our expectations have paled with his induction into Phi Alpha Theta, aka, the International Honorary Society in History. Congratulations, John. More to come, we're all sure of that.

John will present in May a paper on *The US Regulars at the Wheatfield*, completed last year for Dr. Gabor Boritt's class in Civil War history. John was allowed to take this upper level course as a freshman and received a letter from Dr. Boritt acknowledging John's scholarship. Way to go, John. Just a reminder. Mimi, his mother, is our co-president.

2005 Schedule

- February 17** "An Exceptional Exchange with the Enemy: The Civil War Correspondence between a Rebel Sergeant and a Syracuse Abolitionist," by Dennis Connors, Curator of History, OHA, to be held at the OHA, 321 Montgomery St. 7:00 p.m.
- March 17** T.B.A.
- April 16** Adopt-a-Position, Culp's Hill, Gettysburg Battlefield, 10:00 a.m.
- April 21** "General James Longstreet, C.S.A., Comes to Syracuse." Dan Paterson, descendant of the controversial general will give us insight into and details of his famous ancestor. NYSUT, 7:00 p.m.
- April 23** A huge "Welcome Home" party for the Civil War battle flags which have all been returned from the conservator. Onondaga County Courthouse, 2nd floor. Arrangements not finalized.
- May 19** "The U.S. Regulars at the Wheatfield," by John Rudy, OCCWRT member and history student at Gettysburg College. NYSUT, 7:00 p.m.
- June 11-12** 13th Annual Civil War Weekend At Peterboro. Save the dates, more to come...
- June 16** Annual Meeting, Election, Show-and-Tell, etc. NYSUT, 7:00 p.m.

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

Name _____

Address _____

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

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Please find \$ _____ enclosed in form of
Circle One:

Check M.O. Cash

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.