February 18th Meeting

Come one! Come all - and bring your stuff! It’s Show and Tell night on February 18th. It’s your night to show us your special Civil War artifact, or some of your interesting battlefield photos, or your collection of whatevers. Tell us about an interesting CW trip you took last summer or a CW book or character that has captured your attention. Anything goes.

The other stuff we ask you to bring is a donation for our Silent Auction table. Though we prefer CW related items, again, anything goes. This is our only fund raiser for the year. Remember: one man’s clutter is another’s treasure. We look forward to what might appear on the table. Come a bit early to give our volunteers time to set up the auction. See you on the 18th.

January’s Civil War Jeopardy Meeting

Thanks to our four teams of contestants who wrangled with one another to answer the challenging questions Bill Goodwin had for us. Congratulations to the winning team of Ted Jones, Dave Osborn, Collyn Conrad and Pat Stepanek. Another battle will occur next January.

An Invitation to a Special Evening

The Catskill Symphony Orchestra has notified our round table about its annual cabaret fundraiser on March 13, 2010 at 8 PM at Alumni Field House on the SUNY Oneonta campus. The featured artists are Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, one of the most celebrated duos on the American acoustic music scene. Their performance of Jay’s haunting composition Ashokan Farewell in Ken Burns’ famous PBS Civil War series earned the couple international acclaim, including an Emmy nomination for the song and a Grammy award for the soundtrack.

Jay and Molly have appeared on Great Performances, A Prairie Home Companion and their own radio specials. Their music is featured on the soundtracks of such films as Brothers’ Keeper and Legends of the Fall. Molly spent a year singing and doing comedy as a member of the Powdermilk Biscuit Band on Garrison Keillor’s A Prairie Home Companion radio show.

Tickets are $30. For reservations call 607-436-2670 or check the symphony’s website at www.catskillsymphony.net. Weather permitting this event is worth the trip. Mason and Unger’s version of Dixie is sure to bring the house down.

Directions to the 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.
Perhaps you have seen this photograph of a slave with an abhorrently scarred back on a page somewhere in your Civil War reading. It is titled *The Scourged Back* and was widely circulated by abolitionists. It is one of the earliest examples of photography used as propaganda. The *New York Independent* commented in 1863 that the photograph should be multiplied by the thousands and scattered throughout the states. “It tells the story in a way that even Mrs. Stowe (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) cannot approach, because it tells the story to the eye.”

Photo historian K. Collins explains in her *History of Photography, Col.9, Jan-March 1985* that the slave is named Gordon, who escaped his master in Mississippi by rubbing himself with onions to throw off the bloodhounds. He took refuge with the Union Army at Baton Rouge, and in 1863 three engraved portraits of him were printed in *Harper’s Weekly* showing the man “as he underwent the surgical examination previous to being mustered into the service - his back furrowed and scarred with the traces of a whipping administered on Christmas Day last.”

The actual photographs of the escaped slave, taken by McPherson & Oliver of New Orleans, were widely circulated as carte de visite photos. On the verso of the mount were the comments of S. K. Towle, surgeon, 30th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers: “Few sensation writers ever depicted worse punishments than this man must have received, though nothing in his appearance indicates any unusual viciousness but on the contrary, he seems intelligent and well behaved.” Abolitionists circulated this and other cartes de visite. On the back of them was printed: “The net proceeds from the sale of these photographs will be devoted to the education of colored people in the department of the Gulf now under the command of Maj. General. Banks.”

*from Joan Paulson Gage letterto the editor*  
*The New York Times Book Review, October 4, 2009*

**Coffee in the Civil War**

Most of us enjoy its flavor, some of us sip it all day, and a few of us can’t begin our day without it. Even in the midst of the Civil War, one thing the North and South shared with many of us was a serious addiction to caffeine.

In that respect, the Union had an advantage. Not only did the North have more than two-thirds of the population and controlled most of the heavy industry, railroads, and financial reserves in the country, it hoarded supplies of the highly addictive little bean, leaving the Confederacy to wage its own war against java deprivation. Throughout the Civil War, coffee was as prevalent on the battlefields as it is in offices today. In fact, the Union army was fueled by the stuff to the point that if there was no time to boil water, the Boys in Blue would chew on whole beans as they marched. And at night, Union campsites were dotted with tiny fires, like miniature Starbucks, each boiling a pot of coffee. Beyond caffeine cravings, Union troops loved their coffee because it was the best thing on the menu. Their rations of salted meat, hardtack, salt and sugar were neither varied nor appetizing. Corrupt food contractors often charged the government top dollar for rotten, stale, and insect-ridden foodstuffs.

Coffee was almost always fresh because it was delivered in whole-bean form, making it difficult for even the most dishonest supplier to skimp on quality. Not that they didn’t try. In fact, officials began requesting coffee as whole beans after some crooked contractors tried to up their per pound profits by slipping sand and dirt into packages of ground coffee. In 1861, hoping to cut down on the time soldiers spent roasting and grinding beans, the army switched to a concentrated “instant” coffee. The new concoction called “essence of coffee” was made by boiling prepared coffee, milk, and sugar into a thick goop, which the soldier then reconstituted by mixing it with water. The product reportedly tasted every bit as bad as you’d imagine, and thanks to the corrupt dairymen who sold the army spoiled milk, it also tended to cause diarrhea. Needless to say, the Union army was soon back on the bean.

Confederate soldiers would have gladly tried the “instant” coffee because the Union naval blockade had successfully cut into their supply of coffee as well as weapons, machinery, medicine and other vital materials. Before the war a pound of beans cost around 20 cents. Once pre-war supplies ran out, the same amount was as high as $60 in Confederate money. For the most part, Southerners had to rely on substitutes, including various forms of roasted corn, rye, okra seeds, sweet potatoes, acorns, and peanuts. The only slightly better alternative was tea made from the yaupon shrub. The good news was that it contained caffeine; the bad news was that it was incredibly hard to digest. The one way for Southern soldiers to get their coffee was to call an informal truce so Rebels could swap tobacco for Yankee coffee and then dash back to their camps before they were reported missing.

*from CNN.com/living by David A. Norris*

**Really?**

The 13th Amendment to the Constitution provides that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime, can exist in the US of any area under its jurisdiction. The amendment was adopted in 1865 with approval from 27 of the 36 states. Mississippi rejected the amendment in December 1865 but did finally ratify the amendment on March 16, 1995. Because the state never officially notified the US Archivist, the ratification is not yet official. Maybe we can lend our round table’s archivist to the government. Darothy will get the job done!
The Brief Service of 45 Australian Confederate Sailors

The 58,000 mile year and a half journey of the notorious Confederate raider *Shenandoah* marked the only time the flag of the CSA traversed the globe. In late January 1865 when the *Shenandoah* limped into Melbourne harbor for repairs, it also brought the American Civil War to Australia. There was no Australian colonial navy to challenge it, and the ship’s dubious visit to the colony would later cost the British dearly.

Many Melburnians were sympathetic to the rebels’ cause, and the captain and crew quickly became the toast of the town as they waited for repairs to the ship’s propeller shaft. Balls and dinners were held in their honor and huge crowds flocked to see the ship. The US consul was less impressed and tried desperately to rally the authorities to intervene when he got word the ship was stalling repairs to illegally recruit locals to its crew. His efforts were in vain. The repaired and resupplied *Shenandoah* left Melbourne with 45 enthusiastic new recruits who had rowed out to the ship from the beach before it departed on February 19.

After leaving Australia, the *Shenandoah* immediately embarked on a marauding spree, burning or plundering 29 ships of the American whaling fleet in the northern hemisphere. But unknown to the *Shenandoah’s* captain, Lieutenant James Waddell, a NavalAcademy graduate, and third Lieutenant Sidney Smith Lee, Jr., nephew of RE Lee, the Civil War had ended. Thus, 25 of the attacks on American ships were technically acts of piracy rather than of war.

Some of the captains on the captured ships had tried to tell him the grim news of the South’s defeat, but Captain Waddell refused to believe them, suspecting it was a ploy to save their ships from going up in smoke. Waddell did not receive a confirmed report of the surrender until August 2. Then he briefly toyed with the idea of heading for Sydney but instead surrendered the ship to the British government. Many of the crew lied about their nationality, none admitting they were British subjects, and they were all released. The recruitment of sailors in Melbourne was to later become an international scandal as a violation of Britain’s neutrality in the war. Britain was eventually forced to pay 15.5 million in damages to the US for helping the *Shenandoah* and other Southern raiders that terrorized and destroyed Union shipping interests during the conflict.

Waddell remained in England for another 10 years. His employment remains a mystery. He returned to the US in 1875 and continued his maritime career. The Pacific Mail Line hired him to captain a steamer. When he returned to the east coast in the 1880s, he worked for the Maryland State Fishing Force to fight illegal oyster fishermen. He died at Annapolis, MD in 1886.

Waddell’s legacy and that of all Confederate commerce raiders, is controversial because the legality of commerce raiding is questionable. His career is especially notorious because the *Shenandoah* continued battling the US even after the war’s official end. For some, Waddell and his crew were pirates and traitors and should have been tried accordingly. Others argue similar to the *Shenandoah’s* officers: the Confederate captain fulfilled a patriotic duty in mid-1865 with what knowledge he had. No serious attempt was ever made to prosecute Waddell or any of his subordinates, including the nephew of RE Lee.

from www.smh.com.au

**Thank You for Your Dues**

**The new dues schedule is now in effect.**

*See Membership Form Below*

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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.

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**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 $12.00

____ Seniors and Students $16.00

____ 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
Minoa, NY 13116

Please find $__________ enclosed in form of

Circle One:

Check      M.O.      Cash

Date ___________________

* Dues will be pro-rated for new members who join at various times during the fiscal year.

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

E-Mail_______________________________

* Thank You for Your Dues