



October 2006
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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

Meeting Site

**The Warehouse
Syracuse University
School of Architecture**

**350 West Fayette St
Syracuse, NY**

Room 3 Ground Floor

**October 19, 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.

October 19, 2006 Meeting

This month's speaker is Ben Maryniak, president of the Buffalo CWRT and a frequent presenter to the OCCWRT. Ben has co-authored two books: *Faith in the Fight: Civil War Chaplains* and *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains - The Union*. As chaplain Philos G. Cook, Ben delivered a moving invocation at the Rededication Ceremonies of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Clinton Square in September 2001. As a lifelong student of the Civil War, Ben is known for his thorough research and understanding of his topic and his spirited delivery. He has turned his attention to the study of railroads during the Civil War and will present his findings at our October meeting. If you have not heard Ben speak, I promise an exciting evening from a talented Civil War historian.

Onondaga Historical Association Ghost Walk 2006: Raise the Spirit

The OHA will again present its popular ghost tours on the weekends of October 20-21 and 27-28. This year the tours will be held within the OHA - where else but in the newly restored basement. Some of the Syracuse spirits who will appear this year are Moses Fleetwood Walker, the first black professional baseball player as documented by Cooperstown, the famous Cardiff Giant, the victims of the 1874 Central Baptist Church Disaster, and a Syracuse salt baron. This well-attended history event is a major fund raiser for the OHA. It's fun and informative for the entire family.

November 11th Rededication

The 122nd New York State Volunteer Infantry, a Civil War reenactment group based in Syracuse, will sponsor a 3 PM Veterans' Day rededication of a newly cast Sentinel that replaces the original erected in 1885 by the Grand Army of the Republic in the Soldiers' and Sailors' plot of Oakwood Cemetery. The Sentinel stood as a dedicated guard over the graves of 231 veterans of the Civil War until 1951 when thieves stole the statue. Only the eight-foot granite base with the inscription, "In Memory of our Dead Comrades", remained until the 122nd NYV and other interested parties began their fund raising efforts in 1998. The gravestones of the 231 veterans, in a state of disrepair, were all replaced by the 122nd NYSV by Veterans' Day 2000 with new Veterans' Administration marble stones. In the six years since, over \$35,000 has been raised by the 122nd for a replacement life-sized bronze Sentinel to complete the restoration of the site, once called the GAR Root Post section. The Soldiers' and Sailors' plot has now been restored to a place of dignity and will be rededicated to honor the fallen as a symbol of commitment to the veterans of today and the future. Congratulations to the 122nd for the completion of this preservation project.

2006-2007 Dues

Our treasurer Dave Osborn was quite busy at our September meeting collecting dues from a number of members. We urge members and possible new members to consider paying their dues as soon as convenient. Your dues help bring in the best of speakers and keep the round table financially solvent. Please attach the membership form, within the newsletter, to your check or cash payment.

Extra! Extra!

John Rudy Speaks at the Union League in Philadelphia

In early September 2006, Gettysburg College senior and OCCWRT member, John Rudy, was asked by Dr. Alan Guelzo, department chair of the Civil War Era Semester at Gettysburg College, to join him for a trip to the Union League Club in Philadelphia. John, representing a history major from Gettysburg College, and three students from the Civil War Era Semester program were to deliver speeches on the importance of history before a group of distinguished Gettysburg Alums and Philadelphians, all possible donors to fund both research grants and libraries for student use as well as an endowment to keep the department going in perpetuity. With John's permission, what follows is his speech given in the prestigious hall of the Union League. I think you'll agree that Dr. Guelzo's choice of John as the final speaker left a powerful impression on the audience.

Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great honor to speak to you this evening.

I was reflecting last night on what I was going to say here, and found myself at a loss for words. I volunteered for this not truly understanding what I was getting myself into. Presidents and dignitaries speak to all of you on a pretty regular basis, and here I am, a lowly college Senior.

It was my Mother who gave me a bit of advice. "Do a bit of research on to whom exactly you're speaking." I did what I know. I went to the historical sources.

I'm sure you all know that the Union League was formed to help push forward support for Abraham Lincoln in the North's major metropolitan areas. The League recruited units for the war effort, helped politically to push Lincoln back into office much as the wide-awakes had in his first run for the seat of power. The League published pamphlets and publications to support the war effort and even went so far as to suggest to Secretary of War Stanton, in an arguable revolutionary move, to employ African American troops to free their brethren in this new war of freedom.

In October of 1863, your predecessors sent a note to Abraham Lincoln, along with a small token of esteem. It is his reply to that note that I found most interesting during my research. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to read a portion of the note:

It is with heartfelt gratification that I acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the [4th?] and the accompanying medal, by which I am made an honorary member of the Union League of Philadelphia.

I shall always bear with me the consciousness of having endeavored to do my duty in the trying times through which we are passing, and the generous approval of a portion of my fellow citizens so intelligent and so patriotic as those composing your Association assures me that I have not wholly failed. I could not ask, and no one could merit, a better reward.

Lincoln's political footing in the fall of 1863 wasn't the greatest. Right about the time he was receiving that letter from your group, his army's telegraphers were sending him news of Meade's sitting in front of the Confederate Army, not pursuing Robert E. Lee as he withdrew into the turtle shell that was Northern Virginia. The war did not seem to be going as well as anyone could have hoped.

And all Lincoln needed were a few votes of confidence. A few words of encouragement, telling him that he was not a total failure

as a President. A few lines letting him know that some felt his job was admirable. A note from well-wishers letting him know that his was not an action undertaken in vain.

And a month later, he echoed the sentiment of the Union League in his Gettysburg Address. *It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they have, thus far, so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion --that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.* With these lines he was placing his vote of confidence with the Nation and the national cause of Union and Liberty.

This is all well and good. But, many people would say, it happened over 140 years ago. It's old news. It's washed up. It's not pertinent.

At Gettysburg College, with the Civil War Era Studies Department, we are making these lessons of the past pertinent to a new generation of Americans. On more than one occasion, usually when I'm witnessing something particularly galling or rash, some aberration to the soul such as hatred or injustice, I've been reminded by my elders that I am the future. These are my problems. Indeed, it is true that we, the future, inherit the problems of the past. But, we also inherit the inspiration of our forefathers who overcame their problems.

In our program at Gettysburg, we learn of many things. We bandy about ideas as if the classroom were a badminton court. We argue over small details of history and society, and together we come out with a better idea of what happened when our nation tore itself apart 140 some odd years ago.

We take the lessons of the past, through our work with the Civil War Era Studies Department, as a vote of confidence from our ancestors. The nature of the program, being cross-curricular, means we can draw that sentiment into anything we do.

Imagine a History Major with a Civil War Minor going on to become a Park Ranger, touching the lives of millions of Americans with Lincoln's words of freedom at Gettysburg.

Imagine a Molecular Biology Major, with a Civil War Minor, studying Lincoln with all his heart and soul and, upon reaching the White House for his own term, sometime in the future, drawing on such a great historical mentor as our 16th President.

A firm basis in the nation's great crucible, the Civil War, can arm anyone with the confidence of the ages. Studying the Civil War, one of the bleakest times in American's short history, has actually given me hope. Just as Abraham Lincoln could draw votes of confidence from people like yourselves, I can draw a vote of confidence from his ability. If he pulled a country through during terrible times, I can face anything the world can throw at me.

Honorary Membership

Speaking of the Rudy family, Mimi Rudy was awarded an honorary membership at our September meeting. She and her husband "Big" John moved to a new home in Courtland, VA in late September. Mimi was a vital member of the round table holding the positions of treasurer and co-president and an active volunteer whenever her talents were needed. Best wishes from all us, Mimi.

Syracuse University's Connective Corridor Shuttle

Each Tuesday and Thursday from 5 to 11:40 p.m., the Syracuse Connective Corridor shuttle running on Centro bus route #543 will connect the Warehouse, our meeting site, to Syracuse University and a variety of other stops along the way. The shuttle will stop at places where parking may be more convenient for members. For instance, if you choose to park near Syracuse Stage, a shuttle will pick you up at 6:27 pm and arrive at the Warehouse at 6:37 pm. From the Everson Museum, the shuttle arrives at 6:31 pm again arriving at the Warehouse at 6:37 pm. This is a free service. The shuttle leaves the Warehouse at both 8:41pm and 9:21pm for its loop back to SU. For more information and a complete schedule of stops and times go to <http://connectivecorridor.syr.edu>.

Another Aspect of the CW

Here's a facet of the CW most of us have not have not thought about: litigation against the federal government. In Greg Williams' new book, *Civil War Suits in the US Court of Claims: Cases Involving Compensation to Northerners and Southerners for Wartime Losses*, we learn that the "CW proved a boon to the American bar by opening a floodgate of litigation that continued well into the 1920's." Many of the cases ended up in the Supreme Court. Benjamin Dykes of Anderson, GA owned the land appropriated by the Confederacy for the Andersonville POW camp. After the war, Dykes submitted a claim for the return of his property. The federal government resisted and in 1868 established a national cemetery on part of his property. The Judge Advocate General argued that the government should not be made to pay for "soil consecrated by the martyrdom of its fallen heroes...to benefit traitors through whose barbarities these graves have been filled."

Sectional reunion was not always reflected in the courts. If any legal-minded member does read this book, do let us know more about CW litigation. Contemporary America perhaps is not the only example of a litigious society. (*softcover, 248pp, 2006, McFarland & Company Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, \$49.95 plus shipping.*)

How Did We Win?

Member Elaine Tucker submitted this yarn for your enjoyment.

One morning, three Southerners and three Yankees were in a ticket counter line at a train station. The three Northerners each bought a ticket and watched as the three Southerners bought just one ticket. "How are the three of you going to travel on only one ticket?" asked one of the Yankees.

"Watch and learn," answered one of the boys from the South. All six boarded the train where the three Yankees sat down, but the three Southerners crammed into a toilet together and closed the door. Shortly after the train departed, the conductor came around to collect tickets. He knocked on the toilet door and said, "Ticket, please." The door opened just a crack and a single arm emerged with a ticket in hand. The conductor took it and moved on. The Yankees saw this happen and agreed it was quite a clever idea. Indeed, so clever they decided to do the same thing on the return trip and save some money.

That afternoon when they got back to the station, they bought a single ticket for the return trip and watched, while to their astonishment, the three Southerners didn't buy even one ticket. "How are you going to travel without a ticket?" asked a perplexed Yankee. "Wait and learn," answered the three Southern boys in unison. When they boarded the train, the three Northerners crammed themselves into a toilet and the three Southerners crammed into another toilet just down the way.

Shortly after the train began to move, one of the Southerners left his toilet and walked over to the toilet in which the Yankees were hiding. The Southerner knocked on the door and said, "Ticket, please." *There's just no way on God's green earth to explain how the Yankees ever won the war!*

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 _____

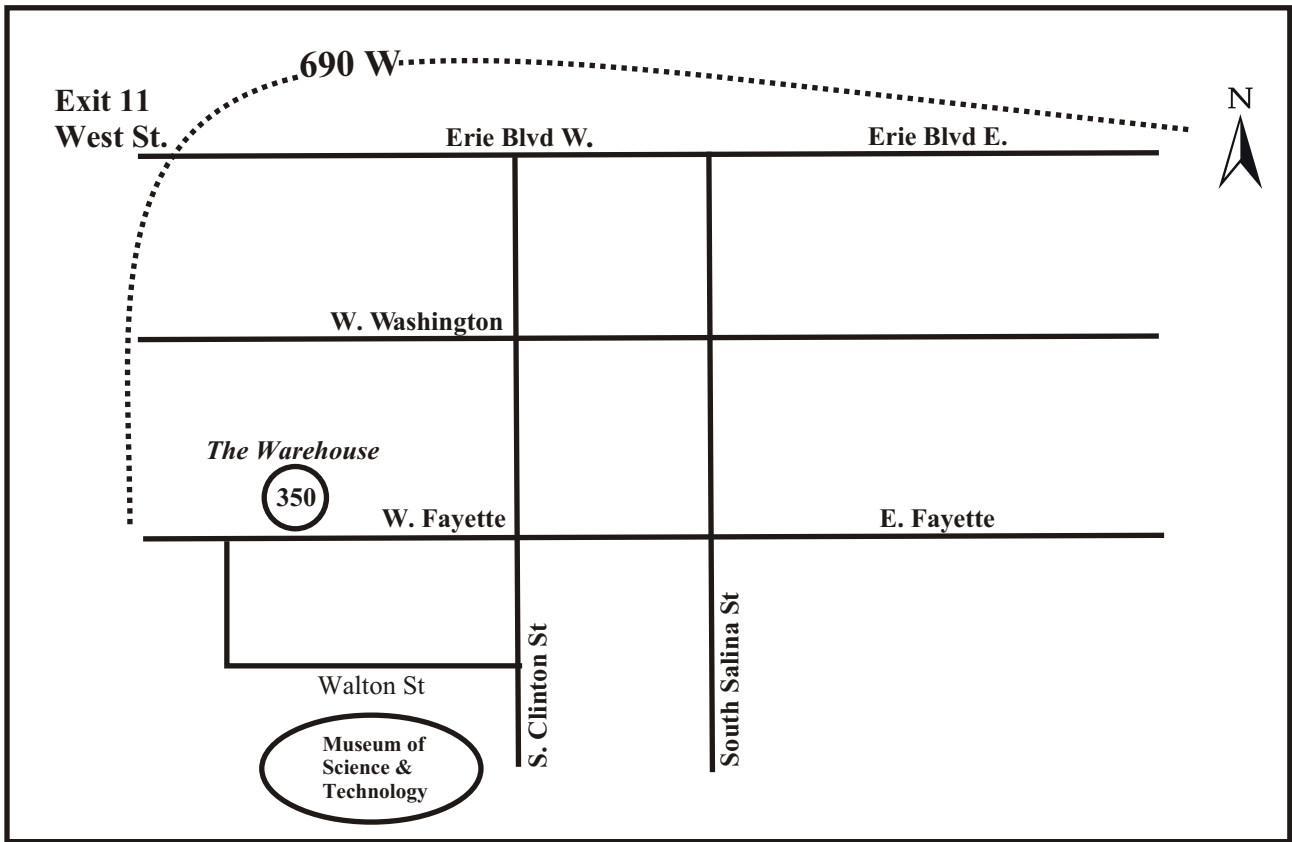
Telephone _____

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.



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