

January 2008
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The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

2007-08 OCCWRT Officers

Bill Goodwin, President
315 437-3887

Dave Osborn, Secretary
315 446-1715

Richard Walker, Treasurer
315 682 4617
rwalker42@aol.com

Sue Greenhagen, Trustee
315 684-3418
greenhsh@morrisville.edu

Elaine Tucker, Trustee
315-683-5510
estucker@peoplepc.com

Darothy DeAngelo, Program Chair
315 682-6312
darothy__@hotmail.com

Pat Stepanek, Newsletter Editor
315 696-5531
pstepane@ix.netcom.com

Meeting Site

The Warehouse

Syracuse University
School of Architecture

350 West Fayette St
Syracuse, NY

Auditorium 1st Floor

*Civil War
Jeopardy Challenge*

Thursday, January 17, 2008
7:15 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 Meeting

The new year has begun and that means it's time to shake off all the Christmas and New Year dinners and desserts and get the mind working again in 2008. What better way to get the mind going than an evening of Civil War Jeopardy. A newsletter category has been added this year. Your answers will be based on articles found in the last six newsletters. The winning team will receive the 2008 *The Abraham Lincoln I Wish I Had Known That Award*, a much coveted certificate that rewards extraordinary knowledge of the Civil War and the ability to recall that knowledge at a moment's notice. We hope you'll join us for a lively game of Jeopardy.

This month we will meet in the 1st floor Warehouse auditorium at 7:15 PM. The extra fifteen minutes will allow students attending a lecture to leave the auditorium and give us time to set up the room for our meeting and start the coffee brewing. See you on Thursday, January 17th in the Warehouse auditorium at 7:15PM.

President's Message

Please consider this to be my letter of resignation from the position of President. Due to unforeseen circumstances I will no longer be able to continue my duties of President of the organization.

I will however be able to continue my Grant Application work on the Sumner Grave Site Project if asked to do so.

In regards to the new meeting site - I have been informed by the Program Chair that due to the distance of the new location it would not be feasible for her to be able to attend the meetings. Since the Program Chair is the person responsible for arranging all the speakers and programs, I would recommend that the program site remain where it is located now - at the Warehouse - to insure the quality of the programs continues and the Program Chair is able to attend. I will take the responsibility of informing the people at the North Central Assembly of God Church that we will no longer be requiring their site for our meetings. It has been my pleasure to be able to work with you all, and I will look forward to seeing you whenever possible at future events.

Note: President Bill Goodwin has asked Jim to continue to work on grants and to be the round table liaison when repairs on General Sumner's grave site begin. Jim has agreed to work at both jobs. Thanks, Jim.

An Onondaga County Notable

Member Mary Raye Casper's recent email to me will be of interest to our round table members. Mary alerted me to **Gettysburg Hero**, a paper written by Richard Clem of Hagerstown, MD which appeared in the **Washington Times**. I have his permission to summarize the nine-page paper. If you want to read it in its entirety, you may email Mary at mcasper@twcny.rr.com and she will email the paper to you as an attachment. Thanks, Mary.



On a cold day in November 1986, Richard Clem and his brother were searching with metal detectors an area in Washington County, MD that had been a Civil War campsite of the 3rd and 5th Federal Corps during the withdrawal from Gettysburg. Richard found a thin piece of metal about the

size of a postage stamp. It turned out to be a silver ID tag of Sgt. Consider Heth Willett of Co. E, 44th NYV. Members of the elite 44th were hand-picked from almost every county in New York State. The regiment was known as the "People's Ellsworth Regiment". The Gettysburg monument of the 44th is the castle that sits atop Little Round Top.

Richard's research revealed that Consider (where did that name come from?) Willett, son of William and Tryphosa Jackson Willett, was born in Onondaga County in 1840. After graduating from Albany Normal School in 1862, C. Willett enlisted in Company E of the 44th NYV. He joined his regiment, attached to the 5th Corps, after the Battle of Antietam and fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

At Gettysburg the 44th was part of Col. Strong Vincent's 5th Corps Brigade that included the 20th Maine, 83rd PA, and the 16th Michigan. The brigade successfully defended Little Round Top against the repeated attacks of Alabama and Texas regiments of **Major-General John Bell Hood's** Confederate Division. "Scores of Confederates out of ammunition hugged the ground or crawled behind boulders to escape from



Captain Consider Willett

being accidentally shot in the back by their own men. To prevent needless slaughter, a Federal officer requested volunteers to come forward and gather the battle weary souls. Under heavy destructive musket and artillery fire, Sergeant Willett was the first to vault the stone breastworks

and started downhill on this mission of mercy. The 44th regimental history gives the following account: 'Sergt. Willett found a large number of the enemy concealed behind the rocks and a depression in the field, lying prone upon the ground. They were taken by surprise at his appearance among them and he quickly had them in motion and conducted to the rear. From his standpoint he conducted 97 prisoners.' ... This life-saving endeavor never received appropriate credit or respect; however, this compassionate act on Little Round Top would be forever etched in the minds of 97 grateful members of Hood's Division."

A month after Gettysburg, Consider Willett was promoted to captain in command of Company G 2nd US Colored Infantry. He and his regiment were ordered to Florida where Captain Willett contracted yellow fever. He was honorably discharged in September 1865. He slowly recovered in New York State, studied law at Albany, and graduated from Michigan University where he was admitted to the bar. He married Lois Wilder of Ann Arbor Michigan, relocated his wife and six daughters to Chicago where he served for several years as Cook County Attorney and practiced law. Two Willett sons were born in Illinois. Captain Consider Willett died in 1912 and is buried in Oak Woods Cemetery in Chicago. Lois was placed by her husband's side at Oak Woods in 1936.

Richard Clem's hope is to bring long overdue recognition to the heroic deed of Sergeant Consider H. Willett of Onondaga County during the Battle of Gettysburg.

*Within a few days of reading **Gettysburg Hero**, I found an article on Mr. Clem in this month's **Civil War News**. Mr. Clem is credited with finding the grave of Col. Issac E. Avery of the 6th North Carolina. Avery was killed during the Battle of Gettysburg leading his regiment in an attack of East Cemetery Hill on the evening of July 1st. He wrote a note in his blood stating he wanted his father to know he died with his face to the enemy. That note is stored in the North Carolina archives. Avery died at the Culp farm on July 3 at the age of 34.*

Mr. Clem was researching names of 236 identified burials at Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown when he came across "Col. J. E. Ayer, 6th NCST, July 3, 1963. With further research, Clem determined the grave to be that of Col. Issac Erwin Avery.

After the battle Avery's slave, Elijah, began his journey south with Avery's body to return it to Swan Ponds Plantation in Morganton, NC, the Avery plantation. Due to the rate of decomposition, Elijah buried Avery in Williamsport overlooking the Potomac River. In the late 1860's when Gov. Oden Bowie established what became known as Washington Confederate Cemetery on three acres inside the Rose Hill Cemetery, Confederate dead who had been buried in Washington County during Lee's retreat were reinterred at the new site.

*For years, the Avery family had been unable to locate the Colonel's remains. When they read the article Mr. Clem wrote for the **Washington Times**, an article Clem hoped would be read by Avery descendants, the mystery was solved. On Saturday, November 3, 2007, the Avery family along with Mr. Clem dedicated a new tombstone at the grave site. Ken Avery blessed the grave and sprinkled it with soil from Swan Ponds. Ken's 5-year old son placed a wreath at the site.*

Congratulations to historian/sleuth Richard Clem.

The Florida Cow Cavalry

Do you have the same vision I had of a Jeb Stuart type with the feather in his hat fluttering in the wind as he rides into battle on a bovine? Or does this image say more about me than I care to know? Whatever the case might be, the Florida Cow Cavalry did exist, and this past November a monument "In memory of the Cow Cavalry" soldiers was erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Plant City, Florida. The history of this cavalry unit, known as the 1st Battalion Florida Special Cavalry, is interesting and worth knowing and not just for a future Jeopardy question.

The Spanish had brought cattle to Florida when they settled in St. Augustine in the 1500's, and many herds still roamed wild in Florida in the 1860's. Florida used this abundance of beef to supply the Confederacy and its armies. With increasing Federal incursions into the state, much of Florida's cattle was confiscated for Union use and very little of it got through to the starving Confederate troops. Floridians looked upon these marauding parties as no better than pirates. Florida authorities decided to combat this situation with special units of cowmen from the Florida frontier to help fight off the Federals. Nine companies comprising 900 men were formed into The Cow Cavalry, 1st Battalion Florida Special Cavalry. Their job was to protect the cattle from Federal "rustlers" and to drive the herds as far north as Savannah and Charleston for distribution to the Confederate armies.

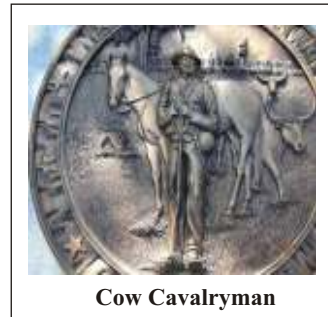
Many of the cavalry companies were comprised of men who were too old or too young for service in the Confederate armies and navies. Confederate deserters also served in this unit. The cattle drives north successfully delivered a steady supply of

beef to the Confederacy.

The monument is a block of gray Georgia granite with the names of the cavalrymen on three sides. The front panel gives this account of the Cow Cavalry:

By 1863 the Confederate Army was suffering severe food shortages. Captain John T. Lesley was commissioned to recruit from Ichepucksassa Cork Area of Plant City a company of pioneer men to round up and drive the wild cattle of Florida north to the Railroad Stations. Many were too young or too old for regular military service. With great effort along with 8 other companies in Florida these men successfully completed their mission overseeing drives as far north as Charleston.

A bronze disc lies flat on top of the monument depicting an armed cavalryman standing beside his horse with two cows in the background. A few people have complained that the image is of a Confederate soldier which they find objectionable. So there is controversy now in Plant City, Florida.



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: Richard Walker, Treasurer

307 Sherbrooke Rd

Manlius, NY 13104

**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