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The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

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Meeting Site

The Warehouse

**Syracuse University
School of Architecture**

**350 West Fayette St
Syracuse, NY**

Room 3 Ground Floor

***Civil War
Jeopardy Challenge***

**Thursday
January 18, 2007
7 PM**

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.

January 18th Meeting

This month you need to bring your wits and a thinking cap or two for the second annual Civil War Jeopardy Challenge we have planned for our first meeting of 2007. Two or three teams will battle it out for the championship. The Jeopardy format will be used; that is, an answer will be given and a correct response will be in question form. For example, He led the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg. The correct response would be - Who is George Meade? No need for you to prepare any questions this year. They are all ready for you. There will be four Double Jeopardy statements and one Final Jeopardy giving each of the teams the possibility of adding more points. Last year this was our liveliest and loudest meeting with many moans, groans, and self-congratulations. Ted Jones with his remarkable recall was the star of the evening.

Each member of the winning team will take home a CW magazine and the much coveted *Abraham Lincoln I Wish I Had Known That* certificate signed by our most famous honorary member, Abraham Lincoln. Join us for an evening of fun and rewards.

President's Message

Happy New Year to everyone and I hope you all had a nice holiday season. It sure was a lot easier to travel around with this unusually warm weather we've been having. The Summer grant applications are proceeding nicely, although I have run into a couple of obstacles. If everything continues on schedule the applications should be completed and submitted this month.

We are checking to see if there is enough interest to go to Gettysburg at the end of April to continue our involvement in the Adopt-A-Position program. We'll probably need at least ten people to make this a worthwhile endeavor. Think about it and let me know at the January meeting if you are interested.

Remember, this meeting is Jeopardy night. It should be a fun evening. Hope to see you there and bring a friend. They may find it interesting.

Jim Dromgoole

Thank You For Your Dues

Bob and Kathy Brown, Scott Cauger, Marion Chester, Ken Davis, Frank and Judy De Grenier, Jim Dromgoole, Nancy Edwards, R. Garnett, Bill Goodwin, Beth Greenfield, Mary Hosking, Marty and Shirley Joyce, Richard Miller, Norm, Chris and Mike Mordue, John Murray, Bill and Barbara O'Leary, Dave Osborn, Kathy Snell, Pat Steponek, Natalie and Rick Trump, Valerie Williams, Edward Wilson, and Fred Wyker.

Final Decision *The Fight is Over! No Casino for Gettysburg*

The Pennsylvania gambling regulators rejected a hotly contested proposal for a casino near the Gettysburg Battlefield. That proposal by a group led by David LeVan spurred vocal opposition from preservationists who said gambling about a mile from the Gettysburg National Military Park and Gettysburg College would sully the sanctity and family friendly atmosphere of the area...and on Dec. 20, 2006 the Gaming Board agreed.

Rufus Pettit: Respected Artilleryman, Cruel Jailer

Due south of the Copse of Trees on the Gettysburg Battlefield stands a monument dedicated to Battery B, 1st NY Light Artillery (2nd Corps) that marks the battery's July 3rd position and notes that the battery was organized in Baldwinsville, NY on August 31, 1861. Battery B was its army designation, but the men of the battery called it Pettit's Battery, after its much respected and fair first leader, Captain Rufus Pettit.



Captain Rufus Pettit 1824-1891

Pettit was born in Cold Springs, NY a few miles SE of Baldwinsville. He served in the Mexican War and showed skill and composure while fighting eight battles including Cerro Gordo and Vera Cruz. He returned to Cold Springs and worked on the family farm for the next 13 years. When the Civil War broke out, he took advantage of his military experience and recruited an army unit from among friends and neighbors. Originally called the

Cold Springs Rifles, it became Company B, 1st NY Light Artillery. The unit's first major action was with Gen. George McClellan in 1862 in the Peninsula campaign—Yorktown, Fair Oaks, Gaines' Mills and Malvern Hill. Suffering from fatigue, exposure and chronic diarrhea which would end his military career, Pettit fought at Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville after which he resigned from the service for medical reasons and returned home as a much respected veteran. He rejoined the army in March 1864 and was assigned to the US Veteran Reserve Corps, a branch of the service for veterans not fit for active field duty. Four months into his service he was made superintendent and inspector of Union prisons in Alexandria, VA. Here his troubles began. By Nov. 1865 he was brought before a court-martial board chaired by Brevet Major General George S. Greene.

At his trial, evidence was presented to prove that Pettit was on a "self-directed mission to expose deserters from the Union army" and used torture and violence to extract confessions out of the imprisoned men. Pettit often had the jailers tie men's wrists and hang them for hours by the wrists with their toes barely touching the floor. Often blood ran from the men's noses and mouths. A string of witnesses attested to many cases of men strung up, some outside in the heat of day or pouring rain with flies swarming around them and blood oozing from their ears. A local baker testified that he saw Pettit put a ring through a man's nose and then pulled him around while asking him to confess his desertion. Others testified to seeing Pettit shoot at prisoners looking out of the prison's windows. Pettit cruelly told a widow who had come to the prison seeking her husband, "Your husband has been released --in his coffin." Another witness told of Pettit's knocking a man down when he denied being a deserter and throwing him out a window. A local restaurant owner testified that he was arrested at gun-point on his own property and charged with desertion by Pettit who used his revolver to hit the man a dozen times. When the victim regained consciousness, he was in the Alexandria County Jail directly across the street from his restaurant.

Pettit was found guilty and dismissed from the army. He returned to Baldwinsville, gave up farming, and began to practice law. Little is known of his postwar years though his

harsh behavior turned up again when his son, a graduate of Cornell with a degree in entomology and a professor at Michigan Agricultural College, was harshly treated by his father. Rufus H, the son, had invented the first bug-spray gun. His father's reaction was to denounce his son as a "butterfly chaser", eventually disowning him.

In the 1880's, Pettit applied for a military pension based on his service in the Mexican War and was awarded \$8 a month. The following year, he applied for a Civil War pension based upon a doctor's affidavit that he suffered from "chronic diarrhea, spinal paralysis and cystitis." The application was denied, most likely because of the court-martial ruling. He died in 1891 and was buried in Baldwinsville's Riverside Cemetery. Though much beloved by his men while he was captain of their battery, we can only imagine their thoughts at the time of his court-martial. Andersonville, Johnson's Island, Elmira and recent horrors surfacing from military prisons in Iraq suggest Pettit's behavior, though atypical, has occurred both before and after his tenure as superintendent of a military prison.

The Thirteenth Amendment - Part 1

"If any citizen of the United States shall accept, claim, receive or retain any title of nobility or honour, or shall without the consent of Congress, accept and retain any present, pension, office, or emolument of any kind whatever, from any emperor, king, prince, or foreign power, such person shall cease to be a citizen of the United States, and shall be incapable of holding any office of trust or profit under them or either of them."

True or False: The above is the text of the Thirteenth Amendment?

This is not a trick question. The above text is the Thirteenth Amendment proposed by Congress in 1810 and surrounded with ratification controversy. Since no debates about this amendment survive, why the amendment was proposed is a matter of dispute. Perhaps anti-royalist sentiment was the reason. Alexander Hamilton in *The Federalist No. 84* stated "...for as long as (titles of nobility) are excluded, there can never be serious danger that the government will be any other than that of the people."

From 1810 through late 1814, 12 states ratified this amendment, known as the Titles of Nobility Amendment (T.O.N.A.). New York State rejected the amendment. Of the seventeen states in the Union, thirteen would have to ratify the Amendment for it to have been adopted. And herein lies the problem. Before the thirteenth state could ratify, the War of 1812 broke out with England. By the end of the war in 1814, the British had burned the Capitol, the Library of Congress and most of the records of the first 38 years of the government. The momentum to ratify was lost in the tumult of war. The 1818 result of the vote in Virginia, the last of the 13 states necessary for ratification, was not officially declared. Louisiana was admitted to the Union in 1812, raising the required number of necessary ratifications to 14 --or did it. No action on the amendment was taken by that state.

To further complicate matters, the amendment was included in many editions of the Constitution published in the 1820's indicating that the publishers thought it was part of the Constitution though Constitutional scholars of the period noted that it had not been ratified. However, because the amendment was not submitted to the states with a time limitation, it could still be made part of the Constitution with twenty-six additional ratifications. T.O.N.A. could live again.

Continued next month: The Thirteenth Amendment of 1860

Second Civil War Site in Europe

The Civil War Preservation Trust has added another site to its 600-site Civil War Discovery Trail. The site, the second outside the United States, is in south-western England on the Wirral Peninsula, across the Mersey River from Liverpool. Here the C.S.S. Alabama was built at the Laird Brothers Shipyard.

In 1861 Confederate leaders sent James Bulloch to England with \$1 million and orders to commission ships for the Confederate Navy. Bulloch, the uncle of Theodore Roosevelt, commissioned the construction of the Alabama. For two years, the Alabama, captained by Raphael Semmes, wreaked havoc on US shipping around the world to the tune of \$6 million dollars. In fact the damage was so heavy that after the war, the US successfully pursued compensation from the British government.

The Alabama was sunk by the U.S.S. Kearsarge off the coast of Cherbourg, France in June 1864. Semmes was rescued by a British yacht and became a hero to Southerners though he was seen as a pirate by Northerners. The Cite de la Mer maritime museum in Cherbourg with its extensive exhibits from the Alabama became the first European site on the CWPT's Civil War Discovery Trail within the past two years. The CWPT's web site (www.civilwar.org) promotes each of the 600 sites in the CW Discovery Trail. Fittingly, Ed Bearss, Chief Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service and a trustee of the CWPT, represented the CWPT at the Nov. 29th ceremony in Wirral, England. What a great show that must have been!

Comments Welcomed?

Have you read a great book lately? Would you consider writing a short review for the newsletter? Does this remind you of those high school book reports you used to write at the last minute? Are you beginning to panic? Take a deep breath and reconsider. Our members would enjoy an honest and frank review to take with them to the bookstore. Share your reading pleasures with your fellow round table members. Just email your thoughts to pstepane@ix.netcom.com or mail to PO Box 175, Tully, NY 13159-0175. Comments and observations are also welcomed.

CW Impact on House Oath

When Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania was chosen the first speaker of the House on April 1, 1789, he took an oath to support the Constitution. He then administered that same oath to the members-elect. When Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California took her oath on Jan. 4 as the new speaker of the House, that oath had been revised during the Civil War to reflect the divisions within the country.

Since 1860, new house members have taken an oath to "defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same..." This is the oath that Speaker Pelosi administered to the new class of House members. The revision reflects the fact that the loyalty of members during the decade before the Civil War was suspect, and enemies of the United States could, in fact, come from within.

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 \$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: 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.

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