



March 2007  
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# The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

## 2006-07 OCCWRT Officers

**Jim Dromgoole**, President  
315 457-2999  
yankeetrader07@aol.com

**Sue Greenhagen**, Vice President  
315 684-3418  
greenhsh@morrisville.edu

**Dave Osborn**, Treasurer  
315 446-1715

**Bill Goodwin**, Secretary/Publicity  
315 437-3887

**Dick Crozier**, Trustee  
607 753-9803  
dickcrozier@yahoo.com

**Kevin Milcarek**, Trustee  
315 374-2218

**Darothy DeAngelo**, Program Chair  
315 682-6312  
darothy\_\_@hotmail.com

**Pat Stepanek**, Newsletter Editor  
315 696-5531  
[pstepane@ix.netcom.com](mailto:pstepane@ix.netcom.com)

## Meeting Site *The Warehouse*

**Syracuse University  
School of Architecture**

**350 West Fayette St  
Syracuse, NY  
Room 3 Ground Floor**

**Andy Kitzmann**  
curator  
Erie Canal Museum

**Thursday  
March 15, 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.

## March 15 Meeting

Andy Kitzmann from the Erie Canal Museum will present an overview of the Erie Canal with a focus on the *Transportation Advantages During the 1860's*. The 1850's marked the gradual end of the canal as railroads became the faster, cheaper mode of transportation. The 1860's, however, instilled new life into the canal as profits spiked during the war years.

Mr. Kitzmann has been at the museum for 8 years - first as educator, then as interim director, and now assistant director and curator. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Iowa State and served as collection manager there. He earned a Master of Arts degree from Syracuse University and began his association with the Erie Canal Museum in 1998. Join us for an expert's analysis of this most famous "ditch."

## President's Message

March is finally here. Hopefully we can put away the snow shovels and break out the lawn mowers. It's good to see baseball's spring training has begun, a sure sign that warmer weather is on the way.

Please try to attend this month's meeting. We have a wonderful speaker in Mr. Andy Kitzmann. He will be discussing the impact of the Erie Canal in Syracuse during the Civil War years..

The Park Service at the Gettysburg National Battlefield has been contacted, and we are set for our Adopt-A-Position cleanup at 10 AM, Saturday, April 28, 2007. Please join us for some worthwhile volunteer work with a pizza party to follow.

A special thanks to Sue and Darothy for their work in raising funds and awareness for the General Sumner Gravesite Restoration Project.

See you at the March meeting,  
Jim Dromgoole

## 2007 Lincoln Prize Winner

For the second time in eight years, Douglas L. Wilson has been awarded the *Lincoln Prize*, the nation's most generous award in the field of American history. *Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words* is a study of Lincoln's writings which "captures a genius-craftsman at work, molding and honing phrases destined to rally his contemporaries and live in American memory." When Lincoln arrived in Washington in 1860, few knew he was an accomplished, self-taught writer. This was his hidden asset though many assumed he was a yokel who told bad jokes. By examining Lincoln's drafts and refinements, Wilson reveals how Lincoln "transformed ordinary thoughts into immortal speech" that powerfully convinced, soothed, or attacked. Wilson's previous win was for his 1999 book, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*.

Wilson who serves as co-director of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois said his book grew out of the process of transcribing the most important of Lincoln's works for the Library of Congress revealing to Wilson, as he parsed Lincoln's prose, the literary craftsmanship of our 16th president.

Wilson will receive \$50,000 and a bronze replica of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' life-size bust of Lincoln. The Lincoln & Soldiers Institute at Gettysburg College awards the prize for the year's best book on Lincoln and the Civil War. A three-member Lincoln Prize jury chose Wilson's book from 119 entries. The chairman of the prize board, Dr. Gabor Boritt, professor of CW history at Gettysburg College, characterized the book as a "signal contribution to the fields of both American history and American literature."

## My Excellent Adventure

by Sue Greenhagen

As the recipient of around 100 emails a day, I tend to make good use of the delete key on my computer. When I received an email one day last November from something called "Lion TV," my first thought was that it was just more spam. Luckily I decided to actually read what they sent, and was I glad I did.

You see, Lion TV produces a nationally syndicated PBS television program called *History Detectives*, and they were contacting me with a question. As a some-time Reference Librarian (my main job is the ever-exciting cataloging), I'm used to questions, but this question led to one of the most Excellent Adventures I've ever experienced.

The premise of the show is that viewers submit historical mysteries (a document or an artifact) and the "detectives" conduct an investigation to solve the mystery. The mystery they presented to me concerned a 19th century portrait of a group of Civil War veterans. The owner of the picture said it was of the members of the Grand Army of the Republic post (Knowlton Post #60) that was in Cazenovia. In this group of twenty-six men were two Black men. Who, the history detectives (well, actually it was their associate producer) wanted to know, were these two Black men?

I just happened to have in my ready reference collection a microfilm of the Town Clerk's records for Madison County (doesn't everybody?). The information on this list, compiled at the end of the war, included not only name, unit, and other sundry facts but also the soldier's race. I was able to find two Cazenovia soldiers with "C" after their names. "C" stood for "colored" as opposed to "W" for "white. Not politically correct but that was the terminology of the time. After checking census records online, including the 1890 Federal Veterans' Schedule, I was sure the two black men were John Stevenson, 29<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Infantry, and Joseph Brown, 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry, two long-time Cazenovia residents.

I was feeling pretty pleased with myself, except for a nagging little doubt that wouldn't leave me alone - it was too easy. There were fifteen G.A.R. Posts in Madison County, but none in Peterboro. What about the Black soldiers who lived there? Any of them could have traveled to neighboring Cazenovia. Thanks to an obituary supplied by Smithfield Town Historian Donna Burdick, my suspicions were confirmed. Albert O. Robbins, a "C" in the Town Clerk's Records of Smithfield, had been a member of the Knowlton Post. It further stated that he was the standardbearer of the post. One of the Black men in the picture was holding the flag. My job was done - I'd supplied the possible answers to the question. The detectives would have to do further research at the National Archives.

Oh, BTW, my job wasn't done. I was asked if I would like to appear in the segment as a "talking head." How fast could I say "YES!?" The appointed day of the shoot was Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup> when the crew would come to Madison County to tell the story of the picture. The Cazenovia Public Library was to be my location. The director, Hugo Something-or other, thought the Morrisville College Library would be too noisy for filming. What, he thinks college students are noisy? My niece and I trekked over to Cazenovia where we met my sister - it's nice to have groupies. For three hours we filmed what will probably take two minutes in the show. I worked with Elyse Luray, the Art



Sue and Elyse, the History Detectives

Historian detective. They filmed Elyse and I walking down a short hall, about twenty times. They filmed us looking at the picture. I had to act "surprised and impressed" about twenty more times. Then we went down to look at microfilm. Luckily I had my page number ready so our "searching" was really just getting to the right page. Finally, after we had done the Town Clerk's Records for Cazenovia, Elyse had to say "I guess we have our two soldiers in the picture." My big line followed, "Well, not necessarily." How many ways can one say, "Well, not necessarily?" That's when the Peterboro angle was introduced. By then I was getting tired - the adrenaline had long since dissipated. Thinking we were done (silly me), I was getting my things together when I was informed it was time to shoot Elyse's entrance. Over and over again. "Welcome to Cazenovia" over and over again. At last we were done. Digital pictures were taken and off we went, back to Morrisville.

The kicker is that I don't know how this story ended - who were those two soldiers in that picture? The show will be aired on WCNY Channel 24 in June or July, so I and I hope you, will be tuned in. Just don't blink, you might miss me.

## New Harvard President with CW Ties

Drew Gilpin Faust has accepted the position of President of Harvard University. She is the first woman to hold the job, the first leader without a Harvard degree since C. Chauncy held the position from 1654 to 1672, and a distinguished **Civil War historian**. Huzzah! Before serving as dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study beginning in 2001, Dr. Faust was the Annenberg Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania for 25 years. Her books include *Southern Stories: Slave-holders in Peace and War*, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, and *Mothers of Invention*, a pathbreaking study of how the Civil War altered the identities and lives of Southern women. Best wishes to President Drew Faust as she begins to mend faculty fences and manages the university's \$3 billion (with a B) budget.

## Another Excellent Adventure

Member Dick Crozier, aka General Lee, joins member Sue Greenhagen on the "world" stage. Dick will appear at the Cumming Playhouse in Cumming, GA - near Atlanta - on Saturday, March 31, 2007 in the world premier of his one-man play, *Robert E. Lee*. The playbill gives Dick this glowing introduction:

*Never before has there been a living historian who so closely resembles the beloved General of the Confederacy than Dick Crozier as General Lee! With the quiet Virginia accent, extensive knowledge, and impeccable manners of a true Virginia gentleman, Dick creates an uncanny portrayal that leaves spectators literally stunned...*

This performance is a celebration of Lee's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. OCCWRT members may remember Dick as General Lee when we were still meeting at NYSUT. He left many of us equally stunned by his remarkable performance. Break a leg, Dick!

## Lincoln/Grant Testimonial

Ben Maryniak, president of the Buffalo CWRT and a frequent speaker at the OCCWRT - most recently in Oct. 2006, had his memory jarred when he read in our January newsletter about the *Abraham Lincoln I Wish I Had Know That* certificate we award to our winning Jeopardy team. Here's the incident he chose to pass on to us:

*Concerning your mention of "Abe Lincoln I wish I had know that." Several years ago, I managed to visit the Marion Skidmore Library at The Lily Dale Spiritualist Assembly near Cassadaga. The library has odd hours - you might expect oddities on 167 acres of mediums etc - but I was interested in something I read about messages rec'd from Lincoln & Grant via automatic writing. Henry Slade was an American medium who was noticed in the 1870's for producing "messages inside double slates, sometimes tied and sealed together, while they lay upon a table without the medium touching it." The historian wasn't around when I visited but someone gave me several slates (small & wood-framed, like you imagine in one-room schoolhouses) with messages that had been varnished. Some were printed, some were in long hand. No mention of the mediums who obtained them or other info. Both Grant and Lincoln wrote that they "wished they had known that" spiritualism was the real deal"...*

Thanks, Ben, for this "groundbreaking" data. It's comforting to know that Abe and Ulysses have limited their testimonials. However, their guidance on laundry detergents, cold medicines, and American automobiles may follow shortly. Stay tuned.

## Unreconstructed Legislators?

The House Rules Committee of the Virginia legislature has rejected a Senate bill that would have created a state commission to oversee the state's participation in the national commemoration of the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, the *Richmond Daily Press* reports. Several states have established panels to work with the federal Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission which is coordinating three years of events surrounding the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth which begins on Feb. 12, 2009. One of the lawmakers told the House committee that supporters of a Virginia celebration of Lincoln's birth suffer from "historical myopia and amnesia." He added that Lincoln "sent armies into Virginia to lay waste to our land." He suggested that the bill should be amended to replace the Lincoln commemoration with a June 3, 2008 celebration of the 200th birthday of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Another legislator added that "we do not need a commission in light of the fact that he was not a Virginian." The committee did note that both of Lincoln's parents were Virginians. However, the bill was rejected with no further discussion.

## Thank You

Treasurer David Osborn thanks the following members for their dues paid during Jan/Feb: Sue Greenhagen, Darothy DeAngelo, Charles Snyder, Eloise Hudson, Rich Walker, and Gordon Cruickshank. Our total paid membership for 2006-07 is now 35.

## 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*