



**Volume 48, No 2  
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**Battle Cry deadline is  
1:00PM Wed. two weeks  
before the regular meeting.  
Items can be given the editor  
by hand, mail or e-mail.**

# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
Sacramento, CA 95865-4702  
<http://sacramentocwrt.com/>



## President's Message

I have been around horses for much of my life so I can easily get into the mood for "horse talk!" The turnout on January 9<sup>th</sup> suggests that the same is true for the entire membership. Thanks to Susan Williams for helping us alleviate our equine dependencies with her "Iron Horse" presentation. I especially enjoyed the many pictures that we were able to see because of Susan's recent mastery of digital technology. You did an excellent job Susan, and we look forward to your next turn on the program schedule.

Next to a reminder – among many other things, moving into 2008 signals the time of the year to pay our SCWRT dues. It remains a bargain at \$20 for a family membership. If you haven't yet given our organization your annual financial support, George Foxworth awaits your check!

The planning for the May re-enactment at Gibson Ranch is underway. Our commitment to escort student groups on Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, is the same as last year. I will circulate volunteer sign-up lists at our February meeting so I can begin developing our roster. The theme for this year's re-enactment is **Gettysburg**—this theme will surface occasionally, but the battle re-enactments will be generic battles without a Gettysburg flavor. I am looking for a Roundtable member or members to give a 45ish minute Gettysburg presentation on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. This presentation will appear on the schedule twice on Saturday, the last time late in the afternoon. If you would like to be a Gettysburg speaker, please let me know!

As we look ahead at the program schedule, you might have questions about our July program. Our guest speaker, Don McCue, is the curator at the Lincoln Memorial Shrine in Redlands, California. Some of us have heard him speak at the Huntington Library in Pasadena and can vouch for the exciting message that he will bring. The details of his visit are still being worked, but expect to meet him in July.

Jim Middleton would welcome a member contributing to the Battle Cry by writing a book review. If you have read an interesting book recently, the membership would love to hear about it. Keep it fairly brief—Jim can give you an approximate word count.

The program at our upcoming February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting will have a focus on California's role in the Civil War. See you at the Hofbrau—come early, stay late!

**Paul Ruud—President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**Wednesday, January 9, 2008**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 41**

**MEMBERS – 34**

Paul Ruud, President  
Dennis Kohlmann, Vice Pres.  
George Foxworth, Treasurer  
Ardith Cnota  
Mitchell Cnota  
Scott Dmytrow  
Brad Friedman  
Alan Geiken  
Robert Hanley  
Don Hayden  
Scottie Hayden

Nancy Hayden  
Chuck Hubbard  
Pam Hubbard  
James Juanitas  
Lowell Lardie  
Victor Le  
Cressie Mendes  
Phil Mendes  
Jim Middleton  
Betty Mitchell  
Maurice Mitchell  
John Nevins

Horst Penning  
Kathy Perisho  
Ron Perisho  
Patty Ruud  
Brad Schall  
Kris Scivoletto  
Nicholas Scivoletto  
Drew Van Winkle  
Robert Williams  
Susan Williams  
John Zasso

**GUESTS – 7**

Dudley Albrecht  
Harvey D. Cain  
Marsha J. Cain  
Sue Fincher  
Tiffany Puch  
Philomene Smith  
Alex Stehl

1. Meeting started at 7:00 PM. Guests and members welcomed by President Ruud. Member Susan Williams introduced two guests—Philomene Smith and Alex Stehl. Guests Sue Fincher and Tiffany Puch were also introduced. The February 2008 program is Captain Henry Green and the California Infantry. President Ruud shared the names of famous horses of the Civil War and the generals who rode them.
2. At 7:08 PM, the speaker Susan Williams was introduced. Her topic was “The War Horse: From Hay Burners to Steam Engines in the Civil War”.
3. At 7:50 PM, the presentation with a question/answer period ended. A GREAT SUCCESS!!!
4. The Gibson Ranch reenactment will be May 16 – 18, 2008. The Sacramento Civil War Round Table will be asked to provide docents for the Schools’ Day Program on May 16.
5. Raffle was held from 7:55 PM to 8:05 PM.
6. The next meeting on February 13, 2008, 7:00 PM, at the Hof Brau.
7. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

**Alex Stehl,**  
**Acting Secretary**

**Treasurer’s Report**

The cash balance following the January 9, 2008 meeting was \$2,107.87. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$106.00.

**George W. Foxworth,**  
**Treasurer**

| <b>Coming Programs 2008</b> |                  |                                     |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>                 | <b>Speaker</b>   | <b>Topic</b>                        |
| February 13 <sup>th</sup>   | Sebastian Nelson | “Capt Henry Green, Calif. Infantry” |
| March 12 <sup>th</sup>      | George Beitzel   | “The Rubber Room”                   |
| April 9 <sup>th</sup>       | Ray Bisio        | “Retreat from Gettysburg”           |
| May 14 <sup>th</sup>        | Harvey Cain      | “Bicycling the Underground Railway” |
| June 11 <sup>th</sup>       | Bob Hanley       | “General Barlow”                    |
| July 9 <sup>th</sup>        | Don McCue        | “Abraham Lincoln”                   |



## **The Civil War Telegraph And Signal Corps**

Most military historians today consider our American civil war to have been the world’s first “modern” war. In large measure this is due to the technology that was then just recently or becoming available. That technology included rifled shoulder weapons and artillery, ironclad warships, the railroads and the telegraph. To some degree mines (torpedoes) and observation balloons might also be included.

Still etched in the minds of many of us from our grade school history lessons is the sentence, “*What Hath God Wrought*”, which were the first words sent a long distance (44 miles!) from Washington to Baltimore by Samuel F. B. Morse on 24 May 1844, using his newly invented electromagnetic telegraphic system. The “system” consisted of two elements: an alphabet made up of combinations of dots and dashes to become known as the Morse code; and the electronic stuff comprised of wires, electromagnets, switches and batteries to transmit these electric impulses.

Morse’s was not the first system, but it was the best and was universally adopted. The idea caught on rapidly. In 1846 the line had been extended 150 miles to New York, then to Boston; and by 1854 all major cities east of the Mississippi were interconnected; and on to San Francisco by 1861. Railroads and the telegraph became natural partners. (See *Battle Cry* July 07 Article) After failure of the first transatlantic cable in 1859, the second one was operational for a short time in 1861. The western world was thusly literarily interconnected, but not durably so until 1866.

The electric telegraph significantly changed the military leader’s ability to command and control field forces. Before the Civil War, the Army used couriers to transmit messages. Civil War commanders used telegrams to transmit messages instantly to each other over distances of a thousand miles or more. By 1860, a network of telegraph wires “crisscrossed the country east of the Mississippi”. The War Department, recognizing the telegraph’s value, co-opted three existing civilian telegraph companies for military use at the beginning of the Civil War, and established the U.S. Military Telegraph Corps (USMT), in May 1861. Telegraph operators supplied the Union Army with technical expertise to

transmit and receive messages; in return, the Union Army provided rations and helped operators construct, repair, and protect telegraph lines. In 1862, the Union Army constructed nearly 4,000 miles of telegraph lines that transmitted over one million military dispatches. More important than the volume of messages was the Union Army's use of the telegraph as a communication tool.

Before the Civil War, information from distant battles took hours or days to reach headquarters. The telegraph permitted Civil War governments to "affect the conduct of campaigns through near-real time communications with commanders in the field." President Lincoln sent 10 to 12 telegrams each day to his generals, routinely soliciting specific tactical information and offering words of advice and encouragement. The telegraph allowed Lincoln to order his Union Armies' strategic repositioning, reinforcement, and pursuit tactics, allowing him to truly act as Commander-in-Chief of the Union Army and Navy. Union generals used the telegraph for rapid communications; including issuing orders; reporting dispositions of enemy and friendly forces; reporting progress and results of battles; and requesting reinforcements.

In 1864 and 1865, Grant went a step further when he used the telegraph to coordinate the movement of all Union forces into one comprehensive plan. He received daily reports from his armies and issued orders to integrate their efforts. Lincoln and Grant used the telegraph to develop a strategic view of the entire theater east of the Mississippi River, allowing them faster, synchronized direction of field forces, and for general planning purposes.

The federal military telegraph service reported directly to the Secretary of War and the military commanders, including Grant, had no jurisdiction over it. The service employed approximately 12,000 civilian telegraphers, strung about 15,000 miles of wire, and averaged upwards of 3000 messages a day. Its code was never compromised.

During the Civil War there were three methods of communication: 1) by messenger, under the province of a commanding officer; 2) by visual signals generated by flags, mirrors, torches, rockets or smoke under the jurisdiction of the U.S Army Signal Corps in the Union, comprising a total of about 1,500 officers and men, and; 3) by telegraph, under the jurisdiction of the USMT, which was mostly comprised of experienced civilian operators and linesmen under contract with the Army. The Signal Corps was commanded by Colonel Albert Myer, early on; and the Telegraph Service was headed by Colonel Anson Stager, the pre-war General Superintendent of the Western Union Company. The Signal Corps reported through the Quartermaster Department; whereas the USMT reported directly to the Secretary of War.

Considerable rivalry was extant between Myer and Stager as to the roles and missions of their respective organizations. Myer felt that he should be responsible for all "tactical" or battlefield communications, while Stager's organization should operate in the realm of "strategic"

communications only. Secretary of War Stanton sided with Stager, however; and the talented, innovative Myer was relieved of command, 10 November 1863.

But Myer's reassignment did not occur before he had placed in operation what were called "Flying Telegraph Trains". These were wagon mounted portable telegraphic devices, known as the "Beardslee" after their inventor's name, which were magneto powered and used insulated line wire. The fascinating, but experimental Beardslee equipment automatically converted the alphabet into dots and dashes for electronic transmission, and reversed the procedure upon message receipt, so that the operator did not need to know the Morse code at all. That is, if everything functioning perfectly, which was rarely the case.

The Signal Corps was to play out its role well with visual signals based upon Myer's development of a new system of semaphores with a telegraphic alphabet. Myer also developed a cipher disk early in the war that enabled the Union to change the code hourly, if need be. This latter nearly eliminated the problem of interception. But even with visual signals alone, there were many early technical and personnel problems that required time and experience to resolve. Early staff assignments to the new Signal Corps were temporary detached service which annoyed normal commanders who sometimes insisted on early recalls; and there was a general resistance of the officer corps that did not wish to legitimize a new branch of service. This latter feeling stalled legislation for the new Signal Corps Branch until 3 March 1863. West Point did not introduce signaling into its regular curriculum until 1867.

Telegraph operators and other signalmen were bright individuals and, by virtue of their assignments, they knew what was going on. And, they were occasionally aware that their superiors, who told them to send certain messages, were making bad mistakes.

What did they do in such instances? Here are a couple of examples: Operator E. S. Sanford deleted the last lines of McClelland's telegram from Savage Station on 29 June 1862 which said: *"If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any other person in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army."* Had he not done so McClelland's military career might have ended a year sooner, for better or for worse? Later, Major Thomas Eckert, the chief operator in the War Department delayed sending Grant's telegram relieving MG George Thomas from command of the Army of the Cumberland; an action which certainly finds support only in the splendid victory of that great soldier at Nashville, and to those who believe in the maxim that the end justifies the means???

**Bob Williams: 1-26-08**

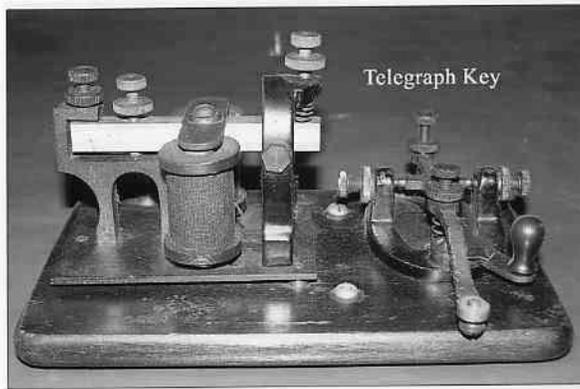
#### **References:**

"The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare", by E. Hagerman, 1988

"Photographic History of the Civil War, Volume IV, by A. W. Greely, 1911

"The Civil War Dictionary" by M. Boatner, 1988

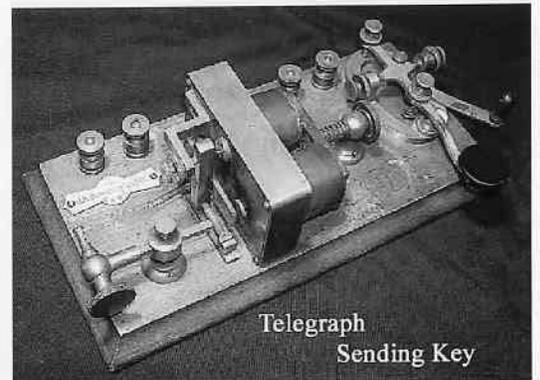
# Civil War Telegraph and Signal Corps Graphics Page One



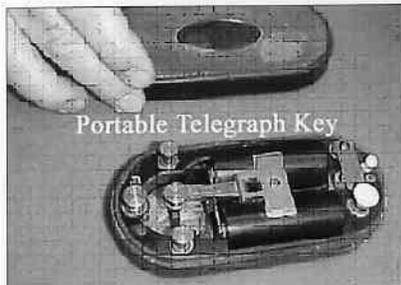
Telegraph Key



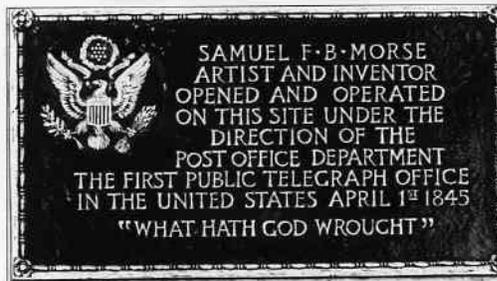
Samuel F. B. Morse



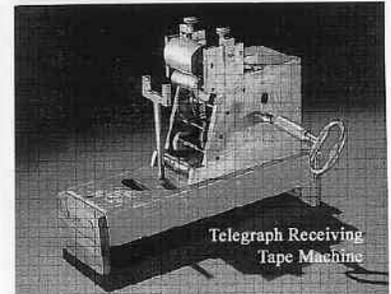
Telegraph Sending Key



Portable Telegraph Key



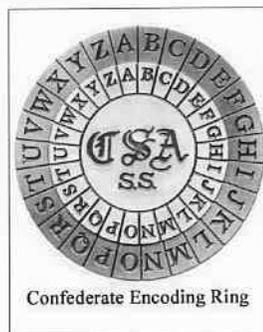
SAMUEL F. B. MORSE  
ARTIST AND INVENTOR  
OPENED AND OPERATED  
ON THIS SITE UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF THE  
POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT  
THE FIRST PUBLIC TELEGRAPH OFFICE  
IN THE UNITED STATES APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 1845  
"WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT"



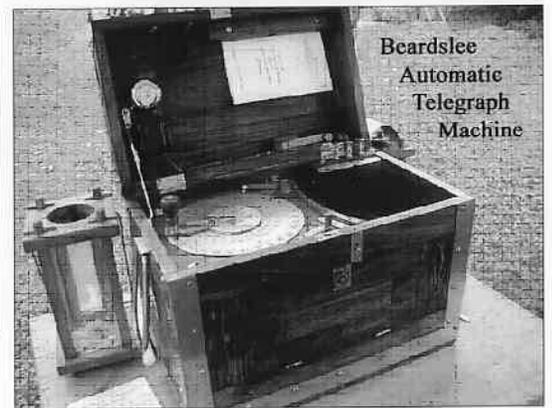
Telegraph Receiving Tape Machine



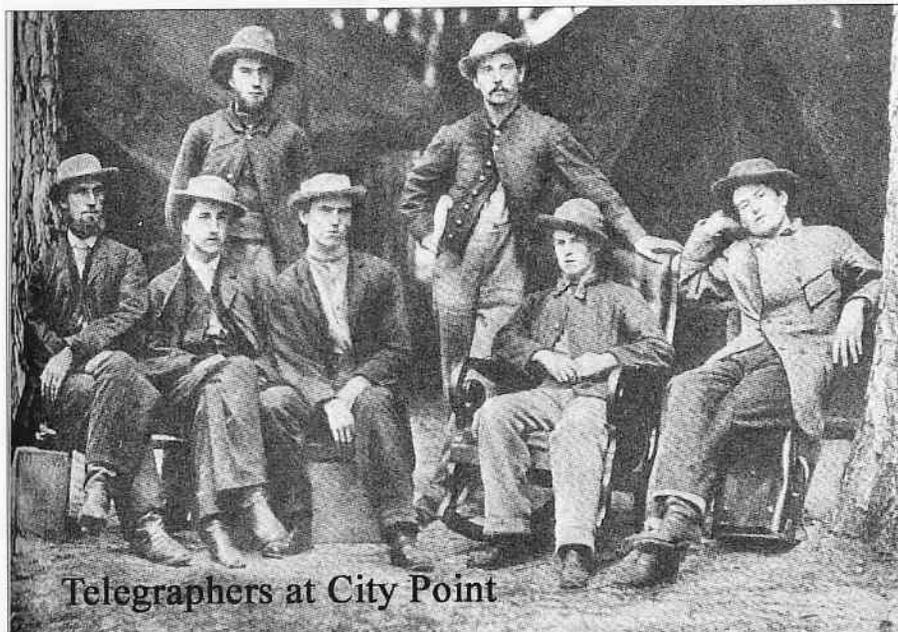
Telegraph Battery Wagon



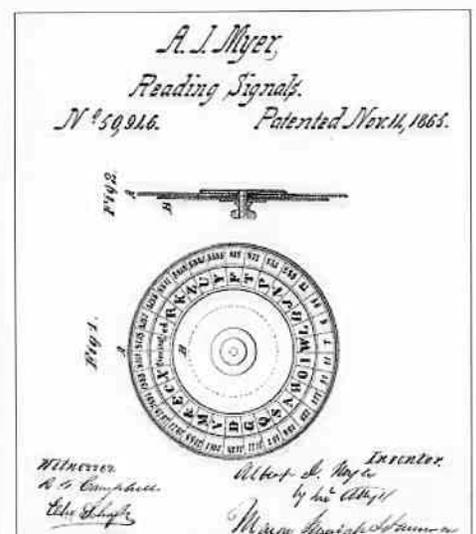
Confederate Encoding Ring



Beardslee Automatic Telegraph Machine



Telegraphers at City Point

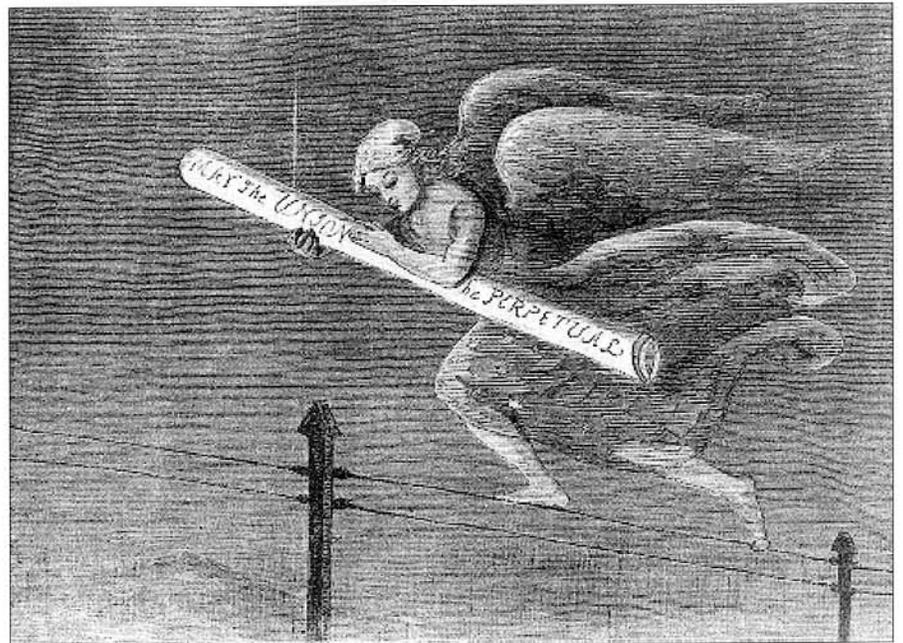
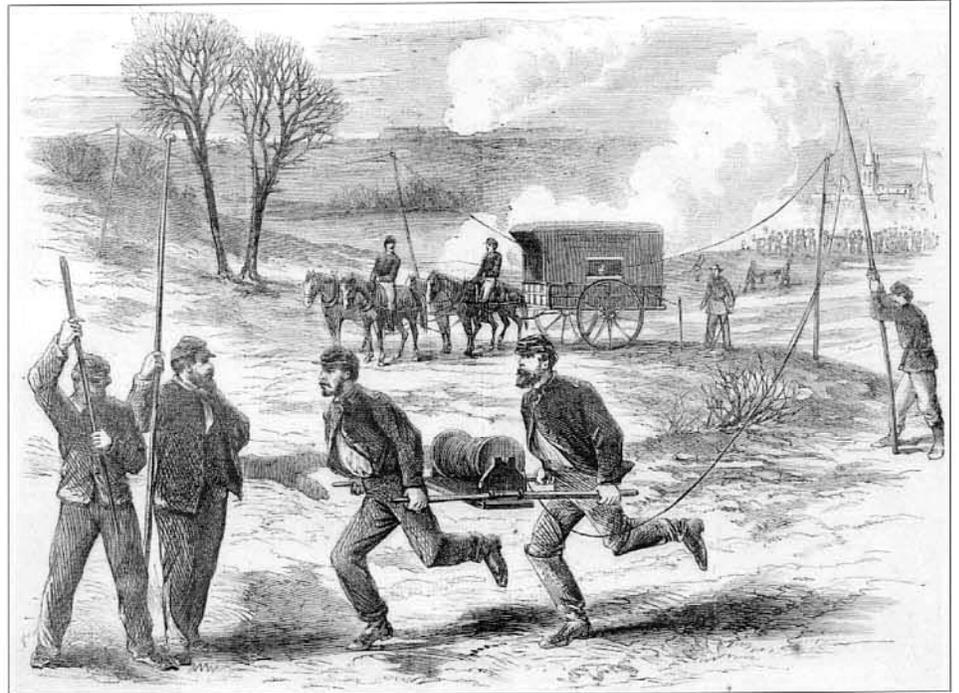
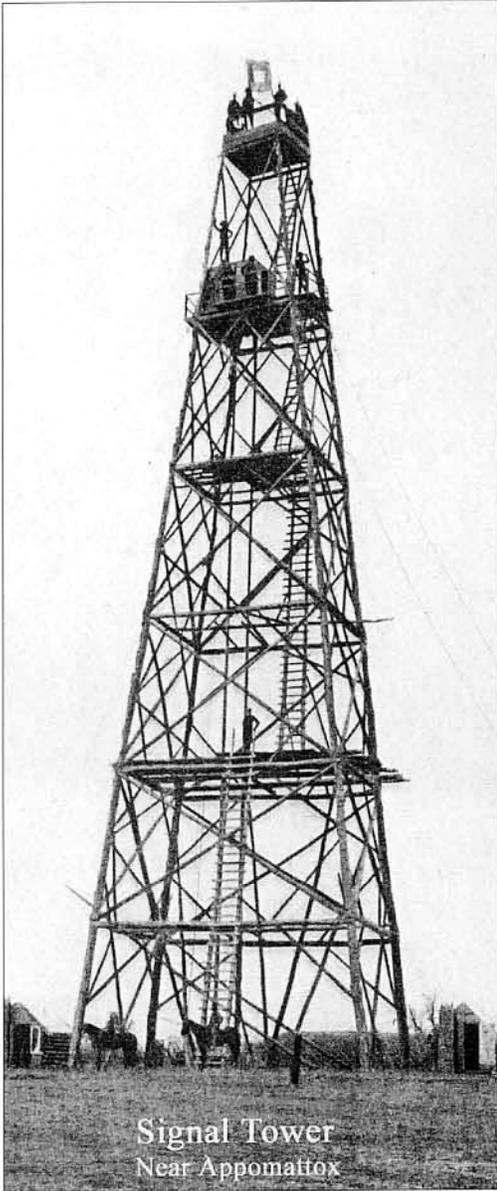


*A. J. Myer*  
*Reading Signals.*  
*N<sup>o</sup> 59,916. Patented Nov 14, 1865.*

*Witness*  
*A. S. Campbell*  
*Edw. Schuyler*

*Inventor*  
*Albert J. Myer*  
*by his Atty*  
*Wm. H. Woodhouse*

# Civil War Telegraph and Signal Corps Graphic Page Two



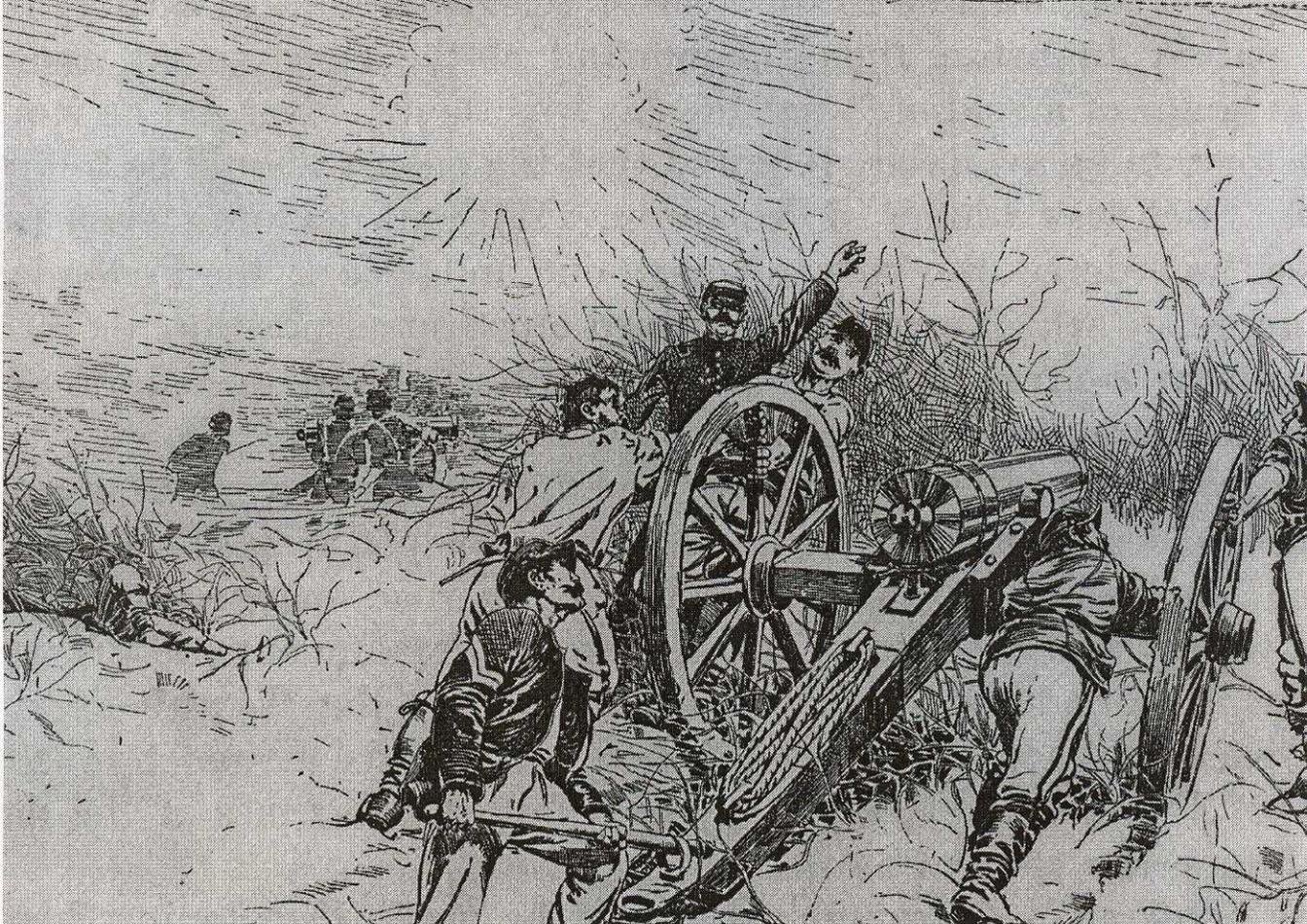


Image from page 419 of Battles and Leaders of the Civil War Vol. 1

## **CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRUST RESCUES 1,616 ACRES OF HALLOWED GROUND IN 2007**

**(Washington, D.C., 1/29/2008)** – The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) announced earlier this month its land preservation accomplishments for 2007. Thanks to the generosity of its members, the organization permanently protected 1,616 acres of hallowed ground at 12 different Civil War battlefields in five states.

This string of successes enabled CWPT to reach an historic milestone of 25,000 acres saved during two decades of preservation work. Overall, CWPT has protected 25,289 acres of battlefield land at 99 sites in 18 states.

The full roster of properties protected by CWPT in 2007 includes: Perryville and Richmond in Kentucky; Champion Hill and Brice's Crossroads in Mississippi; Franklin, Parker's Cross Roads and Shiloh, Tennessee; Glendale, McDowell, Petersburg and White Oak Road, Virginia; and Summit Point, West Virginia.

For a copy of the news release in its entirety, visit:

==> <http://www.civilwar.org/news/PressDetail.php?releaseID=156>

For the latest news on battlefield preservation, visit CWPT's online newsroom at:

==> <http://www.civilwar.org/news/>