



Battle Cry

Founded 1961,
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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President's Message:

Well, here we are into another year of Sacramento Civil War interest. I moved into the area in 2005 from Simi Valley where I was very involved with the West San Fernando Valley Round Table. I asked the president there who I should contact up here and he sent me directly to Don. I was here for about a year and was asked to be a member-at-large working with the Board. I have found it all immensely rewarding, including the conferences, and the Gibson Ranch involvement.

I didn't realize how much the Round-tables are woven into the fabric of the state. I have been interested in our Civil War for a long time but didn't know there were "birds of a feather" until I discovered the West Valley Round Table.

Looking ahead from the November West Coast Conference, we had another great presentation from Paul Ruud in December that was both entertaining and informing. In January we'll have William Burg telling us about "California in the Civil War." Dennis Kohlmann, our Program Chairman is developing another wonderful agenda for 2012.

We can expect another year of interesting programs as our Board continues to support our efforts.

Bob Hanley, President

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
Wednesday, December 14, 2011
HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO

ATTENDANCE – 32

MEMBERS – 28

Silver N. Williams, Vice President
George W. Foxworth, Treasurer
James M. Armstrong
George D. Beitzel
Joan M. Beitzel
Roy Bishop
Rose Browne
James P. Cress
Robert E. Hanley
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Wayne J. Henley
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Pam Hubbard
James Juanitas

Dennis Kohlmann
Lowell L. Lardie
Anne M. Peasley
Rick A. Peasley
Paul G. Ruud, IPP
Nancy B. Samuelson
Robert Schroeder
Nicholas Scivoletto
Richard Sickert
Roxanne E. Spizzirri
James F. Taff
Robert A. Williams
Susan E. Williams
John V. Zasso

GUESTS – 4

Mike Keating
Larry Spizzirri
Richard Spizzirri
David Wilkening

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. by Vice President Silver Williams. President Don Hayden and Scottie Hayden are on vacation in the Caribbean. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by John Zasso.
2. Christmas cake and coffee were served.
3. Vice President Williams welcomed members and guests.
4. Treasurer George W. Foxworth accepted membership renewals and dues of \$20.00 for 2012.
5. Vice President Williams, in stepping down from her position, warmly acknowledged the Board members and encouraged all members to volunteer for positions on the Board.
6. Vice President Williams then introduced the speaker, Immediate Past President (IPP) Paul Ruud.
7. Immediate Past President Ruud announced that the Sacramento Civil War Round Table has purchased a PowerPoint projector for members use.
8. Immediate Past President Ruud skillfully demonstrated the use of the new equipment in his lecture “What Did They Do After the Civil War.” He spoke on John Wesley Powell, William McKinley, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. All served in the War and later gained national fame. Powell was the first to descend the Grand Canyon by boat and became the second director of the United States Geological Survey. McKinley became the 25th President of the United States, the last Civil War veteran to serve as President. Holmes became a law professor at Harvard Law School and in 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to the United States’ Supreme Court. Lively questions and answers followed the presentation.
9. Vice President Williams thanked Immediate Past President Ruud for his talk and conferred his new title President Emeritus.
10. John Zasso sold additional raffle tickets and read the numbers.
11. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Susan E. Williams, Acting for Secretary Edie Keister

Treasurer’s Report

The cash balance following the December 14, 2011 meeting was \$2,034.30. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$57.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Editors note: In this and future issues of *Battle Cry*, the editor has committed to providing readers a more in-depth look at selected topics, albeit in the limited space provided. This month, we take a look at Mary Chesnut with an essay by Catherine Clinton, an extract from Chesnut's diary regarding the firing on Fort Sumter, and available resources for further reading.

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Queen Bee of the Confederacy

by Catherine Clinton

(*New York Times*, May 26, 2011)

When I first encountered Mary Chesnut as a starting point for exploring the American Civil War while an undergraduate at Harvard, I could not have been more fortunate. She provided a riveting antidote to the “fiddle-dee-dee” school of southern womanhood on which I had been weaned as a teenager in the 1960s. Although Scarlett O’Hara was a beguiling screen heroine, Mary Boykin Chesnut was a flesh and blood Rebel, whose wartime scribbling brought to life intimate and important aspects of southern culture. Since its publication in 1905, Chesnut’s diary has become compelling reading. For example here, in an entry about “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”:

But what do you say to this — to a magnate who runs a hideous black harem with its consequences, under the same roof with his lovely white wife and his beautiful and accomplished daughters? He holds his head high and poses as the model of all human virtues to these poor women whom God and the laws have given him. You see, Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot. She makes Legree a bachelor.

Her fiery pronouncements still send chills up my spine, after all these years.

Chesnut’s wartime chronicles began with Lincoln’s election in November 1860, but gathered urgency and momentum when she prayed for the safety of her husband, who rowed out in darkness in Charleston Harbor on April 11th, 1861, delivering Jefferson Davis’s demand for the evacuation of Union troops.

When Confederates began to shell the federal arsenal, Mary Chesnut headed to a rooftop to watch Fort Sumter in the distance. She later recounted an amusing anecdote about the chimney catching her dress on fire. Early on, she encountered a woman who blamed South Carolina’s “mischief” for starting the war. Chesnut let this insult pass, as [she] “told me she was a successful writer in the magazines of the day, but when I found she used ‘incredible’ for ‘incredulous,’ ... I left her incredible and I remained incredulous.”

Secession dramatically altered Chesnut’s way of life, as well as her perspective. Slaveholding women of her generation were catapulted out of their cozy worlds of privilege, much like Ada Monroe in “Cold Mountain.” Chesnut’s vivid account provides bracing highlights of war’s indelible impact.



Born the child of a prominent South Carolina politician, she was given the best education money could buy, at Madame Talvande’s French School for Young Ladies in Charleston. There Chesnut often exceeded Madame’s high standards, excelling in particular in the fine art of repartee. She left school at 17 and wed James Chesnut, who would assume the Senate seat her father once held. Thereafter she could

barely contain her contempt for bucolic plantation routines, preferring the pleasures of urban salons.

Chesnut adored the power politics of Washington and threw her energies into her husband's career. Her childlessness weighed heavily on her, but the Chesnuts were devoted to each other. When she came home late from a party and found her husband on his own, she "put on [her] dressing-gown and scrambled some eggs, etc. there on our own fire. And with our feet on the fender and the small supper table between us, we enjoyed the supper and glorious gossip." Chesnut remained a brilliant insider at Davis's palace court in Richmond throughout the war, however galled that her gender meant she could only press her nose against the glass.



(Mulberry Plantation)

At the same time, her iconoclastic exceptionalism was reflected in her observations: "We try our soldiers to see if they are hot enough before we enlist them. If, when water is thrown on them they do not sizz, they won't do; their patriotism is too cool." Chesnut regularly assumed the role of Cassandra, warning that because of the North's Polonius-like "hooks of steel," the South was slated to become "an unwilling bride."

She muses about liberty and slavery — bandied about in the abstract — while the enslaved, those "sphinxes" of whom she complains, make less frequent appearances. But her razor-sharp observations are

slowly replaced by more sobering recognition of falling fortunes: "A very haughty and highly painted dame greeted me at the hotel. 'No room,' said she. 'Who are you?' I gave my name. 'Try something else,' said she. 'Mrs. Chesnut don't travel round by herself with no servants and no nothing.'"

Besides the disappearance of the woman she once was, she mourns other losses: "Our best and bravest are under the sod; we shall have to wait till another generation grows up. Here we stand, despair in our hearts." She invoked Medea, symbolizing both female endurance and her own resilience. But her faith and passion were, in the end, not enough.

Following Confederate surrender and her husband's escape from the gallows, Chesnut struggled to get her war chronicles into print. Chesnut's process of revising her journals stretched from years into decades, and she never managed to publish her memoir. Before her death in 1886, she entrusted the unfinished manuscript to her friend Isabella Martin, who was able to interest a New York publisher in the project. Editors whittled down the more than a million words she left behind into a manageable fraction of the original, creating a "Diary from Dixie," as the first serialization was called in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Ever since its 1905 appearance, Chesnut's book has stayed in print, in large part because her astute commentaries remain so compelling:

The Yankees, since the war has begun, have discovered it is to free the slaves that they are fighting. So their cause is noble ... we bear the ban of slavery; they get all the money. Cotton pays everybody who handles it, sells it, manufactures it, but rarely pays the man who grows it... They grew rich. We grew poor.

Her observations about status make for likewise intriguing reading:

You know how women sell themselves and are sold in marriage from queens downward eh? You know

***what the Bible says about slavery and marriage;
poor women! Poor slaves!***

Indeed, Chesnut's writing provides a renewable energy source for those of us seeking to better understand the Confederate experience. Each rising generation of scholars finds her work difficult to pin down: is it a diary or a novel? Reminiscences or a memoir? An apologia or unique hybrid? In any case, readers find her work hard to put down, as Chesnut has become the most cited eyewitness to the Civil War era, whose work, William Styron declared, offers "a great epic drama of our greatest national tragedy."

Catherine Clinton holds a chair in U.S. history at Queen's University Belfast where she teaches southern history, women's history, African American history and the history of the Civil War. She is the author or editor of more than two dozen books and her biographies include "Mrs. Lincoln: A Life," "Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom" and Fanny Kemble's "Civil Wars." She is on the advisory committee of Ford's Theatre and divides her time between Northern Ireland and Washington, D.C.



A Diary From Dixie:

Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, 1823-1886

April 12th, 1861 - Anderson will not capitulate. Yesterday's was the merriest, maddest dinner we have had yet. Men were audaciously wise and witty. We had an unspoken foreboding that it was to be our last pleasant meeting. Mr. Miles dined with us to-day. Mrs. Henry King rushed in saying, "The news, I come for the latest news. All the men of the King family are on the Island," of which fact she seemed proud.

While she was here our peace negotiator, or envoy, came in - that is, Mr. Chesnut returned. His interview with Colonel Anderson had been deeply interesting, but Mr. Chesnut was not inclined to be communicative. He wanted his dinner. He felt for Anderson and had telegraphed to President Davis for instructions - what answer to give Anderson, etc. He

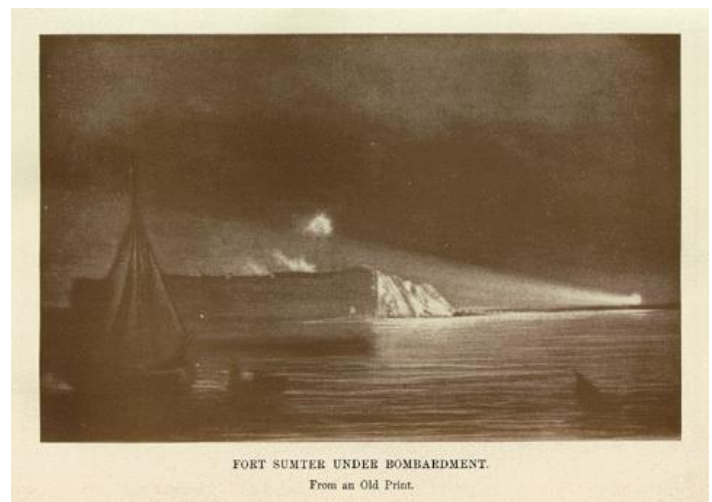
has now gone back to Fort Sumter with additional instructions. When they were about to leave the wharf A. H. Boykin sprang into the boat in great excitement. He thought himself ill-used, with a likelihood of fighting and he to be left behind!

I do not pretend to go to sleep. How can I? If Anderson does not accept terms at four, the orders are, he shall be fired upon. I count four, St. Michael's bells chime out and I begin to hope. At half-past four the heavy booming of a cannon. I sprang out of bed, and on my knees prostrate I prayed as I never prayed before.

There was a sound of stir all over the house, pattering of feet in the corridors. All seemed hurrying one way. I put on my double-gown and a shawl and went, too. It was to the housetop. The shells were bursting. In the dark I heard a man say, "Waste of ammunition." I knew my husband was rowing about in a boat somewhere in that dark bay, and that the shells were roofing it over, bursting toward the fort. If Anderson was obstinate, Colonel

Chesnut was to order the fort on one side to open fire. Certainly fire had begun. The regular roar of the cannon, there it was. And who could tell what each volley accomplished of death and destruction?

The women were wild there on the housetop. Prayers came from the women and imprecations from the men. And then a shell would light up the scene. To-night they say the forces are to attempt to land. We watched up there, and everybody wondered that Fort Sumter did not fire a shot.



FORT SUMTER UNDER BOMBARDMENT.
From an Old Print.

To-day Miles and Manning, colonels now, aides to Beauregard, dined with us. The latter hoped I would keep the peace. I gave him only good words, for he was to be under fire all day and night, down in the bay carrying orders, etc.

Last night, or this morning truly, up on the housetop I was so weak and weary I sat down on something that looked like a black stool. "Get up, you foolish woman. Your dress is on fire," cried a man. And he put me out. I was on a chimney and the sparks had caught my clothes. Susan Preston and Mr. Venable then came up. But my fire had been extinguished before it burst out into a regular blaze.

Do you know, after all that noise and our tears and prayers, nobody has been hurt; sound and fury signifying nothing - a delusion and a snare.

Louisa Hamilton came here now. This is a sort of news center. Jack Hamilton, her handsome young husband, has all the credit of a famous battery, which is made of railroad iron. Mr. Petigru calls it the boomerang, because it throws the balls back the way they came; so Lou Hamilton tells us. During her first marriage, she had no children; hence the value of this lately achieved baby. To divert Louisa from the glories of "the Battery," of which she raves, we asked if the baby could talk yet. "No, not exactly, but he imitates the big gun when he hears that.

He claps his hands and cries 'Boom, boom.' " Her mind is distinctly occupied by three things: Lieutenant Hamilton, whom she calls "Randolph," the baby, and the big gun, and it refuses to hold more.

Pryor, of Virginia, spoke from the piazza of the Charleston hotel. I asked what he said. An irreverent woman replied: "Oh, they all say the same thing, but he made great play with that long hair of his, which he is always tossing aside!"

Somebody came in just now and reported Colonel Chesnut asleep on the sofa in General Beauregard's room. After two such nights he must be so tired as to be able to sleep anywhere.

Just bade farewell to Langdon Cheves. He is forced to go home and leave this interesting place. Says he feels like the man that was not killed at Thermopylae. I think he said that unfortunate had to

hang himself when he got home for very shame. Maybe he fell on his sword, which was the strictly classic way of ending matters.

I do not wonder at Louisa Hamilton's baby; we hear nothing, can listen to nothing; boom, boom goes the cannon all the time. The nervous strain is awful, alone in this darkened room. "Richmond and Washington ablaze," say the papers - blazing with excitement. Why not? To us these last days' events seem frightfully great. We were all women on that iron balcony. Men are only seen at a distance now. Stark Means, marching under the piazza at the head of his regiment, held his cap in his hand all the time he was in sight. Mrs. Means was leaning over and looking with tearful eyes, when an unknown creature asked, "Why did he take his hat off?" Mrs. Means stood straight up and said: "He did that in honor of his mother; he saw me." She is a proud mother, and at the same time most unhappy. Her lovely daughter Emma is dying in there, before her eyes, of consumption. At that moment I am sure Mrs. Means had a spasm of the heart; at least, she looked as I feel sometimes. She took my arm and we came in.

Reprinted from electronic version of Chesnut's Diary found at:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/maryches.html>

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Did You Know?

Tradition holds that eating black-eyed peas on New Year's Day brings good luck the whole year around. Some say the bean's lucky streak dates back to the pharaohs of Egypt. Others claim it started in Vicksburg, Virginia, during the Civil War when the town ran out of food while under siege, and the inhabitants were lucky enough to discover cow peas (better known today as black-eyed peas) to provide sustenance.

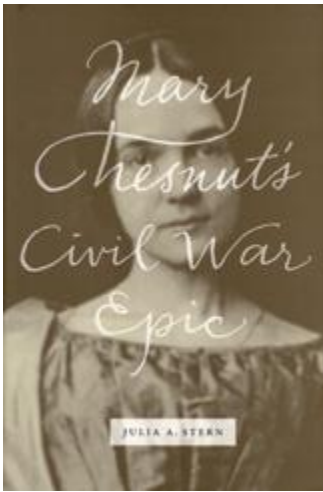


For Further Reading:

Mary Chesnut's Civil War Epic

JULIA A. STERN

352 pages | 10 halftones | 6 x 9 | © 2010



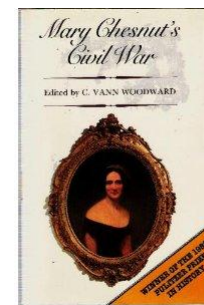
A genteel southern intellectual, saloniste, and wife to a prominent colonel in Jefferson Davis's inner circle, Mary Chesnut today is remembered best for her penetrating Civil War diary. Composed between 1861 and 1865 and revised thoroughly from the late 1870s until Chesnut's death in 1886, the diary was published first in 1905, again in 1949, and later, to great acclaim, in 1981. This complicated literary history and the questions that attend it—which edition represents the real Chesnut? To what genre does this text belong?—may explain why the document largely has, until now, been overlooked in literary studies.

Julia A. Stern's critical analysis returns Chesnut to her rightful place among American writers. In *Mary Chesnut's Civil War Epic*, Stern argues that the revised diary offers the most trenchant literary account of race and slavery until the work of Faulkner and that, along with his Yoknapatawpha novels, it constitutes one of the two great Civil War epics of the American canon. By restoring Chesnut's 1880s revision to its complex, multidecade cultural context, Stern argues both for Chesnut's reinsertion into the pantheon of nineteenth-century American letters and for her centrality to the literary history of women's writing as it evolved from sentimental to tragic to realist forms.

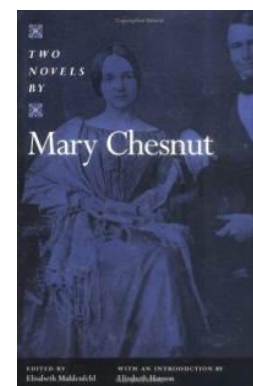
<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo8170827.html>

Publication history:

- 1905: *A Diary From Dixie: Electronic Edition*. *Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, 1823-1886*, ed. by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avary. New York: D. Appleton and Company 1905, available online as a part of the UNC-CH database "*Documenting the American South*." <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/menu.html>
- 1949: *A Diary from Dixie*, an expanded version edited by the novelist [Ben Ames Williams](#) to enhance its readability and annotated. Reissued in 1980 by [Harvard University](#) Press, with a "Foreword" by Edmund Wilson, originally published in 1962 as an essay on Chesnut.
- 1981: *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, edited and Introduction by C. Vann Woodward. Reprinted in 1993. Woodward's work was awarded the 1982 Pulitzer Prize in History.



- 2002, *Mary Chesnut, Two Novels*, includes *The Colonel and the Captain*; and *Two Years - or The Way We Lived Then*, edited and Introduction by Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, University of Virginia Press.



JANUARY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

1861

- 9th** Mississippi secedes
- 10th** Florida secedes
- 11th** Alabama secedes
- 19th** Georgia secedes
- 26th** Louisiana secedes

1862

- 15th** Edwin M. Stanton is confirmed by Senate as Secretary of War.
- 27th** Discontented with McClellan's slow pace to prosecute the war, Lincoln issues General War Order #1.

30th U.S.S. *Monitor* is launched in Long Island, New York.

1863

- 1st** President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.
- 20-22nd** General Ambrose Burnside gets bogged down in trying to flank the Confederates near Fredericksburg. It becomes a major public relations nightmare known as the *Mud March*.
- 25th** "Fighting Joe" Hooker replaces Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

1864

- 11th** The 13th Amendment (ending slavery) to the Constitution is proposed by Senator John B. Henderson of Missouri.

1865

- 15th** John Bell Hood is replaced as commander of Army of Tennessee. 31st
- 13th** Amendment to U.S. Constitution passes abolishing slavery.

