



CINCINNATI  
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



# THE CANISTER

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Monthly Newsletter of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

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Cincinnati CWRT PO Box 621082 Cincinnati, Ohio 45262 <http://www.cincinnatiwrt.org>  
August, 2007 Issue

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## Special Summer Edition

This August edition of the Newsletter is being published to update members on the decisions made by the officer group affecting meeting site, menu options and meal price. A lot has happened since our May meeting and we want the membership to be informed of the behind the scenes activities that resulted in the plans for our 2007 – 2008 campaign season. Articles related to the expenses of running the organization are also included. This over-the-summer examination of Round Table operations has identified some concern areas related to the rising costs of putting on quality meetings. We want the members to be aware of what those concerns are and, where appropriate, our plans for managing and containing these expenses in order for your Round Table to remain a healthy and vibrant organization. The information is provided in two formats. The Headline Points that follow are intended to update members on the decisions made that take effect with the September meeting. A detailed explanation on how those decisions were arrived at is contained in the body of the Newsletter. Providing the information in this format will allow us to minimize the amount of time spent discussing and updating the membership on these changes during the September business meeting.

### Headline Points (with more explanation in the following pages):

Meeting location will return to the Quality Hotel & Suites on Montgomery Avenue in Norwood, at least for the September, October, and November meetings (and longer, we hope).

Dinner will be available at \$25 per person.

Dinner will be provided by an off-site catering service.

Reservations (by Sunday before the meeting) will be more important than ever.

Dinner will be served buffet-style, using disposable plates and utensils.

Dues will remain at \$25 per year, at least for the 2007-2008 campaign year (unchanged since 1986).

\$5 per person meeting-only attendance fee will be initiated for members or visitors who come after dinner for the meeting only, because we will now be paying directly for use of the meeting rooms.

**Meeting Site Survey Results:** The results from the May survey on meeting site location, menu options and price are in and your feedback helped guide our decisions for the 2007 - 2008 campaign season. Ninety-five survey forms were distributed to the membership via the ListServ, if members had email, or the U. S. Post Office, if members did not have computer access. Fifty-one responses were received; forty-one via email and ten via return mail. The most important messages were:

1. A clear message was received from the membership that they would like to see a meal remain part of our meeting format. The preferred meal option was a sit-down meal. Twenty-five members selected this choice. Eleven more checked both the sit-down meal and the buffet option. Thirteen preferred a buffet and two preferred no meal. Several of the comments received are reproduced here to give you a feel for some of the feedback we received.
  - a. The atmosphere would drastically change if the dinner format were eliminated. I believe it is essential that we maintain the sit-down dinner format; it is a way to foster camaraderie, establish friendships, stimulate conversation and learn from others.
  - b. The importance of pre-dinner conversation is something that needs to be emphasized. Getting to know people who have similar interests is quite important.
  - c. Keep the meal. It provides an opportunity for members to talk informally and get to know one another.
  - d. It's very convenient to have both meal and meeting combined. Please do not change this model.
  - e. I prefer a sit-down meal but a buffet is OK if it will keep costs down.
  - f. I come for the fellowship and the presentation.
  
2. On the issue of price a little more interpretation was needed. Clearly, the majority of our members would like to keep the meal price in the twenty to thirty dollar range. The \$25.00 price cap was preferred by the greatest number of members at nineteen. Nine wanted the meal price under \$20.00, fourteen said OK to a \$30.00 price, six were willing to pay up to \$35.00 and three agreed to pay more. While members would generally agree that they want the best meal for the lowest price, our research on other possible meeting sites around town indicated that some change in meal format would be necessary if we were going to satisfy the majority of our members on the price issue. Comments received included:
  - a. I would rather see us keep meal costs down if a high sit-down cost is going to discourage new members.
  - b. Cost has already reached the point where I need to pick and choose which meetings to attend.
  - c. I'll probably become a little more discriminating about the topic the higher the cost gets.
  - d. Attendance for the speaker only will increase if the meal price exceeds \$30.00.
  - e. I prefer a sit down meal but a buffet is OK if it will keep costs down.

3. The feedback on the location issue was evenly divided. Twenty-five members wanted a central location and twenty-five didn't care where the meetings were located, they'd go anywhere as long as it was inside the 275 beltway. The comments received from those who favored the central location did, however, give us some insight. Remember, we have members coming from Northern Kentucky, Southeastern Indiana, Dayton and a number of Cincinnati communities on every side of town. Comments included:
  - a. If at all possible, the Quality Hotel should be retained due to central location amongst the two interstates and Norwood lateral.
  - b. I do think the Quality Hotel and Suites is an ideal location if we can work out the issues.
  - c. Anywhere within twenty minutes of driving. Norwood was very convenient.

Recapping the information indicates that we have a general consensus that says...we want a meal in the twenty-five dollar range, in a central location, if you can do it! That result didn't surprise us but accomplishing it will require some flexibility on everyone's part. To move into the future, as a healthy and vibrant organization that continues to attract new members, we need to make some changes in our dinner meeting format if we are going to accomplish the above objectives. How we intend to accomplish that, in a way that we think responds to most of our members needs, is discussed in the article below.

**Meeting Site Location, Price and Menu Decisions:** We, as an organization, can no longer provide a nice sit-down dinner at a price that a significant number of our members will find acceptable! That said...some choices have to be made. On the issue of location we found a number of members like the Quality Hotel and Suites central location. We have been meeting there since 1999 and they have treated us well. Negotiations with them have indicated that a new Buffalo Wing's and Rings Restaurant is going into the space formerly occupied by Brinkley's Restaurant. It is scheduled to open some time in September. Their sports bar theme does not have a catering option, at least not at present. The manager of the new restaurant is interested in exploring a catering agreement with the hotel but nothing has been finalized and it will be several months before the catering piece is fully resolved. When it is, we are unsure of what the menu selections will be. The Quality Hotel knows that it needs some form of exclusive catering agreement for its meeting rooms and if the new restaurant is unable to provide those services they will have to contract with an outside caterer to be their exclusive representative for this space. The hotel has been flexible on what they will charge us for the meeting space we need, as long as we couple that with bringing in our own caterer for meals. Since relocating to another meeting site would likely involve bringing in our own caterer as well, based on what we are willing to pay, we have decided to continue meeting at the Quality Hotel and Suites, at least for the immediate future.

We have identified a caterer for the September, October and November meetings, after considering several possible vendors. The pricing options provided by everyone contacted confirmed our assumption that changes in our dinner format would be required if we were going to achieve our pricing objective. We weighted food quality as being more important than presentation when it came to making choices based on price. We also maintained our break even pricing philosophy when setting the meal price members would pay. To continue our format of a sit-down dinner with service labor, tablecloths, napkins, china and silverware had a fixed cost of \$8.84 per person, some caterers were more, before we even get to the issue of pricing for the food. Add to that \$5.00 per person for the Quality Hotel's room rental and we only have \$11.16 left for the dinner. To solve this dilemma, we have selected a dinner meeting like menu served in a buffet style format. You will go through a buffet line to get your food and it will be served on paper plates with plastic dinnerware. Cost will be \$25.00.

This format will buy us time, provide the least amount of disruption to the membership, and give us flexibility on our choice of caterers, if the Quality Hotel comes up with a better catering option. Later in the year we will revisit our choices and decide on the meeting format for the January to May meetings. Your feedback is encouraged and will assist us in making those decisions.

There are two additional points we would like to make to minimize problems switching over to the new format.

The first item relates to service. Contracting with an outside caterer requires that they bring everything they need for the meal with them. The option of running upstairs to get more of something, or an item that was overlooked, is no longer available. The caterer may not have guessed exactly right on the amount of coffee, tea, etc. our group consumes so please bear with us while questions of this kind are resolved. If you have concerns, or experience a shortage of something, please bring it to Bob's attention and he will work with the caterers to resolve the problem for the next meeting.

The last point relates to dinner reservations. They are more important than ever! Our contract with the caterer provides for only a small amount of overage on the quantities of food brought to the meeting site. If you show up without having made a reservation, it is likely that we will not have food for you, unless we have a few no-shows. And, as has been our practice for several years now, paying for the meal, if you have a reservation and do not show up, will be required if the Round Table has to pay for your meal.

**A Speaker's Only Fee to Be Added:** The recap provided above identifies some of the costs we incur to put on a meeting. One of the hidden costs has been room rental. In the past it was always in the meal price. Another way of saying that is that members who ate dinner paid for the rental of the room because a portion of the dinner fee was returned to the hotel by the caterer for the use of the room, tables, chairs, podium, screen, etc. Members who have arrived after the dinner for the business meeting and the speaker portion of the evening's activities have not, until now, borne any of this cost. Accordingly, effective with the September 2007 meeting, we will now be charging speaker only attendees (members, visitors and guests) a \$5.00 meeting fee to help us offset the expenses for the evening. We hope this will not discourage anyone from attending and that those affected will understand our need to distribute the cost of putting on our meetings evenly amongst all members. Treasurer Jim Stewart will be available to collect those fees at the check-in table. If you arrive late, and Jim has already found a seat to hear the speaker, we hope you will seek him out to pay your meeting fee.

**And While We Are Updating You On Expenses:** Everywhere you go things cost more. Since members seldom have an opportunity to see behind the scenes on what it costs to put on a Round Table meeting, we thought we would share some of those expenses with you.

The category of greatest expense, after the meal expenses are paid, is what we call Speaker Expenses. We manage the costs in this category by combining local speakers, both club and community, with selected regional and national speakers. In a typical year we will have 4-5 speakers with travel expenses out of our total of eight. The 2007-2008 speaker schedule is set-up that way with five presenters traveling in and three from the local area.

A few years back we used to pay \$250 to \$300 to fly a speaker in for a scheduled appearance. Today that cost might run us \$400 to \$500 for the same flight. And, in order to obtain that rate, we have to ask our speakers to fly into Dayton or one of the other regional airports because the Cincinnati Airport has the highest airfares in the country as reported in the July 26, 2007 *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Speaking to the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table requires a lot of flexibility and patience on the part of our speakers, especially when you consider that

no speaker's honorarium or appearance fee is paid. That's right; it has been a long standing tradition within the civil war community that Round Table speakers receive reimbursement for travel expenses only while away from home. We are extremely fortunate to have high quality speakers who are willing to donate their time to us, especially when you consider that it sometimes involves two days worth of travel time. That's quite a contribution and the highest compliment we can pay them is to have a large turnout for their presentation.

Even the cost of bringing in speakers who drive to Cincinnati has gone up. We used to reimburse our speakers .36 cents a mile for their travel expenses just a few years ago. That fee is now up to .485 cents a mile based on the standard IRS rate used to reimburse travelers for expenses incurred while traveling. Rooms for overnight stays were \$80.00 to \$85.00. For our April and May speakers we paid \$115.00 per night, plus meals in route, plus airport parking fees, if involved, etc., etc.

Now you might ask...why are they bringing this to my attention? Well, it's because our expenses have increased dramatically over the last several years and we haven't raised the annual dues rate in twenty-one years! Yes, the last time the dues rate was increased was 1986. **And, more importantly, we don't intend to raise the rate this year either.**

We bring this to your attention because the year end treasurer's report that Jim Stewart will provide at the September meeting will show a balance of only \$682.09 in the General Fund. That's the lowest in years. We highlighted some of the reasons why by providing insight into what is happening with speaker expenses. That same trend is evident in our other expense categories as well... like the printing and mailing of the monthly Newsletter, web site expenses, our miscellaneous supplies category, etc. Our practice of transferring excess General Fund monies over to the Preservation Fund, as we have at the last few September meetings, looks like a thing of the past given the rising costs we're facing to put on the monthly meetings.

Any increase, if one is implemented, would not take effect until **September of 2008**. We won't raise the dues, if we don't have to, but we wanted to alert you to the possibility of such an increase if the expenses for putting on quality monthly meetings continue to rise.

**Cost Savings Efforts:** We are currently focusing our cost saving efforts in two areas. The first involves our mileage reimbursement rate for speakers. We will contact several other Round Tables to see what rate they use to reimburse speakers when they travel by car. If our rate is higher than required we will adjust it accordingly. The second cost savings opportunity will require help from the membership. We currently have 15 members who receive the monthly Newsletter via both the ListServ (electronic copy) and the U. S. Post Office (paper copy). For those of you who are receiving our monthly updates in both formats, we ask that you discontinue the mailed-to-the home format, if at all possible. The savings on postage and printing costs will help us towards our goal of reducing fixed monthly expenses. Treasurer Jim Stewart will be approaching those members on both distribution lists during the check-in process for the September meeting to see if their name can be removed from the hard copy list. Any help these members can provide will be greatly appreciated.



**Quiz Master Retires:** After sixteen years of surprising, stumping and challenging us with the Civil War Quiz each month, Dan Reigle has informed us that he does not wish to continue developing a CCWRT Quiz for each meeting. The time he used to spend on preparing the quiz has been shifted over to handling the CCWRT website. We have a volunteer who has prepared a quiz for the September meeting but beyond that nothing else has been done. At this point, we do not intend to continue with a monthly quiz or discussion topics. However, if a member or group of members is interested in developing a quiz on an on-going basis, please notify John or Bob.

**Web Site Gets a New Look...Offers More Features: <http://www.cincinnatiwrt.org>**

If you have not visited the CCWRT website recently, please do so! The navigation procedures on the website have been redesigned to make it easier to get from one place to another, and to improve the “searchability” of the site. A Google search bar is now available on the front page to search the entire site. Several “News & Events” items for this summer are featured. The “Research & Information” section is being updated and expanded, with new articles by Dave Mowery, Jack Simon, and Dan Reigle.

Visit the website frequently to keep up to date on CCWRT news and local Civil War-related events. Better yet, give us information or an article (of any length from a paragraph to several pages) to publish on any topic related to the Civil War, especially regarding the greater Cincinnati region of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. Communications to Dan can go to <webmaster@cincinnatiwrt.org>.

***Remember...Only Seven More Weeks Until Our September Meeting!***

***We Hope To See You There.***

**Meeting Date: September 20, 2007**

**Place: Quality Hotel and Suites**

**Time: (6:00) Sign-in and Conversation**

**Dinner: (6:45) R. S. V. P. Signature Salad with Cabernet Vinaigrette Dressing, Sesame Chicken Breast with Ginger, Fresh Medley of Vegetables, Wild and Brown Rice, Apple Bavarian Pie**

**(7:45): Meeting and Program**

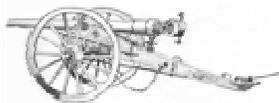
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**Speaker:** Barbara Butler Davis, author of *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family* (Indiana Historical Society Press, 2004). Mrs. Davis’s presentation will focus on the Civil War communications of the Ovid Butler family with 18-year old Scot Butler, who served for most of the war in the US Signal Corps. The Butlers were an active and prominent Indianapolis family. Scot’s father, Ovid, was founder of Butler University in 1855, a prosperous lawyer, noted newspaper publisher, a founder of the Indiana Republican party, a committed abolitionist, and founder of the Indiana branch of the Campbellite Disciples of Christ. As Alan Nolan wrote in his Foreword to the book, “Barbara Davis has presented us with an unusual book ... a family’s letters to the soldier. These letters from the soldier’s family contain the thoughts and activities of a committed Indiana Union family while Scot was at war.” We will have copies of the book available for sale at the meeting.

## FUTURE PRESENTATIONS:

### 2007-2008 Programs

October 18, 2007	Richard M. McMurry	<i>A Georgian Looks at Sherman</i>
November 15, 2007	Gary Ecelbarger	<i>The Unheralded Alliance: John 'Black Jack' Logan and Ulysses S. Grant</i>
January 17, 2008	Dave Smith & Tom Breiner: CCWRT	<i>Relieved of Command at Five Forks: G.K. Warren - Right or Wrong?</i>
February 21, 2008	Bob McLaurin: CCWRT	<i>The River Navy</i>
March 20, 2008	Gary Q. Johnson: CCWRT	<i>The CSS Hunley, A Weapon Ahead of Its Time</i>
April 17, 2008	Raymond Mulesky	<i>Thunder From a Clear Sky: Stovepipe Johnson's Confederate Raid on Newburgh, Indiana</i>
May 15, 2008	Joseph Reinhart	<i>August Willich's Gallant Dutchmen: Bullets, Bayonets and Beer"</i>



## ABOUT THE CINCINNATI CWRT:

**Membership** in the Cincinnati CWRT is open to anyone with an active interest in the American Civil War. Annual dues (prorated throughout the year to new members) are \$25 for a Regular Membership. This fee helps cover operating costs which include this newsletter, as well as speaker expenses. A Sustaining Member level of membership is also available for \$50 (single) and \$85 (couple). The purpose of this membership category is to encourage and recognize members who make additional contributions of \$25 or more, in addition to their annual dues in any fiscal year, to the objectives and programs of the Cincinnati Civil War Round Table. If you are joining for the first time, there is a one-time initiation fee of \$20.

**Dinner reservations** are required, and can be made prior to the reservations deadline either by an email to [reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org](mailto:reservations@cincinnati-cwrt.org) or by a phone call to the officer taking reservations for the meeting (whose name and number is listed on the header of the current *Canister*). **Meals** currently cost \$25. Menu selection will change with each meeting.

**Late Reservations and Walk-ins without a reservation:** Our ability to be flexible for late reservations or walk-ins is now restricted by the fact that the caterer will not be preparing food in the hotel kitchen, but will be transporting food from their facility to the hotel. Therefore, **Late Reservations** (after Sunday prior to the meeting) will be accepted conditionally, subject to the caterer's ability to honor a change in dinner count if received close to the meeting date. **Late Reservations and Walk-ins without a reservation** will only be able to have dinner if offset by cancellations or no-shows, or if the caterer determines that sufficient food is available.

**Late cancellations** may be made by email or phone. Since a cancellation after the Sunday deadline means that CCWRT has guaranteed payment to the caterer for the reserved number of meals, the Treasurer will review the number of late cancellations and late reservations for every meeting. If a late cancellation results in CCWRT's being required to pay for an extra meal, the person making the late cancellation will be expected to pay for the dinner. **No-shows** who have a dinner reservation but do not attend or cancel will also be expected to pay for the dinner.

**Meetings** are held the third Thursday of the month at the Quality Hotel and Suites, 4747 Montgomery Road, Norwood, Ohio (**telephone 513-351-6000**). If traveling Interstate 75, exit at Exit #7, Ohio 562 (The Norwood Lateral) and travel east to the Montgomery Road exit. After exiting, "double-back" by turning left across the bridge, turning left again after the bridge and turning left at the light onto Montgomery. If coming from Interstate 71, also exit at Exit #7, Ohio 562 (The Norwood Lateral) and go west to the Montgomery Road exit. After exiting, continue straight to the light and turn left onto Montgomery. The Quality is on the right, and there is plenty of free parking.



**CINCINNATI CWRT OFFICERS:**

President	John W. Linnenberg	513-922-3999 (h) 513-607-4002 (c)	<a href="mailto:jw.linnenberg@gte.net">jw.linnenberg@gte.net</a>
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Membership & Publicity Chair	Jim Chaney	859-731-0594 (h)	<a href="mailto:jchaney@davmail.org">jchaney@davmail.org</a>
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Trustee (2007-2009)	Jack Simon	513-574-0017 (h)	<a href="mailto:jackpsimon@aol.com">jackpsimon@aol.com</a>

**Committees:**

Preservation Projects	Open		
Webmaster	Dan Reigle	513-777-9255 (h)	<a href="mailto:DReigle@cinci.rr.com">DReigle@cinci.rr.com</a>
Photographer	Jim Chaney	859-731-0594 (h)	<a href="mailto:jchaney@davmail.org">jchaney@davmail.org</a>
CCWRT ListServ	John Steiner	513-528-3350 (h)	<a href="mailto:jcsneuro@fuse.net">jcsneuro@fuse.net</a>

