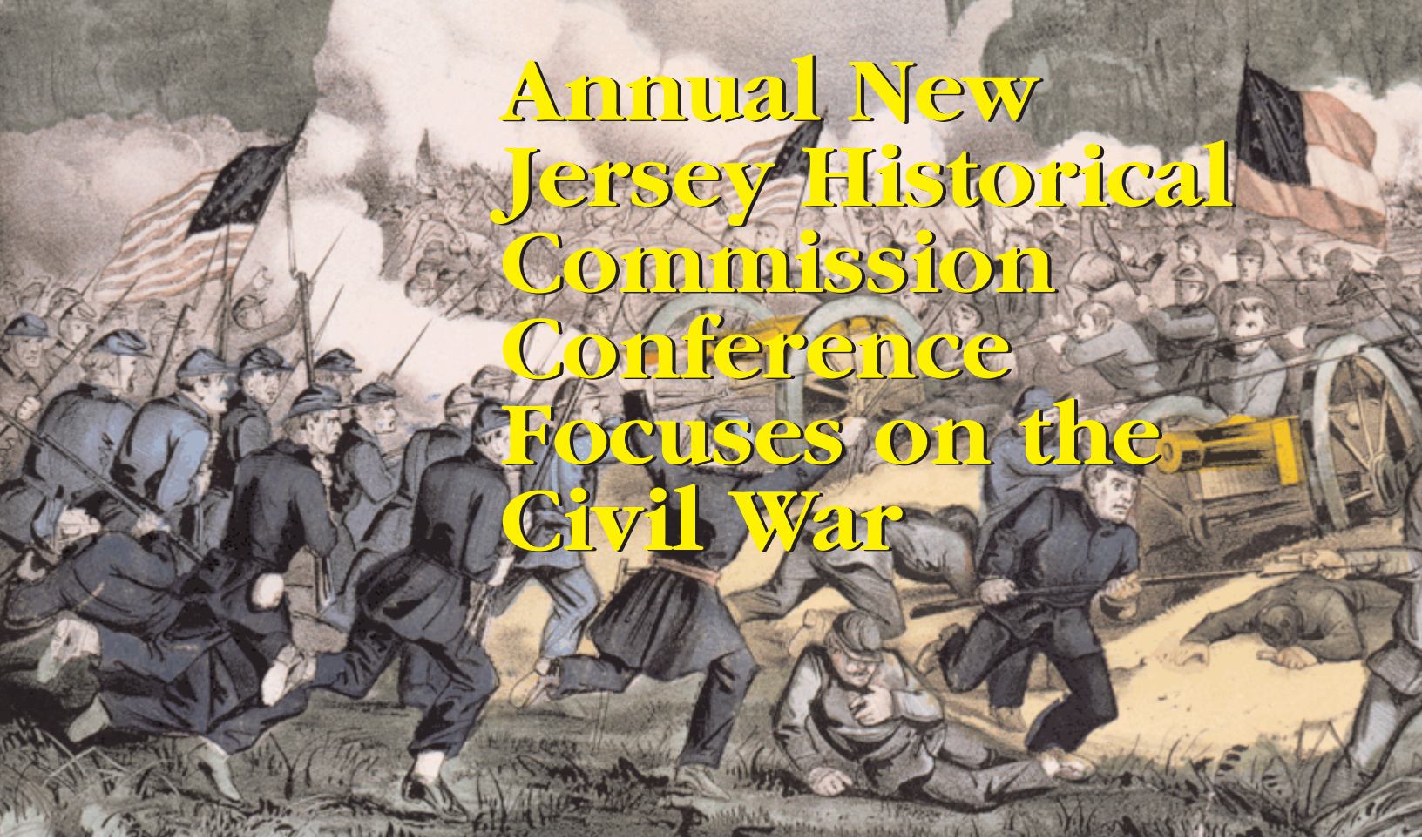

Annual New Jersey Historical Commission Conference Focuses on the Civil War

by
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pictures courtesy New Jersey State Archives; Department of State

In keeping with the 150th anniversary of that tragic seminal American conflict, the subject for the New Jersey Historical Commission's 28th Annual Conference was "New Jersey in the Crucible of the Civil War." The conference, co-sponsored by the Historical Society of Princeton, the New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association, the New Jersey Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, the New Jersey State Archives and the Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, was held at Princeton University's McDonnell Hall on November 19, 2011.

Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History, Columbia University, delivered the keynote address, based on his Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. Foner wove together the complex social, political and economic themes that influenced the evolution of Lincoln's thought on the subject and presented them in a coherent, easily understood (and good humored) manner, leading several attendees to comment that his presentation was "the best keynote address ever."

Foner was followed by Professor Larry Greene of Seton Hall University, who highlighted the attitudes of New Jersey politicians and voters on the slavery issue and examined and

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explained the negative response of Governor Joel Parker and other conservative Democrats in the state to the Emancipation Proclamation and other aspects of Lincoln's policies.

The morning session concluded with the presentation of awards for contributions to the understanding of and education of the public in New Jersey history. The Richard J. Hughes Award, named for the former governor, went to James. F. Turk of Mullica Hill for his long service in the museum and education fields. Daniel Sidorick of Maple Shade received the Richard P. McCormick Prize for his book, *Condensed Capitalism: Campbell Soup and the Pursuit of Cheap Production in the Twentieth Century,* which focused on labor practices in the company's Camden operations.

Commission Awards of Recognition were presented to David Fowler of New Brunswick, for his work on New Jersey subjects as Research Director of the David Library of the American Revolution and project historian at Rutgers University Special Collections, Robert Hunter of Haddon Heights for his significant contributions to historic preservation and Haddon Heights history, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms in Morris Plains for that institution's leadership in raising the public's awareness of the Progressive era and to this writer for his contributions to

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the understanding of New Jersey's military history.

Afternoon sessions included "Researching Your Community's Civil War Heritage," moderated by Sara Cureton of the Historical Commission with presentations by Stephen D. Glazer of the New Jersey Sesquicentennial Committee and author of the book of the same name and Catherine Medich of the Division of Archives and Records Management; "The Homefront," moderated by Marc Mappen and featuring presentations by Bernadette M. Rogoff of the Monmouth County Historical Association and W. Barksdale Maynard; "Women, Medicine and the Civil War," moderated by Maxine Lurie with presenters Sandra Moss and Carol Berkin, and "The Soldier Experience" moderated by Jonathan Lurie, with David Martin of the Peddie School and the New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association, Leonard Bussanich and Diane Miller exploring the subjects of New Jersey's generals and the impact of the war upon the men who fought it.

The Conference closed with a plenary lecture by Professor Clement A. Price of Rutgers University, who spoke on African Americans and the Civil War.

Throughout the day, attendees visited the informational displays set up by a number of New Jersey historical associa-

Professor Clement A. Price of Rutgers University, spoke on African-Americans and the Civil War.

(below) The New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association

tions, including Cape May's Historic Cold Spring Village, the Princeton Battlefield Society, the New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association and its Sesquicentennial Committee and others, all of which drew considerable attention and much lively conversation. It was, overall, a great day for the Commission and a great day for New Jersey history.

Ron Becker (right) of Rutgers University's Special Collections and University Archives was among the meny vendors.