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# 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

### THERE WILL BE A MAY MEETING. THE HOF BRAU WORK IS COMPLETE.

At last! **The Hof Brau is open.** We have waited three months. The Hof Brau has also waited with no income coming in.

Today, I am writing about a battle with our city's name in it. Sacramento, Kentucky was named in 1854 by a man (John Vickers) who had just returned from the California Gold Rush.

Sacramento was the site of a Civil War Battle between Union forces under Major Eli H. Murray and Confederate forces led by Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest. Murray had about 500 troopers and Forrest had 200 to 300 men. The Battle began when a Confederate sympathizer named Mollie Morehead informed Forrest that a Union force was South of town watering their horses on the bank of the Green River.

Forrest divided his force into three groups: one dismounted to attack from the front while concealed by bushes and fences, while two - one of 30 men and one of sixty men - remained mounted to outflank the Union forces. The Union forces were at first unsure as to the identity of the arriving troops, however, they returned fire once Forrest fired the opening shot. The outflanking forces then became embroiled in hand-to-hand combat with the now fleeing Union troops.

Nicknamed "Forest's First Fight," the Battle of Sacramento took place on December 28, 1861. The engagement was one of the earliest in Forrest's career as a Commander of the Cavalry, and it featured several examples of tactics and traits which would become hallmarks of his military career, including the division of his forces, outflanking and encirclement, concealment and personally leading Cavalry charges.

**Dennis Kohlmann, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
Wednesday, April 10, 2019  
HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO

**ATTENDANCE – 0**

**MEMBERS – 0:**

**GUESTS – 0:**

1. There was no meeting in April due to the remodeling of the Hof Brau. The remodeling was still in progress.
2. The next Board Meeting will be Wednesday, May 8, 2019, 10 AM, at Brookfield's Restaurant.
3. The May 8, 2019 speaker is Bernie Quinn and his topic is "Engagements of Hiram Berdan's Sharpshooters."

**Barbara Leone, Secretary**

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance on April 10th was \$6,505.37.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

# Coming Programs for 2019

Date	Speaker	Topic
May 8th	Bernie Quinn	"Engagements of Hiram Berdan's Sharpshooters"
June 12th	Nancy Samuelson	"Colonel John S. "Rip" Ford, Ranger"
July 10th	Robert Bundy	"Rebel Hunters of the Cumberland- -In the Footsteps of the 15th Ohio Volunteer Infantry"
August 14th	Dr. Tad Smith	"The Fuse to the War: The Dred Scott Decision"
September 11th	Richard Sickert	"To Be Determined"
October 9th	James Juanitas	"The Navy in the Civil War"

## 2019 Membership

The 2019 membership renewal is due as of January 1, 2019. 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 any 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**. However, you can submit articles at anytime. Please submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

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

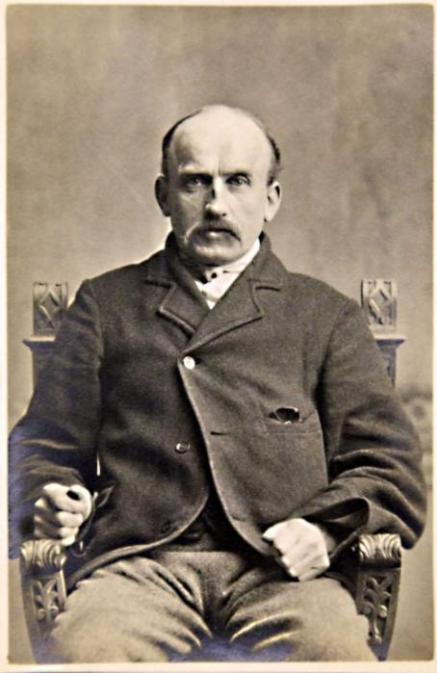
The **Battle Cry** is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization or the Editor. The official address of this organization is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 254702, Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check the web for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

## **Annual Conference on Women & the Civil War**

Friday, July 26 to Sunday, July 28, 2019 - The **Annual Conference on Women & the Civil War** will be held in Williamsburg, Virginia. The weekend's events include lectures by noted historians, and field trips to Historic Jamestowne and James River Plantation sites. This will be the **Society for Women & the Civil War's 20th Conference**, and it is sure to provide a wealth of information around the Conference Theme of "**Women of the Peninsula.**" For Conference information and registration, go to: <http://www.swcw.org/annual-swcw-conference.html> or feel free to contact Pasadena CWRT member Janet Whaley at [Janet1860@charter.net](mailto:Janet1860@charter.net).

# Dr. Thomas Holmes

Thomas Holmes was born in 1817. His family resided at 42 Forsyth Street in New York City. They moved to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, when Thomas was a young boy and he spent the rest of his life there. Thomas graduated from the College of the City of New York. He then went on to the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University, graduating as a medical surgeon in 1845. His first six years out of school were spent as examining physician in the New York City Coroner's Office.



Death and dying was very different in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century than it is now. Most people died at home. Families would sit with their beloved for hours to make sure they were truly dead and would not “wake” up. When it was ascertained that the heart had stopped and life was over, the body was washed with a strong smelling aromatic soap and then covered with ice, if it could be had. Embalming was rarely used before the Civil War. Faces would discolor with settling blood. Bodies would sometimes drip or swell from gases. Loads of lavender and other sweet smelling flowers were placed in the room to ward off the smell of decay. Scented candles were burned to perfume the air.

Thomas Holmes first became interested in the preservation of bodies at medical school. He felt the methods used during dissections were hazardous to the health of students due to the type and strength of the chemicals used: formaldehyde, zinc, mercury, and arsenic. He began to study Egyptian mummies to see the natural ways that bodies could be preserved.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Holmes was commissioned as a Captain in the Army Medical Corps. He began to embalm the bodies of Union soldiers, using the European process of arterial embalming. By opening an artery, flushing out the blood with water and replacing it with his special “embalming fluid,” embalming became cleaner and safer. Now bodies could be preserved until given a “proper burial.”



Colonel Elmer Ellsworth was the first Union officer killed in battle. Ellsworth, a close friend of Lincoln's, was shot and killed on May 24, 1861, while trying to remove a Confederate flag from the roof of a hotel in Alexandria, Virginia. The flag was so large it could be seen from the White House. After receiving permission from Secretary of State William Seward, Dr. Holmes offered his services to the Ellsworth family. Colonel Ellsworth was embalmed and then lay in state in the White House. Later, thousands viewed his open casket in City Hall in Ellsworth's hometown of New York City. All remarked on the beauty and natural appearance of the young Colonel.

President Lincoln was so impressed with Holmes' work that he asked him to train others in the practice of embalming. Holmes set up tents to teach the trade and then charged the private embalmers \$3 a gallon for his embalming fluid. The United States' Government paid the contracting embalmers up to \$80 to embalm an officer and \$30 for the common soldier. (Confederate soldiers were very rarely embalmed.)

Getting a body home in good time and good condition during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was arduous under the best of conditions. During the Civil War, it became more difficult. Railroad ties were blown up. Soldiers were generally buried where they fell. If the body was left too long in the ground, if identification was lost, the soldier would become unidentifiable and one of the vast army of "Unknown" Civil War dead that turned the countryside and farms into burial grounds.

Coffins were not sent to the front. They had to be obtained at the general hospitals and large assembly points. Coffins were made of wood and, though some were lined with zinc, it didn't take long for them to begin to leak and smell. There was no refrigeration and no way to seal the coffins hermetically.

Holmes became known as the "Father of American Embalming." It is believed he embalmed 4,028 soldiers himself. Upon receiving a body to be shipped home, Holmes would inject it with embalming fluid. The corpse was then placed in an Army issue coffin and the name of the deceased and his home address were written on the outside of the box. All letters and personal effects were placed in the coffin.

It is estimated that over 100,000 soldiers were embalmed before burial and many buried in family cemeteries or small churchyards. Arsenic, being the primary embalming agent, often seeped from the wood coffins into the ground near the burial places, contaminating the water supply. To this day, no one really knows if the Civil War dead are still poisoning the land they lay in.

In January of 1865, General Ulysses S. Grant was forced to issue General Order # 39, withdrawing newly issued permits from the embalmers and insisting they stay off the field and away from the soldiers. Until this time, there were no Federal regulations regarding embalming. Some embalmers, like Dr. Richard Burr, would gather dead bodies, embalm them and return them to Washington, DC. Once there, they would contact the families and insist on high fees or they would not release the bodies. Some embalmers started to advertise, "Bodies by us NEVER TURN BLACK." Many of Dr. Holmes' student embalmers were looked upon as vultures. They would approach soldiers before a battle offering them a chance to prepay their own embalming. Even Dr. Holmes would employ salesmen to visit families who had sons fighting in the War.

After the War, Thomas Holmes wanted to distance himself from mortuary practice. He returned to Brooklyn and opened a drug store that sold embalming fluid side by side with root beer. He invested heavily in a health spa and a body bag that doubled as a sleeping bag. Holmes purchased a cargo of fresh beef believing he could preserve the meat to be shipped and eaten later. All the cattle died and he lost over \$17,000 on this venture. At the time of his death, he was also experimenting with embalming gas. Every one of his investments lost money.

Holmes began to suffer from what was known at the time as "softening of the brain," surely the result of all the years spent working with arsenic and other noxious chemicals. He believed he had discovered the cure for leprosy and also a fluid that would kill all the germs known to cause contagious diseases. Holmes embalmed the body of an unknown soldier, dressed him neatly and set him up in a coffin in his shop window to advertise his embalming fluid. Children passing by dissolved into hysterics.

Holmes' last years were spent in and out of lunatic asylums. He died at his residence at 267 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn, NY on January 10, 1900. When coroners were summoned to remove his body, they found embalmed bodies stuffed in closets throughout the house. Also sharing his home were heads and mutilated remains displayed on tables throughout the rooms.

Dr. Holmes specifically requested in his will that he not be embalmed.



Dr. Thomas Holmes is buried in Cypress Hills Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY, in a family tomb. Twenty four members of his family are buried there. One source says he had a wife, Louisa. All other sources say he never married or had children.

**Submitted by Judith Breitstein**

# 2019 CIVIL WAR INSTITUTE SUMMER CONFERENCE

## 2019 CIVIL WAR INSTITUTE SUMMER CONFERENCE

Join us, June 14-19, 2019, for a blockbuster year of CWI speakers! We are thrilled to feature eminent Civil War scholars, Gary W. Gallagher, Ed Ayers, Carol Reardon, and Peter Carmichael within our line-up of over 35 distinguished speakers and tour guides.

Full-time and part-time packages available!

Register now at [www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference](http://www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference)



CIVIL WAR INSTITUTE  
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### TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- *Gettysburg: A Staff Ride*
- *Stonewall Jackson at Frederickburg and Chancellorsville*
- *Mosby's Confederacy: Part II*
- *Treasures of the National Civil War Museum*
- *Voices of Antietam*

with guides Carol Reardon, Dennis Frye, Greg Mertz, Wayne Motts, and more.

### FEATURING

- Gary Gallagher, *Edward Porter Alexander*
- Ed Ayers, *The Thin Line of Freedom: The Civil War and Emancipation in the Heart of America*
- Peter Carmichael, *The Combat Experience of Civil War Soldiers*
- Earl Hess, *Tactics, Terrain, and Trenches in the Atlanta Campaign*
- Amy Murrell Taylor, *Em battled Freedom: Journeys Through the Civil War's Refugee Camps*
- Patrick Breen, *Nat Turner's Rebellion*

PLEASE NOTE: 15% discount for all Sacramento Civil War Round Table Members! Please see [www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference](http://www.gettysburg.edu/cwi/conference) for full details.



# 2019 West Coast Civil War Conference

Sponsored by Sacramento Civil War Round Table

## Civil War Leadership, 1861 - 1865

November 8 - 10, 2019, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Sacramento

### Our Speakers are:

**Chris Mackowski:** A Professor of Journalism & Mass Communication at Saint Bonaventure University, & the author of more than 10 books. He works with the National Parks Service & is the founder of the Emerging Civil War Blog.

**David A. Powell:** A Vice-President of Airsped, Inc., a delivery firm. He has published many articles in magazines & historical simulations of different battles. He specializes & leads tours on the Battle of Chickamauga.

**Sarah Kay Bierle:** A Managing Editor for Emerging Civil War's Blog. She has spent the last few years researching, writing, & speaking across the Country about the American Civil War.

**Paul Kahan:** An expert on the political, diplomatic, & economic history of the United States in the Nineteenth Century. Dr. Kahan has published several books & is a former resident of Sacramento.

**Jim Stanbery:** A retired Professor of Political Science and History at Los Angeles Harbor College, and speaker at the West Coast Civil War Conference for more than thirty years. He is a frequent CWRT speaker.

**Theodore P. Savas:** Is an attorney, adjunct college instructor, award-winning author, Partner and Managing Director of Savas Beatie LLC. He specializes in military history and the American Civil War.

**Edwin L. Kennedy Jr.:** A graduate of West Point & former Professor of the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College History Department & Combat Studies. He is the leader of staff rides, including the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Conference cost is \$200 per person which includes Friday dinner, Saturday lunch and dinner, as well as all sessions. A full hotel breakfast buffet is included for guests staying at the Hotel.

Partial day attendance: **Friday Only** is \$50; **Saturday Only** is \$125; **Saturday Dinner and Lecture Only** is \$50; **Sunday Only** is \$25.

There will be a no-host bar set-up Friday and Saturday evenings for your enjoyment before dinner.

For more information, contact Paul Ruud at 530-886-8806 or by contacting [www.sacramentocwrt.com](http://www.sacramentocwrt.com) where information and registration forms will be available.

Room reservations are available by calling Crowne Plaza directly 877-504-0054 or [www.crowneplaza.com](http://www.crowneplaza.com)  
**Crowne Plaza Hotel** has rooms set aside for us at \$139 per night, plus tax. Please mention the Conference.

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Please print this page, fill it out, and return the form with your check for your registration. Make checks payable to:  
**Sacramento CWRT** and mail to: George W. Foxworth, 9463 Salishan Court, Sacramento, CA 95826-5233.

### Name / Organization as you want it on your badge (Please Print):

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_