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# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
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## President's Message

I most enjoyed researching for my December discussion of Generals Patrick Cleburne and James McPherson. I confess that the study of History is new to me, as I've spent my academic life in literature and linguistics. So I was most fortunate to find our Round Table group through our excellent website; and I've been introduced to a whole new world of study based on facts. Having been trained to scrutinize a poem and argue my interpretation, imagine my amazement that a whole army of scholars and history buffs disagree over authentic events-- and not just disagree but study, contemplate, passionately defend, and patiently consider another's point of view.

To study History is to gain a perspective of our present circumstances through the retrospective of our past.

To that end, our members Don Hayden and Bob Williams have generously shared their archives with us and have given permission to revisit their musings and articles. Over the course of the next few months, I'll share them with all of you! As we are in the fourth year of the Sesquicentennial, I will concentrate on events from 1864.

Many thanks to Bob Hanley for his two years of presidency. He's looking forward to relaxing and being a member again. His presentation on "The Boy General, Francis Channing Barlow" was given with Bob's usual thorough research and attention to detail. Bravo!

I hope you all have a wonderful new year.

**Anne Peasley, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**Wednesday, December 11, 2013**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 38**

**MEMBERS (24)**– Roy Bishop, Ardith Cnota, Mitch Cnota, George Foxworth, (Treas), Monica Foxworth, Bob Hanley (Pres), Don Hayden, (IPP), Scottie Hayden, Nina Henley (MAL), Wayne Henley (MAL), Dennis Kohlmann, Vivian Miller, Anne Peasley (VP), Rick Peasley, Horst Penning, John Rice, Patty Ruud, Paul Ruud, Richard Sickert, Roxanne Spizzirri, Bob Williams, Silver Williams (Program Director), Maxine Wollen (Sec), John Zasso

**GUESTS (14)**– Milo Turaylich, Martha Henley, Chris Osborn, Don A. Zajic, Esther Boeck, Larry Spizzirri, Richard Spizzirri, Dave Black, Harvey D. Cain, Arnold Kunst, Bill Jackson, Jane Jackson, Marsha J. Cain, Mike Werner

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Bob Hanley.
2. President Hanley led the Pledge and then introduced the visitors.
3. Anne Peasley was the speaker for the evening and her topic was a comparison of Generals Cleburne and McPherson. They were on opposing sides, but had many things in common. Both were born and died in the same years. They were both of Irish descent. Cleburne was born in Ireland and McPherson was born in the United States.
4. Cleburne was born in County Cork, into an upper class family. He went into the British Army and was sent to guard food from Ireland that was destined for Britain. Later, he emigrated to New Orleans and then went to Arkansas. He was a man who was driven, and controlled. He joined the local militia and was elected captain. He taught discipline, but did not use corporal punishment. He taught the reason for drill.
5. McPherson was born in Ohio, where his father was a blacksmith. His mother worked in a dry goods store where the owner recognized young McPherson as being very smart. The owner sponsored him into West Point. He was very well known and respected. When the War started, he applied for, and was accepted, into Halleck's Army.
6. Both men knew of each other, and both were in the Battle of Shiloh. They were in later battles across the South and into Georgia. McPherson was killed July 22, 1864) in the Battle for Atlanta, by Cleburne's skirmishers. Cleburne died (November 30, 1864) in the Battle of Franklin, when he had orders to cross an open field.
7. Both men were found with no swords, watches, or shoes. Both men had fallen in love a little bit later in life. Both had applied for leave to get married and both applications were denied. They both have monuments.

**Maxine Wollen, Secretary**

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance following the December 11, 2013 meeting was \$3,904.88. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$46.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

<b>Coming Programs 2014</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
January 8th	Bob Hanley	“Boy General, Francis Channing Barlow”
February 12 <sup>th</sup>	Bob Hubbs	“General Grant at Shiloh”
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Wayne and Nina Henley	“General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain”
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	George Beitzel	“General Robert Edward Lee”
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	John Greer	“150 <sup>th</sup> Gettysburg Re-Enactment”

### **2014 Membership**

The 2014 membership renewal is due as of January 1, 2014. The dues are \$20.00 and you can renew at a monthly meeting or send to the Treasurer through the mail. For all checks, make them payable to “Sacramento Civil War Round Table” and send them to

George W. Foxworth  
 9463 Salishan Court  
 Sacramento, CA 95826-5233

Remember, you can also pay at a monthly meeting.

### **NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES**

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month for that month’s Battle Cry. Submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

[gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net)

## **The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History**

Edited by Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan

Book Review by Michel Wolf

16 December 2006

It's been said that history is written by the winners, but the American Civil War was a unique exception. As these nine essays make clear, the former Confederates who established the Southern Historical Society and controlled its publications starting in the late 1860's established the Myth of the Lost Cause and promulgated it relentlessly. Its influence persists today, despite the efforts of modern historians (such as the authors of these essays) to set the record straight.

This enjoyable and informative collection provides a useful introduction to the Lost Cause and fascinating details of its formation. The essays, published in 2000, are by authors well-known to Round Table members, and are a pleasure to read.

To the myth-makers, the war was not about slavery, secession was justified and Constitutional, and the Southern armies were doomed from the start, due to the Northern juggernaut of manpower and materials. Mr. Nolan writes, "In the popular mind, the Lost Cause represents the national memory of the Civil War; it has been substituted for the history of the war." Gary Gallagher describes how Lt. Gen. Jubal Early and others seized the historical initiative in formulating the Lost Cause legend, and cites examples of its existence in today's popular culture.

Charles Holden shows how cavalry General Wade Hampton's post-war conservative, elitist politics were repudiated by populists in South Carolina, but Hampton still became the "sometimes general, sometimes governor, sometimes senator, but always hero" in the public's imagination.

Just what were these Confederate soldiers' reunions like? Keith Bohannon focuses on reunions in Georgia from 1885-95, ranging from logistics to oratory. He notes that Lt. Gen James Longstreet was reviled by Early and his cohorts, but at Georgia reunions, "battle-scarred veterans hovered around Longstreet, hung upon every word the old general uttered, and in their eyes and faces could be seen the deep respect and true love they bore for their old commander."

Peter Carmichael's essay concerns the last generation of Virginia slaveholders, men born in the 1830s. Both before and after the war, they disdained the "moonlight and magnolias" view of the old South, and "understood the potential dangers of trying to recapture a golden age because of its stifling effect on intellectual creativity."

To Jeffrey Wert, "James Longstreet was undoubtedly the greatest victim of Lost Cause interpretation." His superb essay discusses historians' views of Longstreet, beginning with the first full-length biography in 1936, and continuing to today's detractors, Bob Krick and Bud Robertson, two of our present day neo-confederate writers and talkers. He reviews Longstreet's actions at Gettysburg, the main focus of the unfair attacks on him.

Brooks Simpson assesses the many attempts to demean Grant's military achievements. "What was most troubling to (Lost Cause advocates) about Grant was that he had prevailed over Robert E. Lee. If one could no longer defeat Grant, at least one might take solace in denigrating him."

Lesley Gordon reviews the voluminous literary output of Maj. Gen. George Pickett's widow, LaSalle, who survived him by more than fifty years. Beginning in the 1880s, she began her life's work of portraying an idyllic South that never existed, and the public, both North and South, lapped it up. Professor Lloyd Hunter ends with a look at the transformation of the Lost Cause into a secular religion. He cites the over-the-top oratory and verse that "marked a period of Southern flight from reality."

(See also "Battle Cry" article of February 2004 on "Lost Cause" Mythology)

Submitted by Bob Williams: 10-20-07

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## **A Short Summary of The Siege of Petersburg and of the Options of Robert E. Lee**

When Union forces under Grant and Meade crossed the Rapidan River in May 1864, headed southeast some 80 miles towards Richmond-Petersburg and the James River, R. E. Lee advised his staff that: *“We must destroy this Army of Grant’s before he gets to the James River. If he gets there it will become a siege and then it will be a mere question of time.”* By 16 June 1864, the Union Army of the Potomac had secretly crossed the James River without Lee’s knowledge via a record long 2,200-foot pontoon bridge and boats. It is a feat nearly unbelievable that this rebel commanding general of some 60,000 was completely without knowledge of the location of the opposing 110,000-member Union Army of the Potomac; and all of this occurring within a radius of less than 20 miles. Apparently, all he knew of that Army’s whereabouts was they were not yet in Richmond, or he would have certainly heard from J. F. Davis. So the Siege of Petersburg was about to commence.

Considering that he had again been outgeneraled, and recognizing that it was indeed now only “a mere question of time,” Lee would have done well to have recommended the immediate termination of hostile activities by the rebels, and to have resigned army command should Davis disagree. He had even more reason to do so a month later when Sherman rode into Atlanta, and the War in the West had been essentially won by the Union. Lee, however, had never been much interested in events of the War outside of Virginia. Had Lee resigned, there is a probability that his Army of Northern Virginia would not have remained viable, thus ending the War in the East many months earlier. The best case scenario is that the rebel army would have then peaceably disintegrated, surrendering by units. Accordingly, Lee would have saved thousands of lives and millions of dollars of further damage to the South, and perhaps be remembered today as a true national hero, rather than the facetious junior Deity he is depicted to be in the “Legend of the Lost Cause?” But there was

also a worst case possibility that the rebel army would break up into a series of guerrilla bands and perpetuate the hostility in isolated regions almost indefinitely; and even against the civilian populations. Lee’s influence could probably have prevented such action from occurring, but is it not plausible that J.F. Davis might have been inclined to encourage it?

In 1860, Petersburg was a “modern” city of 18,000 with paved streets, a waterworks, gas lighting, eight banks, two daily newspapers, a canal system along the Appomattox River, and well maintained roads radiating in all directions. Its main military value was that it was a hub for five railroads; the City Point, Norfolk, Weldon, South Side; thence all roads funneling north some 22 miles to Richmond (1860 population 38,000). The village of City Point, located 12 miles NE on the James River, later became Grant’s Headquarters and a massive Union quartermaster, ordinance, and hospital complex. Petersburg’s defense system was the well built seven mile long 1862 “Dimmock” Line, named after the confederate engineering officer who designed it. It included a series of 12 earthen forts with interconnecting rifle trenches. Additional fortifications had also been built in early 1864 by Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, who commanded in the area at the time of the first Union attack on 15 June. He was the first person to tell R. E. Lee where the Union army was, after Lee had “lost” it.

The first federal assault ordered by Grant was led by W. F. “Baldy” Smith’s 18<sup>th</sup> Corps, backed up by W. S. Hancock’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, a total of some 40,000 federals against 12,000 confederates. Due to lack of aggressiveness on the part of the Feds, Beauregard’s smaller force prevailed the first day. An explanation for this lack of vigor was that these two Union corps had borne the brunt of the ill conceived frontal attacks at Cold Harbor on 3 June, and they were now (to use a well worn expression) “operating with cold feet in a gun shy mode on an nine to four schedule.” Otherwise, they should have readily overwhelmed the rebels and easily walked into downtown Petersburg. Through out the day Beauregard had been arguing and

pleading with Lee to send reinforcements, and finally Lee, belatedly realizing that he and his usual inadequate staff had made a mistake, finally sent them. "Baldy" Smith had cracked the hard shell of the Petersburg defenses, but he could not then break it. A marvelous opportunity to end the War in the East was forfeited then and there.

Two items of possible interest about "Baldy" Smith are: 1) He had, like a number of his colleagues, provided excellent service as an engineering officer, but this excellence did not carry over when he became a high level line combat commander; and 2) He was not bald, the nickname was a carry over from his West Point Cadet days, because of his high forehead.

Although Grant's first attempt to capture Petersburg from the east was a miserable and costly failure, the Union forces did manage to cut two railroads and gain control of several roads. In August, the Feds struck out to the south and west against the Weldon Railroad and destroyed it in the vicinity of Globe Tavern, but this required some fierce fighting in brutally hot weather. Lee's army was now largely immobilized and their days of maneuvering over extensive distances were drawing to a close, but they did hold the interior lines and could rapidly relocate defense forces when the need arose. Several days later on 25 August the rebels scored a minor victory at Ream's Station, five miles south of the Tavern, but failed to break the Federal hold on that Railroad.

A unique event of the Petersburg Siege was the 30 July 1864 Union mine assault on a salient of the Confederate defense line. The mine was skillfully constructed by the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, comprised of former coal miners. The main shaft ran 512 feet to a point 20 feet under a rebel artillery battery with lateral galleries totaling another 75 feet. Cross section area was 16± sq. ft. Explosive charge was four tons of black powder. It was ventilated by an ingenious system whereby fire in a chimney near the portal drew stale air out of the tunnel, while the resulting vacuum pulled fresh air through a wooden tube along the floor to the end where the men were digging. The explosion occurred at 4:45 A.M. after a brief delay. It created a crater

170 feet long, 75 feet wide, 30 feet deep, and caused 300 rebel casualties. The mining was a complete success, but the follow up exploitation by Union infantry of Burnside's IX Corps was a "stupendous" failure. Instead of attacking around the crater and rapidly moving forward, they entered the crater and were trapped. Total Union casualties were 3,800, and added rebels 1,500.

By October, the Feds had moved three miles west of the Weldon Railroad and the noose around Petersburg was both lengthened and tightened. By December 1864, Lee's desertion rate began to accelerate. The siege line was now some 20 miles long. The approach of winter brought a partial halt except for local skirmishing, sniper fire, and mortar shelling. By early February 1865, Lee had some 55,000 cold, hungry and ill-equipped soldiers in trenches to oppose Grant and Meade's well-equipped and well-fed force of 110,000. In accordance with his general plan of westward elongation, Grant extended his lines five miles to Hatcher's Run on 5-7 February. This forced Lee to lengthen his now thinly stretched defense line, which had now become 25 miles long. Federal supplies were moved continuously to Union troops at the front over the military railroad and its extensions which had been built from City Point. Very little of the "mere question of time" was remaining.

By mid-March the outlook for the rebels in Virginia looked nearly as grim as it did to those in the western states. The rebel civilian population's will to continue the fight was growing shallow and army desertion rates were at record levels. Lee planned a disparate move, since it was apparent that the Feds would either flank the Petersburg defenses on the right or pierce the line somewhere along its now 37-mile length. Accordingly, the rebel commander hoped to break the Union stranglehold by an attack on the Union Fort Stedman (See Map). Plans were to breach the Union line, hold the gap and gain access to the U.S. Military Railroad a short distance behind the line. Lee thought the Feds might thereby need to relinquish their positions to the southwest of town, and the rebels

could then shorten their own dangerously undermanned defense lines. On 25 March, the confederates momentarily overpowered the Fort, only to be defeated by a Union counterattack that restored the Federal lines.

By spring 1865, the only remaining supply line into Petersburg was the Southside Railroad. On 29 March, Grant sent forces on a westward movement to cut this major rail artery and also the important Boydton Plank Road (now US Route 1), knowing that this would cause the rebels to either be captured, surrender on-site, or abandon Petersburg and Richmond. This led to the Battle of Five Forks. (See “Battle Cry” article of 8-07.) On 2 April 1865, Grant assaulted Petersburg directly and the City was evacuated that night. Richmond surrendered the next morning, and the final surrender at Appomattox Court House was but one week away.

Many historians and authors have found it difficult to understand why R. E. Lee continued to fight when he personally believed defeat was inevitable. In this and other regards, it is regrettable that he chose not to write memoirs, as many of the other key leaders on both sides had done. Other than limited correspondence, there is little to provide an insight into his views on this and many other matters. (See “Battle Cry” book review of 9-07 by Susan Williams. That recent book of Lee’s correspondence suggests that he was not a Deity at all, but a mere human, which may explain why he so frequently erred.) Some have concluded that Lee continued the War because of “Honor” and/or “Audacity.” Worthy traits under most circumstances, but how did they correlate in terms of additional human lives lost and further economic damages caused by extending the combat well beyond the point where a victory might have been achievable?

Moreover, Lee was quoted as saying on 13 Dec 62, during the Battle of Fredericksburg that; *“It is well that war is so terrible – lest we should grow too fond of it.”* Is there not a disconnect in logic here; between this comment and Lee’s

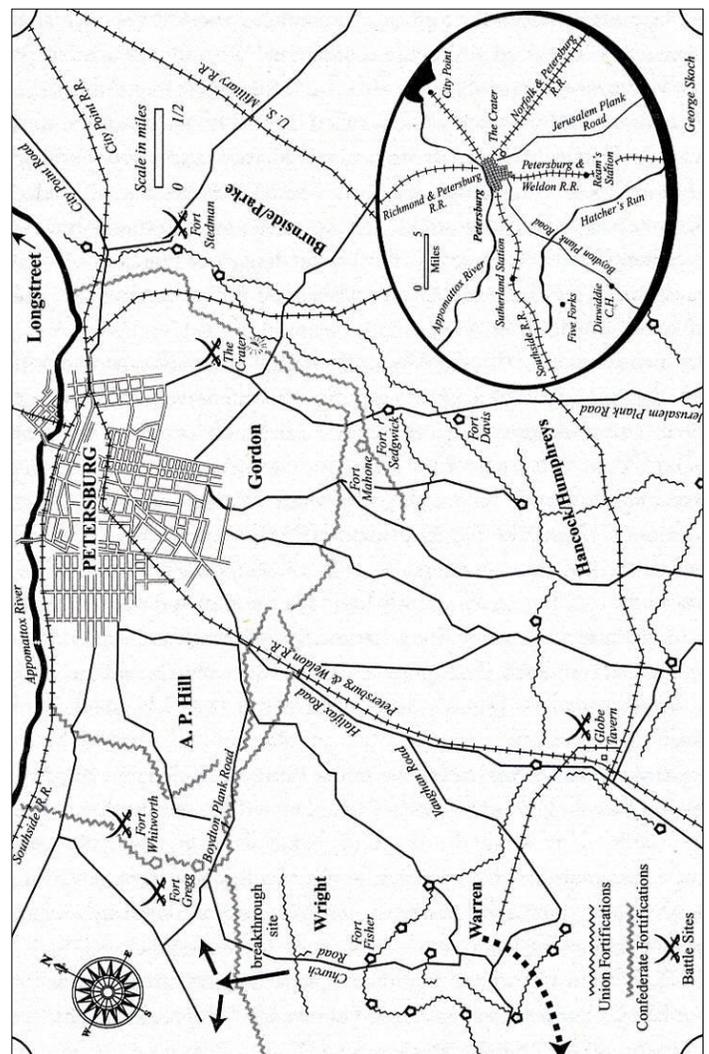
continuing to serve as the confed’s top war commander for eleven months after he had expressed the opinion that they could not win? Or stated more succinctly; why did Lee continue to fight when he considered a victory impossible, unless he just enjoyed fighting? Certainly, he had little reason to believe at this late juncture that the Union would not carry the War forward to the fullest, nor that the Europeans would intervene. Lee had nothing to lose by resigning and much to be gained. Davis, of course, may have smelled “rope.” Your thoughts?

**Bob Williams: 11-28-07**

Reprint by permission of Bob Williams, 12-07

References:

“The Last Citadel” by N. A. Trudeau, 1993; “Battles and Leaders” V4 P1, 1887; “Battle Cry of Freedom” by J. M. McPherson, 1988; “Why the South Lost the Civil War” by Beringer, Hattaway, et. al., 1986; OR’s S1, V46, P1; “How R.E. Lee Lost the Civil War” by E. H. Bonekemper, 1999.



# Siege of Petersburg Photos Page

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