



September 2007  
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# 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 Ground Floor**

**Dr. Wayne Mahood**

*Alexander "Fighting Elleck" Hays:  
The Life of a CW General  
from West Point to the  
Wilderness*

**Thursday  
September 20, 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.

## September 20th Meeting

The 2007-08 season of the OCCWRT, our 14th year, begins with another visit from a prestigious Civil War historian and author Dr. Wayne Mahood, an emeritus professor of education at the State University of New York at Geneseo. He will discuss his latest book, *Alexander "Fighting Elleck" Hays: The Life of a Civil War General from West Point to the Wilderness* (Jefferson, NC:McFarland, 2005, 222pp.).



General Alexander Hays  
Ziegler's Grove Gettysburg

General Hays is a relatively forgotten general-the last study of him was published in 1913- though his division at Gettysburg cleared the Bliss Barn of Confederate sharpshooters and defended the stonewall near the angle during Pickett's Charge. He participated in the Seven Days' Battles, Second Manassas, Morton's Ford and The Wilderness where he was mortally wounded. Known as a hot-headed and hard-drinking fighter, Hays was a man's man, He was paid the ultimate tribute by US Grant who visited Pittsburg during his presidential campaign in 1868 and asked to be taken to Hays' grave. There Grant sat on a cannon and wept for Hays, a man with the heart of a lion.

Reviews for this book and his last book, *General Wadsworth: The Life and Wars of General James S. Wadsworth*-a compelling look at the life of a true Geneseo Civil War patriot, agree that Dr. Mahood's books are thoroughly researched and engage the reader's interest. Join us for a revealing look into the life of General Alexander Hays from "local" scholar and teacher, Dr. Wayne Mahood. This will be enjoyable evening.

## President's Message

Welcome to the 2007-08 season of the OCCWRT. Hopefully you enjoyed a great summer and were able to do something related to the Civil War. The Peterboro Civil War Weekend attracted a good crowd, and it was great to see a number of members attending.

Darothy and Sue gave Oakwood Cemetery tours during the summer. There will be one more scheduled for September 23rd hosted by Roy Simmons, Jr. entitled *Athletes of Oakwood*. The tour begins at 2 PM if you're interested in attending.

We sure could use help with publicity this year. If anyone would be able to lend their assistance with this please let me know as soon as possible.

Darothy has managed to arrange for author and historian Wayne Mahood to speak at our September meeting. Please join us and hear about Civil War General Alexander Hays.

If anyone has a topic they would like to have presented, please mention it at the meeting. We like to know what our members' interests are.

**Jim Dromgoole**

## With Thanks

Our thanks to two organizations who have contributed to our General Summer Grave Restoration Project over the summer. The Norwich Round Table and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation each chose to support this important project of the OCCWRT.

### Greenwood Cemetery Civil War Project

by Beth Greenfield

In celebration and remembrance of Civil War veterans, Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, NY unveiled over 1200 new markers from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Memorial Day presentation was a huge phase of a project started in 2002. The Historic Fund's Civil War Project is a mostly volunteer effort to tie in archives, cemetery records, pensions and enlistment papers, government databases, regimental histories, published obituaries and public death notices to locate Civil War veterans buried at Greenwood. According to Jeff Richman, Greenwood Cemetery historian, an informal search started with 500 veterans; since 2002 almost 3,000 CW veterans have been identified. The project is still ongoing as they believe the final number to be about 8,000.

Thanks to Sue Greenhagen pushing copies of the *Civil War News* at our round table meetings, I was able to read about this project and contacted Jeff. He explained that several ancestors of the veterans would be there on Memorial Day for a CW reading. Since no ancestors of the 139th NYSV had surfaced, I informed Jeff I would come down and read some of the names of the 139th. This is the regiment of my CW ancestor, Col. Samuel Roberts.

My mother, sister Ruth and I hacked into Brooklyn on a beautiful hazy day. Please note this is not a trip for people who cannot navigate NYC traffic. My sister had a death grip on the door handle as I drove my new Subaru in through the mid Queens and took a left at the East River and followed it down into Brooklyn. After passing the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge, we arrived at the exit for 33rd St. and 3rd Ave. But we had to drive over and up to 25th St. and 5th Ave in Brooklyn.

The gate to Greenwood is an impressive piece of architecture and sculpture. Along the front field, over 1200 markers were lined up, each with a flag at the head. Some had pictures of the veteran on the standard VA issue marker. After signing in, I was told I had to read five names from over 50 names of the 139th veterans identified. It was a very emotional experience to match the name with the marker. A full military color guard, volunteers, the Drum and Fife Band of the 119th NYV, 5th NYV, 67th NYV, Winslow's Battery, descendants and dignitaries all marched up the hill to the cemetery's Battle Hill. We passed some of the most impressive tombs I have seen in quite a while, many with mausoleums with Tiffany glass. After several readings by ancestors, cannon fire, salutes, and songs, I was quick to realize that actually I was a separate entity on the program wedged in with some pretty

famous CW writers including Roger Hunt. I needed to come up with a brief introduction to the 139th. I think I did Col. Roberts proud.

One of the best things about this day was the people I met: direct ancestors of General Slocum, another man who was a Slocum specialist (even though he had not been to Delphi Falls), a descendant of Gen. Thomas Meagher (who has a memorial there), Patrick Falci, Sen. Chuck Shumer, and most of all Jeff Richman. I never did get to see Gen. Slocum's monument, as we hacked over to the section where my grandparents are buried. At that moment a flyby formation by the Thunderbirds over New York Harbor pretty much wrapped up a very remarkable Memorial Day 2007.

### Dues Reminder

September is the beginning of a new fiscal year for the OCCWRT. This means that membership dues will be collected at the meetings or may be sent directly to our treasurer. In either case, please fill out the Membership Form at the end of the newsletter. If your email address has changed or you now can receive email, please inform us of the change. Complimentary newsletters sent through the mail to non-members will be limited to two copies.

### Bloodstained Clothes Sent to Storage

On September 6th the National Park Service transported most of what President Lincoln wore as he sat in the private box in Ford's Theater on Good Friday 1865 to a Park Service storage center in Maryland. There they will remain while the theater undergoes an 18-month renovation. His squared-toed, size 14 goatskin boots with worn down heels along with a bloodstained double-breasted frockcoat with the words "One Country, One Destiny" embroidered in its lining were carefully packed by the Ford's Theater Museum curator, Gloria Swift. Swift admitted that touching Lincoln's clothing was "almost indescribable. It is very chilling...knowing what you're handling."

### Possible January Jeopardy Question

It's time to gear up for our annual January Jeopardy meeting. Until then the OCCWRT newsletter will carry bits of CW trivia that could reappear in January as one of the questions. Here's a little known fact about Robert Frost, the 20th century American poet, born in California, who chose New England as his special province for his poetry. Yet, no poetry so regional has ever been so universal.

Frost's father, William Prescott Frost, revolted from Republican New England and left for California in the early 1870's to work for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, a Democratic newspaper. During the Civil War, William had been proud to be a Copperhead, a southern sympathizer and champion of states rights. When his son was born on March 26, 1875, the child was named after "you know who" and christened Robert Lee Frost. That middle name is unknown to most Frost fans, since Frost chose not to use it in his professional life.

## Member Survey

*The board of directors of the OCCWRT is interested in your suggestions for the round table. So, we offer this survey. Please respond with your thoughts. You may give the survey to our president or mail your comments to Pat Stepanek, PO Box 175, Tully, NY 13159-0175.*

*What CW topics interest you?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Do you know of a local speaker who could address the round table?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Do you have a special talent to contribute to the round table?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*General comments and suggestions?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Do you have experience with publicity?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 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*