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The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

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Meeting Site

March 16, 2006
7 PM

Eastwood Baptist Church
3212 James Street
Eastwood, NY

Gerrit Smith: Practical Dreamer
A Survey of His Social and
Financial Philanthropy

Presented by
Norman Dann, Ph.D.

Directions: Route 690 East to Midler Ave
Exit 15. North on Midler to James St.
Right on James. Church will be two blocks
from Midler on the right.

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.

March 2006 Meeting Details

Abolitionist Gerrit Smith (1797-1874) from nearby Peterboro, was considered to be the wealthiest landowner in New York State. He donated at least \$1 billion (in today's money value) to special causes, concentrating on the antislavery issue. Smith is remembered locally along with Samuel J. May for his resistance to the fugitive slave law and for a plan to rescue Jerry, a fugitive slave, from a Syracuse police station. A monument to that event stands in Clinton Square. Smith became a member of the "Secret Six" who backed John Brown's plan to free Virginia's slaves. Brown had visited Smith in Peterboro and successfully sought financial and moral support for his plan to seize the US armory and arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Norm Dann, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at Morrisville State College, will examine Smith's motives, goals, and legacy at our March meeting. Dr. Dann's book *Practical Dreamer: A Biography of Gerrit Smith* will be published this summer. Dann is a founding member of the Cabinet of Freedom that launched the National Abolition Hall of Fame in Peterboro. Join us for an in-depth study of Gerrit Smith, one of the North's most prominent abolitionists.

President's Message

Cheryl Pula did a great job presenting the coincidences in the lives and deaths of President Kenndy and President Lincoln. Some of the points drew gasps from our audience. The scariest thing for me, however, was when Cheryl flashed pictures of Nixon.

Now is the time to think Spring with our annual Adopt-a-Position at Culp's Hill on April 8th. Every year, the OCCWRT shakes off the winter flakes with a trip to Gettysburg to ready Culp's Hill for the tourist season. With hand saws and clippers (no power tools allowed), we cut out the invading undergrowth, hack down old and new growth trees and plant grass around General Greene's statue. This is followed up with a pizza party. John Rudy will do his Civil War tour of the Gettysburg College campus for us. I know he got an "A" for this project. Maybe we could give him our own grade.

Last year I attended the annual NY state convention for Health Information Management at Turning Stone. One of the many seminars I attended was titled "Building Collaboration in a %#!*#!* Environment." It was essentially about working in a defensive environment and changing it to a positive one. The presenter began to talk about leadership qualities and I immediately recognized how it relates to the leaders of the Civil War. The focus was on how leaders have to shift from using tactics in the Red Zone, i.e. low trust-high blame, threats and fear, hostility, withholding energy, risk avoidance, attitude of entitlement, cynicism and suspicion to tactics in the Green Zone, i.e. high trust-low blame, mutual support, honesty and openness, risk taking, sense of contribution, sincerity and optimism. I can think of several civil war leaders both military and civilian who could have benefitted from leadership seminars, but they were not invented in the 1860's.

Sic semper,

Beth Greenfield

Senseless Destruction at Gettysburg

During the late evening of Feb. 15th and the morning of Feb. 16th, three monuments within the confines of Gettysburg National Military Park were victims of the worst vandalism seen in 90 years. The discoveries left observers in a state of disbelief. The three monuments honored three different regiments from Sickles' Third Corps.



The most heavily damaged was the monument to the 4th NY Independent Artillery atop Devil's Den and facing the Triangular Field. The massive bronze statue was pulled off its pedestal and dragged more than 160 feet. Both the head and ramrod were taken.

The monument to the 114th PA Zouaves located along the Emmitsburg Road in front of the Sherfy House was also pulled from its pedestal and fell onto a decorative wrought iron fence. This bronze sculpture of a Zouave infantryman loading his rifle was dedicated on July 2, 1886 and is one of the most striking monuments on the battlefield.



Across from the Sherfy house at the intersection of Sickles Ave is the 11th Mass. Monument consisting of a hand grasping a sword set upon a carved column. A favorite of vandals, the sword has been stolen or broken at least twice. In this incident, the hand and sword were taken from the scene.

Restoration costs are estimated to be \$100,000 or more. A \$30,000 reward is being offered by the Friends group and other groups as well. When the culprits are caught, may they be fined heavily with jail time added for this desecration of our mightiest symbols. (See [press release on next page](#))

Lincoln Prize Awarded

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin has been awarded the 2006 Lincoln Prize for her widely acclaimed biography of the 16th President and his extraordinary Cabinet: *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Administered annually by the Lincoln and Soldiers Institute at Gettysburg College and endowed by philanthropists Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman, the Lincoln Prize is the nation's most generous award in the field of American History. Goodwin will be awarded the \$50,000 and a large bronze replica of Saint-Gaudens' bust of Lincoln at formal ceremonies on April 6 at the Union League Club in NYC.

Praising its "literary accomplishment" together with its "magisterial and epic quality," the jury called *Team of Rivals* "an impressive chronicle of Lincoln's political management in seeking, winning, and holding the presidency," revealing how "a pragmatic, wise, magnanimous, and empathetic president kept control of a talented if sometimes dysfunctional cabinet, and

impressed his purposes upon them." Added the jury, "At 750 pages long, it is a measure of its literary quality that it feels far shorter than many books half its length. If its weight makes it hard to pick up, its quality makes it equally hard to put down. Goodwin has brought her protagonists to life."

The jury also praised Carol Bundy's *The Nature of Sacrifice: A Biography of Charles Russell Lowell, Jr.*; Margaret Creighton's *The Color of Courage: Gettysburg's Forgotten History - Immigrants, Women, and African Americans in the Civil War's Defining Battle*; and Richard F. Miller's *Harvard's Civil War: A History of the Twentieth Mass. Volunteer Infantry*. Excellent choices if you happen to be wandering about your local bookstore.

A Noted Syracuse Scoundrel

You've most likely never heard of Joseph Cosey (1887-1950?) and hopefully you've never unknowingly purchased any of his notorious works. For Joseph Cosey was one of the foremost document forgers in the country. Born Martin Conceely in Syracuse, Cosey worked as a printer's apprentice and small-time thief before he joined the US Army in 1909. Dishonorably discharged four years later, he spent 10 years in San Quentin for a variety of crimes a few years after his discharge.

In the late 20's he stole a pay warrant from Benjamin Franklin's file in the Library of Congress to practice Franklin's handwriting. He sold the forgeries for small sums but later expanded to other historical forgeries. He used old paper, brown ink and writing implements that the contemporary writer would have used. His documents were so convincing that they fooled several experts.

Cosey prided himself for never selling his forgeries to amateur collectors. One of his most famous forgeries was a draft of the Declaration of Independence supposedly written in Jefferson's handwriting. Cosey forged documents and signatures of George Washington, James Monroe, Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln. He was arrested in 1937 when he sold a fake letter supposedly from Lincoln to a stamp dealer who analyzed it. Cosey was arrested and confessed to the deed. He was sentenced to three years in prison though he was released early and continued to forge documents until his death.



Several of the forgeries are still in circulation and may be held in private collections as originals. In fact, Cosey's forgeries have become valuable collector's item in their own right. However, reputable dealers still shudder at the sound of his name.

Lincoln's Last Laugh

On April 13, 1865, Lincoln ordered an end to the draft. The following night, during the fateful performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater, there was a scene in which the heroine of the play, reclining on a garden seat, called for a shawl to protect her from the draft. The actor to whom the request was made, replied with an ad-lib line: "You are mistaken, Miss Mary, the draft has already been stopped by order of the president."

Abraham Lincoln laughed heartily, along with the rest of the audience, at this impromptu joke. It was his last laugh.

from *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln*

An Unheard Plea

Bleeding Blue and Gray by Ira M. Rutkow is a recent history of medicine during the Civil War. Prior to his preface, Rutkow quotes the powerful sentiments of S. Weir Mitchell, a Philadelphia physician. Weir wrote what follows in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1914. Yes, it fell on deaf ears.

“We had served faithfully as great a cause as earth has known; we had built novel hospitals, organized such an ambulance service as had never before been seen, contributed numberless essays on disease and wounds, and passed again into private life...

What has been our reward? The great leaders in war have been promoted and universally honored. Countless statues commemorate in Washington and elsewhere the popular heroes. Statues of generals are in every town, some of them memorials of men it were wiser to forget, some of whom history will judge severely. Every village has its statue to the private soldier.

There is not a state or national monument to a surgeon. At Gettysburg, every battery site is marked with a recording tablet; every general who fell, Union or Confederate, is remembered in bronze or marble; but what of the surgeon who died? Nothing!”

The Civil War Campaign Badge

More than forty years after the Civil War, the War Department in 1907 authorized the striking of a special medal for all living Civil War veterans who had served in the US Army or Volunteer units between April 15, 1861, and April 9, 1865. Soldiers serving in Texas until August 20, 1866 were allowed to apply for the medal.



The bronze head of Lincoln is surrounded by the words “With malice toward none with charity for all.” The reverse has “The Civil War 1861-1865” surrounded by a wreath of oak on the left and an olive branch on the right. The medal was designed by F. D. Millett, an American artist, and was manufactured by the US Mint in Philadelphia.

Unlike the Medal of Honor which was the only medal awarded during the war, the Campaign Medal was established to recognize living veterans of that war. Eventually families of deceased veterans could apply for the medal.

Technically, the Civil War Campaign Medal should be called a badge. The Judge Advocate General of the Army had proclaimed it “not proper to issue medals except by authorization of Congress,” but “it was proper for the President to issue badges.” The Civil War Campaign Badge/Medal is still available for purchase by descendants of Civil War veterans (Union). Recently an original 1907 issue was sold on Ebay for \$800.

The keys to finding the recipients of these medals are in the records of the Office of the Quartermaster General (Record Group 92) in the National Archives.



March 1, 2006 Press Release from the Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides at Gettysburg

This press release was mailed to the OCCWRT and received on March 3, 2006 by your newsletter editor. The entire press release follows as an example of the marshaling of resources and funds now occurring at Gettysburg. During our Adopt-A-Position weekend we will visit these vandalized sites after we complete the Culp's Hill duties assigned to us by the Park Service. Won't you join us on the weekend of April 8th to help the OCCWRT contribute its share?

“The Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides (ALBG) at Gettysburg will hold a special free battlefield walk on Saturday, March 11, at 10 a.m. to support awareness of the most recent wave of monument vandalism at Gettysburg National Military Park - and the history of Park monumentation that forms its commemorative landscape.

The walk - open to the public- will focus primarily on the unique stories of the men who served in the 4th NY Independent Battery, the 11th Mass Infantry and the 114th PA Infantry - and the battlefield monuments that represent their service, which were completely or partially destroyed by vandals on February 15-16. The Park Service estimates that \$60,000+ will be required to repair or restore these works of art that have long stood as both tributes to the veterans and interpretive guides to the events at Gettysburg. The walk also will include presentations on the veterans of the 40th NY and 6th NJ Infantry regiments, as well as the 96th PA Infantry - all three monuments fell victim to a major 1913 vandalism spree that occurred just before the battle's 50th anniversary celebration.

‘The ALBG was pleased to contribute \$5,000 to a community fund for monument repair, but we believed we could-and should-do much more. Gettysburg shaped our nation's destiny, and as interpreters of that critical event, we are committed to bringing to life the stories of the people who sacrificed everything for our country. By desecrating these treasured monuments, vandals violated the legacy of the veterans themselves,’ said **ALBG President Sue Boardman**.

‘We're pleased and proud of the guides' leadership-and their spirit-in contributing their time, talents and finances to help catch the perpetrators of these reprehensible acts,’ said **Park Superintendent John Latschar**.

To be held rain or shine, the ALBG walk will be presented by several licensed battlefield guides and will begin at the 4th NY Battery monument in Devil's Den. No registration is required to attend the walk.

The presenters, listed below, will weave rare photographs, maps and research into their histories of the veterans and their monuments: **Sue Boardman**, ALBG President and Liaison to the Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation, has been a licensed battlefield guide since 2001. Recipient of the Park Superintendent's Award for Excellence in Guiding in 2005, she concentrated on Park History-particularly monumentation-as a major focus of her research and presentations. **Tim Smith**, a research historian for the Adams County Historical Society and a licensed battlefield guide for many years, is author, co-author or compiler of four books related to Gettysburg. He is well know for his expertise on the fighting in the Devil's Den area.”

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

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

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.