



November 2006
Volume 13 Number 3

The Battlefield

Newsletter of the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table

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Meeting Site

The Warehouse
Syracuse University
School of Architecture

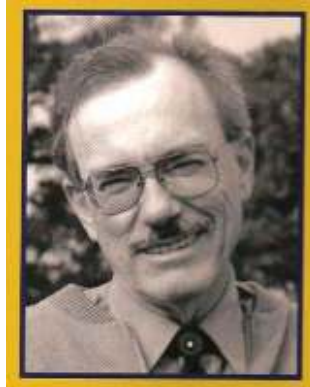
350 West Fayette St
Syracuse, NY

Room 3 1st Floor

Thursday
November 16, 2006
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.

November 16, 2006 Meeting



Ed Raus, Jr. has spent the last 30 years with the National Park Service. Newly retired, Ed has moved back to his roots in Cortland County where he is a member of the Major Andrew Grover CW Round Table. He graduated from SUNY Cortland and was drafted from Cortland County into the US Army from 1968-1970. He began his NPS career at Gettysburg National Military Park in 1974. During his service there he met a number of park visitors seeking information on a hometown regiment. He responded with his first book, *A Generation on*

the March: The Union Army at Gettysburg, an indispensable guide to the 345 Union monuments and markers on the battlefield. He served as park historian at Fredericksburg and chief of interpretation at Manassas National Battlefield. Quite a distinguished career.

Where Duty Called Them: The Story of the Samuel Babcock Family of Homer, NY in the Civil War, published in 2001, is Ed's second book. It's an account of three brothers who enlisted in the Union Army from Homer and never returned home. The heart wrenching journey to Gettysburg by the boys' father to search for the body of his son, Willis, illustrates the lasting emotional pain on families left behind.

Ed credits his grandmother Curtis' stories of her ancestors in both the Revolutionary War and the Civil War for initially stirring his interest in history. With relatives serving with the 76th NYV and the 23rd NYV, Cortland County contributing men to both regiments, Ed's third book, *Banners South: A Northern Community at War* (2005, Kent State University Press), focuses on the 23rd NYV. Filled with local history, this regimental history examines not only the battlefield experiences of the regiment during the first two years of the war but also explores the social and political context of the Cortland area civilians. Ed's presentation will focus on Cortland County and the 23rd NYV. We're delighted he's back in the area.

Reminder

Saturday's Veterans' Day rededication of the newly cast Sentinel in the Soldiers' and Sailors' plot of Oakwood Cemetery is at 3 p.m. This ceremony is sponsored by the 122nd NY State Volunteer Infantry.

President's Message

As I look out the window while writing this I notice the leaves are almost all gone from the trees and the geese are heading south. Winter is definitely on the horizon. The World Series is finally over and my Yankees didn't make an appearance again this year. Congratulations to the St. Louis Cardinals and as they used to say in Brooklyn, "Wait Until Next Year".

I hope everyone has enjoyed our first two meetings this fall as the speakers were excellent. Hopefully the parking situation at our meeting site will be better now that we can park in the lot behind the building off West Washington St. Just tell the person in the booth that you're attending the Round Table meeting.

We're having a Board Meeting the first Sunday in November to work on the grant application and to plan the Christmas Party. If anyone has any experience with writing articles for the newspaper please let me know as we're trying to get more publicity and more people attending our meetings.

See you at the November meeting and bring a friend if you like.

Jim Dromgoole
President

December Meeting

Our regular meeting on the third Thursday of the month will fall on December 21st. Since that is a bit too close to Christmas, our meeting will be Thursday, December 14, 2006. Meeting details in the next newsletter.

Warehouse Parking Information

If you refer to the revised Warehouse Map on page 4 of this newsletter, you'll find new parking possibilities. Two lots are directly behind or north of the Warehouse. At the end of W. Washington St is a free, small Warehouse lot manned by a guard. If there is no "event" at the Warehouse on our meeting night, that lot is available with easy access to the Warehouse. The guard will expect you to name the event you are attending. If that lot is full or unavailable, just east is a metered lot also with quick access to the north Warehouse entrance.

Horse Dung at Five Paces

Had it with negative campaign ads? In 1842 Illinois State Auditor, James Shields felt the same way and demanded to know who was insulting him in a series of anonymous letters in the local newspaper. One of the letters said "Shields is a fool as well as a liar. With him the truth is out of the question." With the writer's consent, the newspaper editor revealed the culprit to be state representative Abraham Lincoln.

Shields challenged Lincoln to a duel, giving Lincoln the choice of weapons. Lincoln first called for "horse dung at five paces." A more serious Lincoln then selected cavalry broadswords. With Lincoln's long arms, the sword would give him the advantage. Perhaps Shields would think twice and withdraw the challenge.

The day of the duel found Shields and Lincoln on an island in the Mississippi River with swords in hand. Friends of the men managed to talk them into canceling the impending duel. In later years both men became friends. However, Lincoln was forever embarrassed by the incident.

During the Civil War an officer visiting the White House asked about the duel. Lincoln replied, "I do not deny it but if you desire my friendship you will never mention it again." In today's vernacular, Lincoln would tell the officer, "Don't even go there."

General Sumner Project

Darothy DeAngelo and Sue Greenhagen have been on the road with their General Sumner presentation. They have informed local historical societies of General Edwin Sumner's long military career which ended with his 1863 death in Syracuse while visiting his daughter. The fact that a Civil War general is buried in Syracuse's Oakwood Cemetery within a deteriorating grave site is of interest and concern to these groups. The proceeds from the presentations go directly into the OCCWRT Sumner Preservation Fund. If you know of any group that would be interested in the presentation, give Darothy a call at 682-6312.

Watertown, NY Cemetery Vandalism + Find

Vandals tipped over 52 monuments including one with a Civil War soldier at the North Watertown cemetery early in October. As cemetery workers assessed the damage they found what they thought was a shim to shore up the Civil War statue. The shim was actually a lead time capsule placed in the base of the statue during a 1891 dedication. The contents of the capsule have been given to the Jefferson County Historical Society and include the following documents: a handwritten letter, probably a speech read during the dedication; a handbook of a local GAR post; a roster of Civil War soldiers from the Watertown area; and one copy each of the three Watertown newspapers of the time.

These materials will be on display at the at the JC Historical Society in the near future. The cemetery plans to place another time capsule in the CW monument at its rededication. However, many of the gravestones have been permanently damaged.

Gettysburg Controversies Inspire CD

from *The York Daily Record* 10/31/2006

Controversies are constant in the town of Gettysburg - the proposed casino, changes on the historic battlefield, proliferating ghost tours, too many motorcycles, and commercialization. The divided opinions are strong and at time boil over. Yet one man has found humor within the disputes.

Brian Kennell, the superintendent of the historic Evergreen Cemetery which borders the National Cemetery, has written music he hopes will give "locals a chance to step back and laugh, and give outsiders a peek into the changing nature and constant debate" within his historic town. The 11-song *The Voices of Gettysburg* CD will be another souvenir available to tourists, "the exact type of commercialization he mocks in his songs." Kennell has Gettysburg's ghosts debate whether they should be allowed on the battlefield at night- a jab at the National Park Service's decision to "close" the battlefield early during winter.

The casino controversy is echoed to the tune of "Green Acres":
Greed Acres is the place to be, Casino livin' is the life for me. Slots keep spreading' out so far and wide, Give me a quarter - who needs a battlefield guide?

The ever-present ghost tours that plague town residents are parodied to the tune of "The Addams Family": *If you want to make a dollar, Just start your tour and holler. You don't have to be a scholar for ghost tour families.*

Drums and Trumpets Historians - A Dying Breed

What follows is a summary of an article that appeared on October 9, 2006 on the National Review Online website. Written by John J. Miller, a NR national political reporter, the article examines why military historians, sometimes referred to as members of an academic sub-discipline, are a dying breed. This is a five page article, too long for this newsletter. If you want to read the entire article, go to Google and enter John J. Miller, National Review Online Sounding Taps. The first hit will take you to the article.

Ten years ago, author Stephen Ambrose endowed a professorship in American military history at his University of Wisconsin alma mater with a \$500,000 donation. Today that endowment totals over \$1million and still sits in a university account. Wisconsin hasn't had a military historian on its faculty since Edward Coffman retired in 1992. Just two years ago, Coffman examined the faculties of the 25 best history departments and found that among more than a thousand professors, only 21 listed war as a specialty. Dartmouth turned down a \$1.5 million endowment for a chair in military history. Princeton most likely will fill Dr. James McPherson's position with an expert in gender relations. Both the University of Michigan and Purdue have not replaced their retired military historians. *The American Historical Review*, an academic journal for history professors, published only two articles on the US Civil War in the last 150 issues. John Miller concludes that military history is either dead and buried or under siege and dying.

Where are the military historians? Kansas State, Ohio State, Texas A&M, and Yale have highly regarded departments of military history. The Army employs more than 200 of them. The service academies and ROTC programs continue to teach military history. Cadets at West Point must take two semesters of military history during their senior year. The Marine Corps still recommends to its officers Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War written 25 centuries ago. Military historians keep writing. And their books sell.

When history departments offer military - history courses students flock to them. The History Channel recently launched a separate Military History Channel. The public's interest in military history helps to keep the field alive.

So why are universities not keeping military chairs alive? According to John Miller, military history is no longer politically correct; military historians are seen as advocates of militarism. Recently MIT's Security Studies Program introduced a new logo that features a compass. "It seemed there were complaints from others at MIT that the existing logo with its 18th -century cannons was too aggressive," its retiring director recently stated. Robert Bruce, a professor at a Texas university speculates that "military historians have been hunted into extinction by politically active faculty members who think military history is a subject for right-wing, imperialistic warmongers." Miller contends that "the ossified tenure system, scholarly navel-gazing, and ideological hostility to all things military" are responsible for the neglect of military history.

Miller's provocative article raises as many questions as it answers. However, as "students" of the Civil War era, we are aware of the richness and variety of CW scholarship, the best of which integrates political, social, cultural, and military studies.

Reminder

Dues will be gratefully accepted.

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 _____

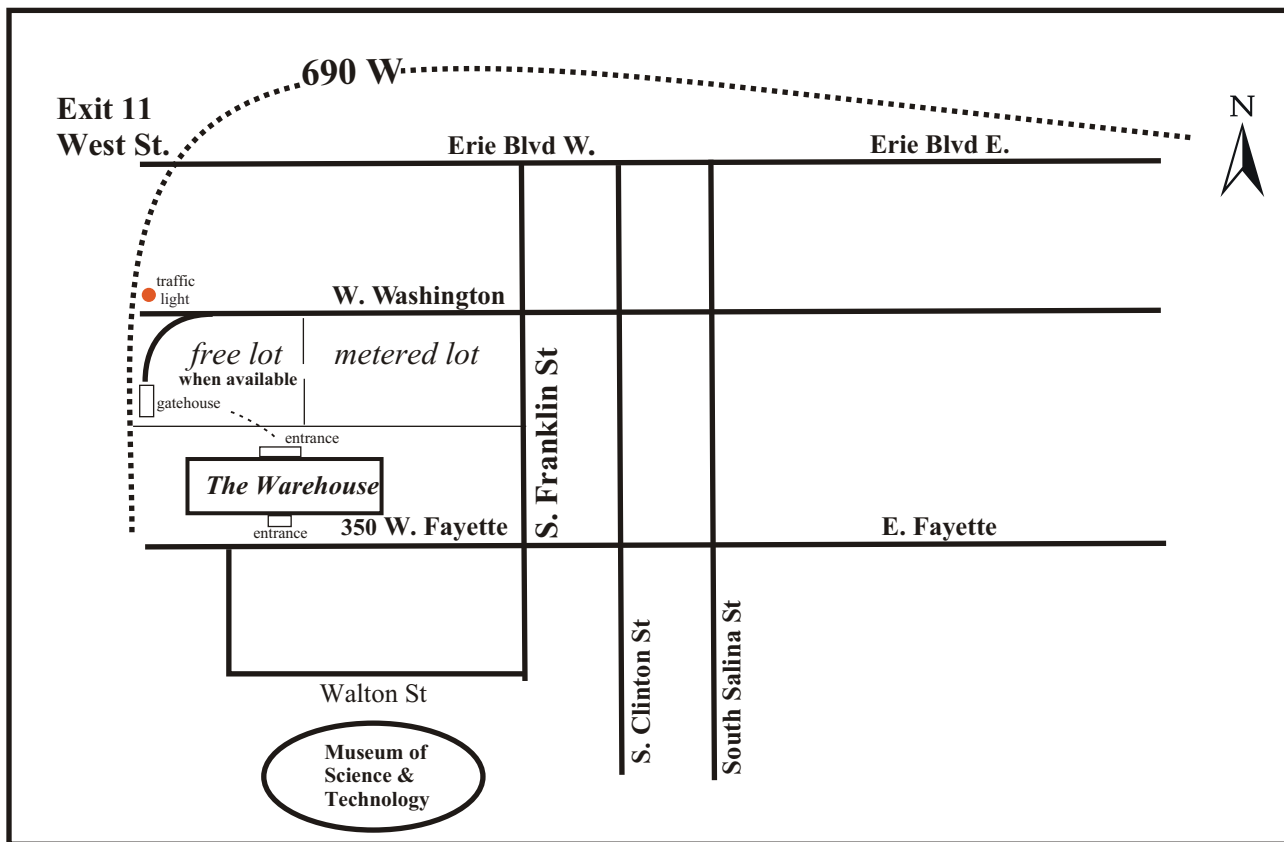
Telephone _____

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.

Directions to the Warehouse - 350 W. Fayette St - Parking Info



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