



HARPERS FERRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

BOX 389, HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

Vol. 26 May 2007 No. 9

- DATE:** Wednesday, May 9th, 2007
- TIME:** 7:00 PM - CWRT Members Dinner
(Dinner Reservations Required)
- 8:00 Speakers Presentation and Book Raffle
(Open to the Public)
- PLACE:** Hilltop House Hotel,
400 East Ridge St. Harpers Ferry, WV
(Follow signs for Hilltop house from Washington St.)
(Turn Right on Ridge St. and go to the end of the street.)
- SPEAKER:** Ross Kimmel
- SUBJECT:** Confederate John J. Omenhausser's Civil War Art

The Subject:

Confederate soldier John J. Omenhausser, Co. A, 46th Virginia Infantry, produced a considerable body of folk art during the Civil War. There are about 250 known works by this artist. While a prisoner at Point Lookout, he sketched scenes of prison life and cartoons to amuse others in the camp. The drawings highlight the concerns and experiences of prisoners of war; most scenes show prisoners playing cards, buying food, or engaging in barter with food vendors. Although rations in Northern prisons were usually more generous than what the Confederate soldiers had been accustomed to in the field, these sketches show prisoners hungry for familiar food. All of the prison guards depicted are African American, and encounters are recorded between these guards and

the Confederate prisoners. The prisoners are also shown in conflict over taking an oath of allegiance to the United States (Union) government.

The Speaker

Mr. Ross Kimmel is a State Park Historian for the Maryland Park Service and has served in that capacity for over thirty years. Preservation and interpretation of the state park-owned historic resources are his chief responsibilities.

Mr. Kimmel is a native Marylander who developed an interest in the Civil War as a young boy. In his mid-teens, he joined a North-South Skirmish Association unit, the 1st Maryland “Blackhats,” where he competed in shooting competitions and took part in Civil War Centennial reenactments while in high school and college. He is involved in Civil War living history, participating with the NSSA (Hardaway’s Alabama Battery) and the Baltimore Light Artillery, a living history unit that does presentations at Antietam, Gettysburg, South Mountain, Fort McHenry and Harpers Ferry parks. He has both a BA and MA in American history from the University of Maryland and has numerous publications on various historical topics to his credit.

The Meal

A family-style meal will be served at 7:00 PM prior to the program. The cost of the meal is **\$11.00** per person. Reservations for the meal **must be phoned in no later than Sunday, May 6th**, to Allison Alsdorf, at 304-535-2101 or you can e-mail her at alsdorf@comcast.net

Prisoners

As in all Civil War statistical studies, the number of prisoners is subject to doubt. According to the U. S. Record and Pension Office 211,411, Union soldiers were captured by the Confederates during the war. Of this total 16,668 were paroled on the field and 30,218 died while in prison. Confederate soldiers captured by the Union numbered 462,634. Of this total 247,769 were paroled on the field, mainly in various surrenders, and 25,976 died in prison. The mortality rate was a little over 12 per cent in Northern prisons holding Confederates and 15.5 for Yankees in Southern prisons. If these figures are close to accurate, some 214,000 Confederates soldiers were in Northern prison camps and 194,000 Federal soldiers in Southern camps.

An “Andersonville complex” seems to exist regarding Civil War prisons. It is synonymous in print and on the screen with all that was reprehensible in wartime prisons. Ofttimes it is the first and only Civil War prison mentioned. While no one should make light of the abominable conditions at Andersonville, GA, at the same time, one cannot ignore the harshness of life in Northern camps at Elmira, NY, Johnson’s Island in Lake Erie, or Camp Douglas, Chicago. There has been little historical objectivity shown in most writing on Civil War prisons. Andersonville is even enlarged upon, with some authors making it exist for the whole war, whereas it really was in operation from February, 1864 to the end of the war. (Excerpted from *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865* by E. B. Long, published by Doubleday and Company, 1971)

American Civil War Round Table of the United Kingdom

Peter Lockwood and seven members of the ACWRT of the UK will be staying at the Hilltop House on May 23rd and 24th. Mr. Lockwood has expressed an interest in meeting members of the HFCWRT on those dates. If you would like an opportunity to meet these Civil War enthusiasts from England, please speak to Mike Musick as he will have more details.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Development Threatens the Park Experience

On March 13, 2007 The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) named Harpers Ferry National Historical Park among its list of America's Most Endangered Battlefields. Developers are proposing to build 2,000,000 square feet of office space and other buildings on private land known as Old Standard in the core of historic properties the park protects.

Harpers Ferry Park Superintendent said, "It is sad to know that Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is on America's Most Endangered Battlefields list; however, the endangered listing will help focus attention on whatever can be done to preserve the integrity of the park."

If you wish to comment to the park on this issue, please [e-mail here](#) or send a letter to: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry NHP, P.O. Box 65, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRUST UNVEILS REPORT ON MOST ENDANGERED BATTLEFIELDS

Among the sites on this year's list is **Harpers Ferry, W. Va.**, famous as the site of John Brown's abortive attempt to arm and liberate local slaves, but also the site of an important 1862 battle. From the heights that surround the sleepy village, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson orchestrated one of the largest mass surrenders in American history. In August 2006, a consortium of Jefferson County, W. Va. developers crossed onto National Park Service (NPS) property and dug two 1,900-foot-long trenches for water and sewer pipes. They did so without receiving a permit from NPS and, despite repeated requests to cease and desist, left nearly two acres of taxpayer-owned hallowed ground seriously compromised. Now, thanks to this illegal construction, the same developers are proposing a massive development along the ridgeline.

With 70,000 members, CWPT is the largest nonprofit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its mission is to preserve our country's remaining Civil War battlefields. Since 1987, the organization has saved more than 23,500 acres of hallowed ground nationwide. CWPT's website is located at www.civilwar.org.