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Battle Cry

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

I was greatly impressed with Professor Swan's presentation on Chicago's Irish Legions. He covered the barriers Irish immigrants faced in those perilous times, their contrasting qualities of hell raising and hard fighting with Sherman's XV Corps from Tennessee to the Carolinas and the patriotic warmth they must have felt in the Grand March at the end along with with the pride he obvious feels that his grand father was one of them. Dr. Swan and his wife Patricia were most welcome guests from Nashville and we are grateful for them spending time with us. His book is filled with evidence of meticulous research in great detail. We are hopeful that they will join us for next year's conference on 1861 which we will sponsor. Many thanks to the Swans for a pleasant informative and entertaining evening.

We are delighted to welcome several new members, Don Zajic, Jerry Cross, Sean Keister and Kristine Amerine. Kris is a new resident of Oroville and a previous member of the Chicago and Las Vegas Round Tables. Please make yourself known to all of us at every opportunity and feel free to participate in any capacity with which you feel comfortable. Suggestions and new ideas are always welcome.

Program Chairman Dennis Kohlmann is lining up a splendid group of speakers for this year. I continue to be grateful for John Zasso's continuing to run our most successful raffles and for the members who contribute a wide array of prizes. Thanks also for Secretary Edie Keister's reporting of the minutes and to the other members of our excellent board.

Be sure to join us for Ron Perisho's presentation on Wed., March 10th. Ron is on The Board of the Center for Civil War Photography and has previously provided two superb talks, the last with 3-D photographs. This is one not to be missed.. Hope you can join us early for social hour and/or dinner.

Don Hayden, President

MINUTES
 Sacramento Civil War Round Table
 February 10, 2010
 Hof Brau Restaurant, 2500 Watt Ave, Sacramento

Attendance-42

Members-34

Don Hayden, President	Scottie Hayden	Donna Nothmann	Drew Van Winkle
Silver Williams, Vice President	Nina Henley	Bruce Nothmann	Susan Williams
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Kris Amerene	Chuck Hubbard	Horst Penning	<u>Guest-8</u>
George Beitzel	Lowell Lardie	Mark Penning	Bob Davis
Ken Berna	Mary Lou Lentz	Paul Ruud, IPP	Richard Eisele
Roy Bishop	Ken Lentz	Nancy Samuelson	Clint Ferguson
Jerry Cress	Grace Long	Brad Schall	Billy Hensley
Fred Elenbaas	Jim Middleton, Editor	Richard Sickert, MAL	Sean Keister
			Robert Schroeder
			Pat Swan
			James Swan

1. Meeting started at 7:00 President Hayden welcomed members and guests.
2. James Swan, all the way from Tennessee, presented “Chicago Irish Legion- 90th Illinois volunteers,” one of which was his great grandfather. James was accompanied by his wife Pat.
3. The raffle was held and meeting adjourned at 8:35.

Welcome new member Kris Amerene

Eddie Keister, Secretary

Treasurer’s Report

The cash balance following the February 10, 2010 meeting was \$3,022.58. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$78.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Coming Programs 2010		
Mar. 10 th	Ron Perisho	TBA
Apr. 14 th	Tom Mays	Champ Ferguson
May 12 th	Larry Tagg	Emancipation Proclamation
June 9 th	Sue Patton	TBA
July 14 th	TBA	TBA
Aug. 11 th	Jim Stanbery	The Cracker Line
Sept. 8 th	Tom Lubus	Kansas/Missouri Border Wars

Mrs. Lincoln: A Life By Catherine Clinton: A review by M. Wolf

There's a recent book on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, "The Long Pursuit," by Roy Morris. Mr. Morris writes, "Had it not been for Douglas, Lincoln would have remained merely a good trial lawyer in Springfield, known locally for his droll sense of humor, bad jokes, and slightly nutty wife." Irrelevant insults like this are typical of the abuse, often unfair, that Mary Todd Lincoln endured between Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 and her death in 1882, and that her historical reputation has suffered ever since.

Catherine Clinton is a historian (biographies of Harriet Tubman and Fanny Kemble) who holds a chair in American History at Queen's University in Belfast. I've heard three of her lectures (she's one of the best!) and spoken with her, but hadn't read her latest book, published this year. In February, I'll be leading a book discussion group at the New-York Historical Society, so I decided I'd better read this now. It's an excellent study of a troubled and controversial woman, well-written and thoroughly referenced.

Although Professor Clinton disputes current critics such as Michael Burlingame (she writes in an end note that "he has replaced William Herndon as Mary Lincoln's harshest critic"), this book is by no means a hagiography. She candidly and repeatedly assesses her subject's emotional and mental states; one quote will suffice: "She suffered from self-destructive patterns and maintained her dance of denial over mental problems throughout her long life." (She died at 63.) This is an objective biography of a highly intelligent, accomplished woman who rose to the top of the political-social ladder. One of her problems was that she was a twentieth-century woman subject to nineteenth-century constraints. Professor Clinton provides many examples of Victorian customs dictating a woman's place in society, and how Mary Lincoln dealt with some of them. Those she couldn't cope with led to her sad life.

The biography opens with a description of the social and intellectual milieu of Mary Todd's early life in Lexington, Kentucky. The Todds were well-connected politically, and young Mary knew Henry Clay well. In contrast to her future husband, "Mary was certainly better educated than most women within her society and also was better educated than most of the men during her era as well." She had many suitors, but declared, "My hand will never be given where my heart is not." Professor Clinton indicates emphatically that Mary "wanted to marry for love."

Her White House years were anything but happy. Married twenty years earlier, she endured her husband's frequent absences on the Eighth Judicial Circuit, living in boarding houses early in their marriage, and seeing her sisters marry into wealthy, comfortable surroundings. When she finally won the coveted prize, disaster struck. Her son, Willie, died in 1862, and the steady drumbeat of political attacks, with a ferocity unknown today, during and after her husband's presidency, took their toll on an already fragile psyche.

She was accused of being a traitor to the Union; many Kentuckians had family members in both armies, and several close Todd relatives were killed in Confederate service. Professor Clinton writes, "She was forced to run a gauntlet as First Lady, with scorching press attacks more prolonged than those made on any presidential wife before. She was called names in the press and hunted like the vulnerable prey she was." Even presidential secretaries John Hay and John Nicolay (both have stellar reputations today) were "openly hostile to Mrs. Lincoln. They

referred to her as Hellcat behind her back.... Hay wrote to Nicolay on March 31, 1862: 'Madame has mounted me to pay her the Steward's salary. I told her to kiss mine.'

Professor Clinton doesn't hide Mrs. Lincoln's extravagances in acquiring clothes, and in grossly exceeding White House budgets. After the White House years, when she was claiming to be an impoverished widow (she always had enough money, but convinced herself that the poorhouse was imminent), she bought 84 pairs of gloves at one time. This binge buying was clearly a manifestation of what Professor Clinton calls "financial bulimia."

She was declared insane in May, 1875. "A jury of upstanding male citizens was assembled to weigh the evidence, but Mary was not given any time or opportunity to defend herself. When the jury adjourned, Mrs. Lincoln finally spoke: 'O Robert, to think that my son would ever have done this.' Within ten minutes, the jury returned a verdict of guilty: Mary Lincoln was ruled incompetent by reason of mental incapacity." Professor Clinton cites Jean Baker ("Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography," 1987): "Historian Jean Baker's judicious concerns about the gendered nature of these proceedings still stand. Furthermore, Baker underscores the blatant disregard of procedure..." Professor Clinton totally absolves Robert Lincoln of any malicious intent in committing his mother to a sanitarium; he was acting in her best interests, and was a faithful conservator of her financial resources.

She was released from the sanitarium after six months, and went to live with her elder sister in Springfield, but that only lasted for a year. Her last years were literally spent in exile, in the small village of Pau, in southwestern France. When her health declined in 1881, she returned to America, and soon died.

I think it is remarkable – and wonderful – that Civil War documents are still being discovered. Matthew Pinsky wrote "Lincoln's Sanctuary" in 2003, a fascinating account of Lincoln's time at the Anderson Cottage, the summer White House of the day. The book was based on recently discovered letters and diaries of soldiers in Lincoln's security detail. "Reading the Man" (2007) by Elizabeth Pryor is based on letters of Robert E. Lee that were deposited in a Virginia bank vault by his daughter in 1912, and remained there for more than ninety years.

In 1975, "James Hickey, Lincoln curator extraordinaire, found a cache of documents that had been squirreled away at Hildene, the Vermont family home of Robert Lincoln." This yielded forty pages of documents, which were the basis of "The Insanity File" (Robert's name for the batch of letters) by Mark Neely and Gerald McMurtry (1987). More recently, some letters were found in a trunk, and were the basis of Jason Emerson's "The Madness of Mary Lincoln" (2006).

Professor Clinton writes, "Mary Lincoln's mental health will remain, like her husband's, a topic of endless interest and speculation. However, amid continuing controversy, Mrs. Lincoln has received a superb biography.

The Great Comeback by Gary Ecelbarger—Review by M. Wolf

This book is subtitled, "How Abraham Lincoln Beat the Odds to Win the 1860 Republican Nomination." Lincoln's nomination certainly was against all odds. After his loss to Stephen Douglas in the 1858 Illinois election to the U.S. Senate, he was politically dead. Instead of holding a press conference to say, "You won't have Lincoln to kick around any more," he picked himself up, dusted himself off, and started all over again. This book tells the story of Abraham

Lincoln's ambitious, carefully planned, improbable march to the Republican nomination in May, 1860.

Mr. Ecelbarger writes, "Looking at it in hindsight, it is difficult to imagine that this sequence of events was purely a coincidence." He begins his story in late 1858, with Lincoln's strategy of becoming "visible in the East and the West and concealing (his) candidacy until 'the proper time.'" If ever there was a stealth candidacy, this was it. The front-runner was New York Senator William H. Seward, one of the eventual "team of rivals." Lincoln's task was to make himself widely known as a moderate with no enemies within the party, to whom the delegates could turn if and when Seward failed to be nominated.

Gary Ecelbarger has written excellent biographies of two Union generals, Frederick Lander, not well known today due to his death from osteomyelitis early in 1862, and John A. Logan, an Illinois politician who rose to be a corps commander in Sherman's Army of the Tennessee. Mr. Ecelbarger has also published a book on Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign, and conducts Civil War tours in the Valley, West Virginia, and Lincoln tours in Springfield, Illinois.

Throughout 1859, Lincoln gave speeches throughout the west. At first, "The Lincoln boom had made such a small groundswell that no one paying attention to it would have noticed it. That is the way Lincoln preferred it for the present". But soon "he was racking up impressive presidential endorsements from Republican newspapers both in and outside of Illinois." By January, only six months before the national convention, Lincoln was "a growing snowball rolling down a hill, the center of which was the rock – Lincoln's ambition..."

Mr. Ecelbarger describes how Lincoln dodged bullets along the way. He had to silence suggestions that he run for vice-president. It seems odd now, but Lincoln was afraid Stephen Douglas, "the best-known politician in the land," would alienate southern Democrats (he sure did!), and moderate Republicans would vote for him (they didn't). Most of all, Lincoln had to avoid alienating Republican candidates and delegates so the convention would turn to him. But "making Lincoln's chance to upend Seward an even longer shot was that he was still not the second choice...nor the third or even the fourth-ranked Republican candidate." Salmon Chase of Ohio, Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, and Edward Bates of Missouri, all of whom eventually joined the "team of rivals," were all serious candidates behind Senator Seward. Eventually, however, it became a two-man race between Seward and Lincoln, whose goal was merely to get one hundred of the 465 convention votes on the first ballot.

Lincoln benefited from brilliant campaign managers, Norman Judd and David Davis. Mr. Ecelbarger is especially good in describing their manipulations in securing the nomination for their man. Today we don't realize how important the choice of a convention city was in 1860. St. Louis – the home city of Edward Bates – was the favorite. Ironically, "Chicago made the short list primarily because Lincoln's name had not resonated as a serious candidate." If St. Louis had been chosen, Norman Judd could not have arranged for Illinois railroads to reduce train fares, allowing Lincoln supporters to descend on the convention hall in huge numbers. Bates supporters would predominate. As we shall see, in a pre-electronic age this was important. "If St. Louis was chosen as a host city,...it would be inconceivable for Lincoln to win the nomination...Judd achieved an incredible coup by placing Chicago at center stage for national party politics in 1860."

Another Judd stroke of genius was the seemingly unimportant placing of state delegations in the convention hall, known as "The Wigwam." By surrounding Seward's New York delegation with delegations pledged to Lincoln, "the Seward delegation was locked in, an island within a raging sea of Lincoln. The delegations of Ohio, Missouri, and New Jersey were seated too far away from the New Yorkers for them to negotiate...between the second and third ballots...The crescendo and cacophony emanating from ten thousand throats above them and in front of them in the galleries rendered useless any attempt to get the 42 Chase votes, the 35 Bates votes, the ten Dayton (of New Jersey) votes, or even the eight McLean (also of Ohio)

votes that had committed to these also-rans on the first and second ballots." (Just think – if Seward had a cell phone, he could have been president!)

Lincoln's brilliant Cooper Union speech on Feb. 27, 1860, and its importance in establishing his reputation in the east, is thoroughly recounted by Mr. Ecelbarger. But another aspect of this speech is amusing, especially with today's political fund-raisers and the obscene amounts of money sloshing through political campaigns. "Seward supporters seethed when they learned that Lincoln was paid \$200 for the Cooper Union speech. This could be achieved only through a door charge, considered indecent for political speeches in the mid-1800s." They "pummeled Lincoln in print for demanding a fee and his Cooper Union hosts for charging the audience 'the regular circus rate of twenty-five cents' to hear him. The press had a field day with the issue...Lincoln was called 'the two-shilling candidate.'" Lincoln had addressed a group of children in New York, and Horace Greeley's Tribune wrote, "The Tribune does not say how much Mr. Lincoln charged for his speech – as it was delivered to children. We suppose he asked only half price, say \$100." Of course, this blew over. Lincoln considered his Cooper Union address, "The speech that made me president," but this is just one good example of the 1860 political atmosphere evoked in Mr. Ecelbarger's story.

Back in Chicago, Seward's people were so confident of victory that they held a pre-victory champagne supper. Lincoln's men realized that something had to be done, and fast: LET'S MAKE A DEAL! And they did. Lincoln had wired instructions, "Make no contracts that bind me." However, "Davis heeded it not. He was not about to let Lincoln's accomplishments of the past 18 months and their tireless efforts over the past six days go to waste just because Lincoln clung to a naive notion...Lincoln was not in Chicago; he did not understand what needed to be done. Davis was here and knew what to do. He would 'fight the devil with fire.'"

Mr. Ecelbarger explores David Davis' alleged deal with Judge Joseph Casey of Pennsylvania (two judges; how appropriate!). Did Judge Davis offer a cabinet post to Simon Cameron? In a long end note, Mr. Ecelbarger observes that "Perhaps no single nomination issue has generated more disagreement among historians." He cites a letter from Judge Casey, "as close to a 'smoking gun' as can be found on this issue." He also cites a Davis letter to Lincoln, calling it "a telltale piece of evidence suggesting that Davis had made at least one convention promise of which Lincoln was unaware." Mr. Ecelbarger concludes "that the Pennsylvania deal was made."

Southern states were represented at this convention. Virginia gave 14 votes to Lincoln and 8 to Seward. Texas gave all but two votes to Seward. At the end of the third ballot, Lincoln was one and a half votes shy of a 233 majority. As the convention prepared for a fourth ballot, Ohio switched four votes to put Lincoln over the top. New York moved to make it unanimous, and that was it.

Lincoln had won because he convinced the party that he could win in November, and that Seward was too radical to win four of the five free states that Fremont had lost in 1856: Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and California. The Republicans had to win four of them in 1860 to reach the White House (against one opponent, not three – but this wasn't known in May), and Lincoln, not Seward, could appeal to these moderate voters.

Mr. Ecelbarger concludes that "Abraham Lincoln won the Republican nomination because he was a principled pragmatist, but also because he was the candidate agreed upon in the parlors of Chicago's hotels before the balloting commenced in the Great Wigwam....As appropriate as Lincoln was for the Republican Party in 1860, there is little doubt that he won because of the result of negotiations conducted in smoke-filled rooms."

Considering events of the next five years, this is a significant story, and a well-told tale it is.