

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

April 2011

President's Message

Greetings!

Last month we had a wonderful presentation from Terry Abrams with regards to the History of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation. Terry's honest and informative style was well received and the slide show was great. This month we are honored to have Ellyn "Cookie" Strzelc with a demonstration and discussion on Antique Kitchen Gadgets.

This year is the 150th year anniversary of the Civil War. Below is a great article presented by Adam Tabela about the visit of Frederick Douglas to Medina. Also Frank Burger presented an article about a Soldier during the Civil War. We will highlight others from Frank in upcoming months. Also please stop by the Museum during the upcoming months to view the updated exhibit prepared by Georgia Thomas on the Civil War.

Thank you for your continued support.

Next Monthly Meeting

**Medina Historical Society
April 25th 2011**

**7:00pm Lee-Whedon
Memorial Library**

Officers 2011

**Last Board Meeting
April 11, 2011**

**President: Cindy Robinson
Vice President: Craig Lacy
Treasurer: Sandy Tompkins
Secretary: Shane Sia
Board: Chris Tompkins.**

New Editor

Reinhard Rogowski

I am very excited to be the new Editor and relatively new member of the Medina Historical Society. I look forward to working with all our members and welcome any new ideas, story submissions, interviews or just to talk about the great history of our area. Please contact me via cell at 585-317-7457 or e-mail rrogowski@rochester.rr.com

Frederick Douglass in Medina

By Adam Tabelski

Frederick Douglass lived in Rochester for 25 years and spoke in hundreds of communities throughout the course of his long public career. Considering these facts, perhaps it is not surprising that the lecture circuit brought him to Medina. Nevertheless, the circumstances of his visit, and what he said, are worth remembering.

Douglass delivered an address in Medina on August 3, 1869 entitled, "We are not yet quite free." Of course, the "we" he referred to were African-Americans. This was barely more than four years after the end of the Civil War, and although black slaves in Southern states had been emancipated in 1863 and slavery had been formally prohibited by the 13th amendment to the Constitution in 1865, men and women with dark skin still faced many challenges assimilating in society.

The venue of the speech is unknown, but newspapers described a large, attentive, and appreciative audience who listened to Douglass talk passionately about the hardships encountered by his son, Lewis, who couldn't find a job in Rochester, even though that city was known for being at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the nineteenth century. Lewis had served with the famed 54th Massachusetts regiment in the Civil War, the unit featured in the award-

winning film, *Glory*. The indignation in Douglass voice still resonates:

"He had just returned from the war; had stood on the walls of Fort Wagner with Colonel Shaw; had borne himself like a man on the perilous edge of battle, and now that the war was nearly over, he had returned to Rochester, somewhat broken in health, but still able and willing to work at his trade [in newspaper printing]. But, alas! he begged in vain of his fellow-worms to give him leave to toil. Day after day, week after week, and month after month he sought work, found none and came home sad and dejected."

Douglass, a former slave who had been whipped by his masters, continued, "I had felt the iron of negro hate before, but the case of this young man gave it a deeper entrance into my soul than ever before."

The plight of blacks in post-war America deeply concerned Douglass. He did not need to look beyond the experiences of his own family to see how prejudice and ignorance could affect black men and women struggling to make their way in the world.

Douglass knew that the nation could help improve the condition of those who were "not yet quite free" by guaranteeing their right to participate in civil society through protecting their right to vote. He closed his remarks with an exhortation in support of the 15th amendment to the Constitution, which had been proposed

by Congress earlier in the year and was under consideration the various states:

“The fifteenth article of the Constitution is a necessity, not only to the Republican Party, and the present [Grant] Administration, but to the future peace and safety of the Republic. With the adoption of that great principle into the organic law of the land, the negro may well enough take his chance with all other classes of citizens. At any rate, all I have ever asked and now ask for my people, North and South, is simple, fair play, and if they get this, they will and must do what remains to make themselves useful, prosperous, and happy citizens.”

The 15th amendment, which states that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” was finally ratified on February 3, 1870.

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“Farewell Mother, you may never press me to your heart again”

Private Edwin Francis 2nd. Louisiana Regiment C.S.A woke up in a cold sweat. His fitful sleep was shattered before dawn by the rattle of regimental drums sounding the “general” a signal to prepare for battle. It was July 1, 1862 Edwin was a private in the Confederate army, under the command of General Robert E. Lee. On this day Edwin and his fellow soldiers would be ordered to storm Malvern Hill, in a attempt to defeat the Federal Army. It would be Hell on earth – death for many. But Edwin was brave and filled with courage. He was determined to do his duty, and not let himself or his comrades down.

Soon he would hear the crack of musketry and the boom of cannons. As he stood at the foot of Malvern Hill, he looked up to see the bristling line of guns gleaming bayonets that marked the Union line. He knew what lay ahead.

As the order to advance, came Edwin closed his eyes. He thought of his mother, Sarah, his father Robert, and his four brothers. Edwin said a silent prayer asking to be spared , that he might live to see them again.

Than he marched forward.

The fighting become chaotic, the air was soon filled with thick exploding smoke from exploding shells. There was noise everywhere – from the thunder of guns, to the shouts and screams of the fighting, and dying.

Edwin too was hit; He fell, bleeding pouring from his wounds, soaking into the dirt where he lay.

Edwin was one of many to die that day. When fighting stopped, over 5,600 Confederate and 3,000 Federal soldiers had been killed, wounded or captured.

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ATTN: MEMBERSHIP CHAIR
406 WEST AVENUE
MEDINA, NY 14103

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