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The Battle Cry

March 2002

Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
 Founded 1961, <http://sacramentocwrt.com/>



President's Message

Apart from a few more people, Saturday night at the Sudwerk is about like Wednesday night! Thanks to Ray Bisio for filling in with a great presentation on Gettysburg! Talk about knowing your subject matter! A couple of items relating to Ray (1) he will return to talk to us again in August and (2) he is writing a book on General Meade of Gettysburg fame that will be out shortly. My understanding is that Ray believes history has thus far undervalued the contributions that Meade made toward the Union victory.

Don't forget the Gibson Ranch Re-enactment on April 26-28th! I have a list of volunteers for Friday's school program, but can use more people power if your Friday the 26th becomes available. I will also be recruiting volunteers to staff our booth on Saturday and Sunday before long.

At the board meeting this week we decided to slightly alter the raffle process. You have no doubt noticed that it has become increasingly difficult after adjournment of the meeting to regain the attention of the group to conduct the drawings. This is understandable, but is not conducive to affording deserved attention to the raffle. We decided to give a try at holding the drawings before adjournment from the podium in the front of the room. Please play along and give this new approach a fair evaluation.

The next muster is on Wednesday, March 27th, at the usual time and place. Our good friend from the South Bay CWRT, Phil Avila, will provide the program discussing the 54th Massachusetts. He has been doing considerable research and we'll get the full benefit of it all! See you there!

Paul Ruud, President

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2002
 Sudwerk Restaurant, 1375 Exposition Boulevard, Sacramento

ATTENDANCE - 47

MEMBERS – 37

Paul Ruud, President	Carol Breiter	Dennis Kohlman	John Passerello
George Foxworth, Treas.	Steve Breiter	Garda Kohlman	Elvin Roach
Walt Bittle, Sec.	Jim Connally	Gatha Lee	Keith Roberts
Dudley Albrecht	Ruth Connally	Earl Martin	Patty Ruud
Claudia Andres	Ardith Cnota	Virginia Martin	Rudy Schafer
Jim Armstrong	Mitch Cnota	Al McKim	Clayton Williams
Mark Aulman	Jon Courtway	Sherran McKim	Bob Williams
Mary Aulman	Bill Donaldson	Jim Middleton	
Roy Bishop	Lydia Donaldson	Genevieve Mooney	
Fred Bohmfalk	Ken Kitchen	Bev Passerello	

GUESTS – 10

Phil Avila
Bill Fignshu
P.J. Gurindo
Ted Hansen
Ken Lentz
Mary Lou Lentz
Mary Muttera
Phil Wallace
John Waller
Randy Wright

1. The meeting was called to order by President Ruud, who reviewed this day in history. New members and guests were introduced and welcomed. The January minutes were approved as printed. Treasurer Foxworth reported a current balance of \$1558.74, of which \$82 was raised by the January raffle.

2. Program – Ray Bisio, resident of Barstow and long-time volunteer guide at Gettysburg roused the group with an excellent presentation of “Three Days That Changed the World” – those three days being July 1, 2, and 3 of 1863. Referring to Gettysburg as “The Crown Jewel of the National Military Parks”, Mr. Bisio lead us up to, through, and beyond the momentous battle where Lee was at his worst and Meade at his best. There were lots of questions and answers, and Mr. Bisio left us with a much better understanding of the Battle of Gettysburg. Thanks, Ray – and we appreciate your offer to return.

3. Committee/Activity Reports

- a. Dudley Albrecht commented on the upcoming premiere of *We Were Soldiers* and plans that are in the works for *Gods and Generals*.
- b. Ken Kitchen spoke on behalf of the Military Museum and the fundraiser at Mather Hospital.
- c. Mitch Cnota is working on a group tour to historical sites in the Benicia area.
- d. Carol Breiter is putting together a group tour of the *USS Hornet*, probably in May.

4. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 by President Ruud. The monthly raffle followed.

Walt Bittle

Secretary

Next Regular Meeting

Sudwerk Restaurant

Wednesday, March 27, 2002

Dinner (optional) at 6 pm – Meeting at 7 pm

Program: Colonel Robert Gould Shaw by Phil Avila

Book Review

Wilkinson, Warren & Steven E. Woodworth. **A Scythe of Fire: A Civil War Story of the Eighth Georgia Infantry Regiment.** Morrow/Harper Collins (352 pp.) March 2002 ISBN 0-380-97752-4 \$27.95.

This is the story of a Georgia Confederate regiment told from the viewpoint of the common soldier. The sources are almost totally from letters, diaries and newspaper articles written by the soldiers. This book will give you a feel of how regular soldiers felt and how the feelings changed over time. Although this unit mustered in 1861 and fought through most of the war, the period after Gettysburg is covered in two chapters while the first two years took eight chapters. As the war progressed, more and more of the sources of this book were killed or wounded. The authors were reduced to fewer sources and some of the flavor was lost. I considered the first two years coverage to be superior and it gives you a real idea how ordinary soldiers reacted. Don't expect information on any of the generals. The higher an officer's rank the less he is mentioned. They were under Longstreet but this is not a book about him. The proud regiment of near a thousand men in 1861 were a shadow of just over a hundred at Appomattox. This is a moving book about real people.

FOOD IN THE SOUTH

As in the North, Southerners' diets were based on the traditional fare of their English, Irish and German predecessors, and influenced by the large African-American population and crops that flourished in the region, such as rice and okra.

Largely because of the Union blockade and eventually because U.S.

troops were marching through the Confederacy and occupying parts of it, food shortages began to affect Southerners early in the war, and grew acute as it progressed. A reduced ability to produce food because so many men and animals had been sent to the armies, along with wastage caused by raids and invasion, exacerbated these shortages.

Shortages tended to be the very worst in urban areas, which produced little food on their own and had relatively large, concentrated populations (populations that were often swelled by the influx of refugees from areas directly affected by the war). As the Confederacy's infrastructure deteriorated, the ability to transport food into the cities eroded. In rural areas, shortages were also felt, especially in areas touched directly by the war. However, shortages tended to be less devastating to people already accustomed to foraging, hunting and growing their own food.

Southern blacks had a traditional diet rather different from their masters, and had long become accustomed to making the most of lesser cuts of meat and second-rate produce. As shortages took their toll on the Confederacy, the diet of whites shifted more and more toward the sorts of dishes blacks had traditionally eaten.

Varhola, Michael J. *EVERYDAY LIFE DURING THE CIVIL WAR*, 1999. p 80.

HEAD WOUND FROM A CANNON BALL

Captain Joe Desha was born in Harrison County, Kentucky, May 22, 1833, and died May 8, 1902. He raised the first company in Kentucky for the Confederacy that was raised in the "neutral" state. They went by the L&N railroad to Nashville, from there to Virginia and became part of the First Kentucky Regiment.

In an engagement at Drainesville, Virginia, he was severely wounded in the shoulder, his left arm crushed below the elbow, rendering it almost useless the rest of his life; but the most remarkable of his many wounds was one in the head at Murfreesboro by a cannon ball, which left him apparently dead. While being carried from the field as dead he sat upright on the litter and said: "What does this mean, boys? What's the matter?" Some of his men about him cried with joy, and said: "Captain, we thought you were dead!" He stood up and felt himself, and said: "I am all right I believe," and went back to the line.

Afterwards, while in Richmond and passing the residence of President Davis, the President and his private secretary, Col. William Preston Johnson, saw the officer, and the latter mentioned that it was Captain Desha, of Kentucky, when the President said: "Call him back; I want to see him." He was introduced to President Davis, who said: "Captain, I wanted to see the only man ever struck in the head with a cannon ball and not killed!" The President asked him about the effects of it and Desha replied: "I believe about the only bad effects I sustained by it was the loss of a fine pistol dropped from my belt when the boys were carrying me off the field." Mr. Davis excused himself for a few min-

utes, and returned with a new pistol in his hand, making it a gift to replace the lost weapon.

CONDOLENCES

Our hearts go out to Kit Knight, our Vice-President, in her grief over the loss of her only brother, Art Duell. We offer our sympathy to her parents on their loss.

A SOUTHERN VIEW

In the *Richmond Examiner* after the battle of Perryville:
 "Of genius, military or civil, [Bragg] has none. Even in judgment and sagacity, for large affairs he is notoriously deficient. As Commander-in-chief, he is worse than inexperienced, for he has grown old and hardened in a subaltern position of a regular army. With an iron heart and iron hand and a wooden head, his failure in a position where the highest intellectual facilities were demanded was predestined."

Quoted in Harris, Brayton *BLUE & GRAY IN BLACK & WHITE*, 1999 p 175

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR, 1863

On the first day this seminary was a Union hospital. On the second day we became a hospital for wounded Confederate troops. By the third day, bleeding, dying men from both armies were here. Boys who were too young to be away from home and old men who shouldn't have been anywhere but home. Years ago, Father Francis put a sign in the Gettysburg cemetery warning there would be a five dollar fine for discharging a gun. Cannons were 16 yards apart and blew up headstones. Over 150,000 soldiers ground this grassy slope to jelly. A blood jelly. I watched the mangled dead be freshly torn apart by shells that screamed and thudded. A leg wearing blue pants and an untied boot flew past me. The air was full of pieces of men and horses. The clangor was heard in Baltimore, 60 miles away. Through the smoke, Father shouted, "The lucky ones are unconscious." Trembling in horror and amazement, we saw the moon hanging in a splintered tree as a man was hurled 10 feet up. It was the fourth morn before we heard that great fragile hush that falls over a muted battlefield.

---**Kit Knight**---

Upcoming Meeting

April 24th: "Reconstruction the Revolution that Went Backwards." by Dan Defoe, Professor of History, Sierra Community College. Dan starts his presentation with Lincoln's formulation of plans initiated after Gettysburg and goes on from there into what did and didn't happen!

INSTANT COFFEE

Coffee was high on the list of supplies most in demand by soldiers. Many Confederates were quickly forced to adopt crude substitutes, but Union soldiers insisted on the real thing. Northern stockpiles of coffee beans were usually adequate to meet the demand, but many commanders balked at letting their men carry the bulky commodity.

Wholesale merchants in a major port city, probably Philadelphia, devised what they considered to be a solution to the coffee problem. Beans were ground to a fine powder, then mixed with sugar and milk to form a thick paste. Easily portable and not prone to spoilage, a spoonful of paste and a cup of hot water generated a cup of coffee that a thirsty soldier would drink eagerly. Few civilians would today willingly down the brew, but it was this paste that presaged all modern forms of instant - or dehydrated - coffee.

Perhaps in late 1861, but certainly by mid-1862, the Cincinnati lithographic firm of Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co. began to issue a series of portraits of Civil War figures: politicians as well as military and naval officers. These prints, which the firm continued to issue at least as late as 1864, were of a similar type to the popular portraits issued by other firms such as Currier & Ives (cf. above). While of a familiar type of print, though, these Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co. are quite unlike the prints by other publishers in one salient feature.



As discussed in Milt Kaplan's "Heads of States," (*Winterthur Portfolio* 6. Charlottesville, 1970 Pp. 135-150.) prints of different figures share the same, or very similar backgrounds, with the identical horses, landscapes, troops, ships, desks, and so forth. [Cf. illustrations of Gens. Franklin (left) and Fremont (right)] While some of the backgrounds the firm used appear only in one print, others are shared by between three and five figures, and one has as many as seven different



generals sharing it. Overall, the firm issued seventy-nine different prints of sixty-nine different Union politicians and officers. The Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co. prints were issued separately for those in the mid-west who wanted to have these images of Union heroes and they have also been found in bound portfolios. However they are found, they are very rare and a fascinating part of Civil War history. For further information, see Mark E. Neely Jr. & Harold Holzer's *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War North*. (Chapel Hill, 2000.)

Book Review

As a tour guide (and former teacher), I am particularly sensitive about how history is presented, and I try not to pass on myths, legends, and half-truths. Consequently, there are two books in my library I would not part with, both by the same author: James W. Loewen. The first is titled *Lies My Teacher Told Me (Everything Your History Textbook Got Wrong)*. Loewen spent two years at the Smithsonian surveying twelve leading textbooks. He provides numerous examples from those texts that distort, lie about, or just gloss over important events in American history – including the Civil War.

The other book I am recommending is *Lies Across America (What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong)*. In this book, Loewen looks at more than one hundred sites where history is interpreted – on the monuments and plaques we erect, as well as what the tour guides are instructed to say and not to say. Sacramento and John Sutter get raked over the coals rather early in the book; then Loewen proceeds eastward with great emphasis on the Civil War and how it is portrayed. [Loewen actually visited every state historical marker in 34 states. Texas, however, bested him: they have almost 12,000 state markers – more than the rest of the country combined!]

These are remarkable books, and they should be required reading in every history class. I have read each of them at least twice and keep them handy as reference sources. Do yourself a favor – read them both early and often. (Available in paperback.)

by Walt Bittle

Sherman and His Generals



In 1865, shortly after the war ended, Mathew Brady offered to photograph William Tecumseh Sherman along with all of his generals. According to Brady, Sherman doubted that his staff would remain in Washington for the picture, but with characteristic energy the photographer appointed an hour and notified all seven men (Oliver Otis Howard, John A. Logan, William B. Hazen, Jefferson C. Davis, Henry Warner Slocum, Joseph A. Mower, and Francis P. Blair). Blair alone missed the sitting, and he is missing from the first set of photographs, as shown here. But Brady arranged to photograph him separately and added him to later versions of the portrait by pasting Blair's image onto an existing photograph, exhibited here for the first time. Brady then photographed the new, complete picture in order to make a negative that recorded Sherman's entire staff, and used it to print many copies of Sherman and His Generals.

Atlanta Conference

Keep in mind the conference held in Fresno in Nov. 2002 will be on the Atlanta Campaign. Be sure to mark your calendars for Veteran's Day weekend. Although the campaign did not begin until May 1864. Sherman was gathering his army and stockpiling supplies in March and April. The battles of Resaca, New Hope Church and Kennesaw Mt. all took place in May 1864, 138 years ago. By July, Peach Tree Creek and Ezra Church were fought while August saw Jonesboro and Sherman entered Atlanta in early September. We will try to give short summaries of some of these battles in the next few months.

The Battle Cry Editor—This publication is a monthly newsletter (except December) of the Sacramento CWRT. Please submit items to me for publication at the Board of Directors meeting of each month or e-mail <BattleCryEditor@aol.com> Check the web site <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org/> for past newsletter editions.

Reenactors & Skirmisher WEB SITES

Reenactors of the American Civil War

[Http://www.home.inreach.com/mavgw/racwschedule.htm](http://www.home.inreach.com/mavgw/racwschedule.htm)

American Civil War Association

http://www.angelfire.com/sys/popup_source.shtml?Category=

Civil War Skirmish Association

<http://www.calweb.com/~arline/Events.html>

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