



Bugle Call Echoes

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

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San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table 2005 Board of Directors

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From the President's Desk

"March Madness" has come to define the outlook for college basketball enthusiasts at this time of the year, but for Civil War enthusiasts the game remains the same. That is, the search for history: whether it is generalship in battles, the role of battles in the final outcome, the details of all those souls who were affected by the war, changes to the landscape from war, or any myriad of the many aspects - legal, political, social, religious, etc. - which each of us call our Madness.

At our next meeting David Davenport will explain exactly why the 79th New York Highlanders are for him a topic of intense madness.

The Board continues to explore the possibility of hosting the West Coast Symposium in November, following the default by the Phoenix group. We have not come to a decision yet.

Brian

For Dinner Reservations our Thurs., March 31st, meeting at the Ramada Inn at the Freeway 41 Shaw offramp ... contact Secretary Phyllis Mann at 229-3778 [afternoons and evenings, please].



Obituary

Norval C. Wills

The editorial staff of *Bugle Call* was saddened to learn of the death of Norval C. Wills, aged 84. Norval, a native of Fresno County, was a member of the 9th Armored Division of the U.S. Army from 1941 to 1945. His unit was the last horse-drawn artillery in the army. He was captured at the Battle of the Bulge on December 31, 1944 and liberated on April 28, 1945.

Norval was well-known to members of the reenacting community. He and Anne, his wife of 59 years, were involved with "mountain man rendezvous" for many years. More importantly he was a "founding father" of Civil War Reenacting. In 1974 he created D Battery of the 5th U.S. Artillery of the first reenacting organization in California.

Norval was a remarkably skilled artilleryman. Having acquired "blue prints" for several different Civil War era cannon he built limbers, tubes, and caissons for at least five guns still used by reenactors. These are a half-scale 6 pound howitzer, a ¾ scale "Napoleon", a full-scale "Weard", a full-scale 2 pound Woodruff, and a full-scale 12 pound mountain howitzer. He engaged in reenacting until poor eyesight forced his retirement in 2000.

Norval was laid to rest at the Clovis District Cemetery on Monday, February 14, 2005, following a service at the Boice Funeral Home in Old Town Clovis. The family asks that remembrances be made in his name to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, 770 E. Shaw #217, Fresno, CA 93710.

AFTER ACTION REPORT SJVCWRT MEETING of 2/24/05

By Ron Vaughan

The 16 members present enjoyed a great meal and an entertaining talk by Phyllis Mann. Her topic was "Old Abe the Battle Eagle". If you think a talk about an eagle is unimportant, or a "bird brain idea", Confederate Gen. Stirling Price did not think so. At the Battle of Corinth, he saw the bird circling in the air over the battlefield, and offered a bounty to anyone who could shoot him down. Gen. Price must have had an idea of the morale boost that Old Abe provided to the 8th Wisconsin Regt. There is a monument with a statue of Old Abe at the Vicksburg Battlefield Park.

The story began when Chief Blue Sky captured the eaglet and traded him to Mr. Daniel McCann. The family loved to play music and taught the eagle to dance. When the 8th Wisc. Regt. was forming, McCann offered him as a mascot. Capt. Perkins of "C" Co. paid \$2.50 for the bald eagle, had a 5 ft. high perch constructed, and created a new rank of "Eagle Bearer". To the delight of the soldiers, when the regimental band played he would strut and flap his wings, and he would spread his wings whenever the men cheered. Old Abe understood bugle calls and would lay down when the soldiers went prone under fire. He would become agitated at the sight of Confederate uniforms, and thus helped discover a Rebel messenger attempting to infiltrate through the lines. Old Abe provided amusement for the soldiers in camp, and sometimes irritation when he tipped over water buckets, bit through shoe laces, and pilfered things—like an officer's chicken dinner!

After the war, Old Abe was kept in the basement of the Wisconsin capitol building, and shown off at veteran's fund raisers, displayed at the 1876 Centennial, and appeared with Grant at the Republican Presidential Convention.

Database lists CW soldiers all in one place

Service records of 6.3 million Confederate, Union troops on-line

Civil War buffs, historians and people adding branches to their family trees can now go to a single source to find service records of 6.3 million Union and Confederate soldiers.

Completion of a database called the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System was announced last month by the National Park Service.

"Never in one place could one get this information so easily," said a spokesman. Volunteers from the Mormon Church, Federation of Genealogical Societies, and United Daughters of the Confederacy did the monumental task of assembling information from various sources and entering it at www.civilwar.nps.gov.

This should be one of the best tools available for people studying their own lineage and genealogy.

Special thanks to Charlie Jorgensen for this article.

Civil War Preservation Update

I recently received a Winter 2005 newsletter from Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT) and a summary of some of their activities follows.

In March they purchased a 16.37 acre parcel of land on the Talley Farm ridge, where Stonewall Jackson led a flank attack during the battle of Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863. This was the fourth purchase of land in this part of the battlefield since 1998. The total acreage purchased by CVBT at this site is 50.05 acres in the last eight years. This shows the long-term benefits of a sustained effort by just one of the battlefield preservation groups.

In December, CVBT acquired an easement for 104 acres on the Fredericksburg battlefield. This open ground, known as Latimer's Knoll, was part of the fighting on the southern end of the field, on December 13, 1862. The value of this easement is nearly \$2 million, but did not cost CVBT anything except its time and expertise. An easement does not include a title to the land, but rather allows for use of the property now and into the future.

When the year began, CVBT had protected a total of 224 acres. At year end, CVBT had helped to preserve a cumulative total of 484 acres.

Tom

Peninsula Civil War Round Table announces Special Speaker for lunch and talk on April 19, 2005

Edward Bonekemper, author of 'A Victor Not a Butcher: U. S. Grant's Overlooked Military Genius' as recently featured on C-SPAN.

Historian Edward Bonekemper cuts through the fog politicized history to reveal why US Grant was the greatest general of the Civil War. Author Edward H. Bonekemper identifies the key elements of Grant's successes as a general and traces his unparalleled record. He explains how as a military strategist and leader, Grant surpassed his much-lionized rival, Robert E. Lee. Bonekemper proves how it is no historical accident that Grant accepted the surrender of three entire Confederate armies.

To find out more about this presentation and the Peninsula Civil War Round Table see:
www.PeninsulaCivilWarRoundTable.org.

\$18 per person for lunch and talk at noon on Tuesday, April 19th, at Dominic's at Popular Creek, 1700 Coyote Point Drive, San Mateo, CA 94401 Check on-line for reservations.

Davenport Delivers March 31st Round Table Presentation

David Davenport will speak at our March 31st meeting about the 79th New York, a "Scottish" Regiment. He is a well-known Civil War re-enactor and longtime member of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table.

In "civilian life" David is a history teacher, most recently at Fresno City College where he was first employed in August 1990. Prior to this time he taught geography and was then uninterested in the Civil War despite living for one school year in a townhouse among the earthworks on the slopes of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia.

At the invitation of Cathy Riehart, David portrayed Lt. Col. James Olney, commander of the Union forces at Ft. Miller during the Civil War, at the Kearney Park Civil War Revisited in 1993. These troops reinforced the garrison at Camp Babbit, near Visalia, when summoned by Col. Evans. Olney was a "spoiled rich kid" from Rhode Island with no military experience, having served in a unit which saw no action in the War with Mexico. This was fortunate because Olney was said to be a drunkard, appearing for inspection without his trowsers on at least one occasion.

The location of Fort Miller is now covered by the waters of Lake Millerton but the original block house has been rebuilt and is undergoing restoration at a site near the Table Mountain Casino. Ironically, the Native Americans who operate the Casino are descendents of the "Indians" who were forced by the army to build the original Ft. Miller in 1851.

Professor Davenport is a member of two reenacting organizations, the CWRS and the ACWA. In the former he is a private in the 6th Iowa Veteran Volunteer Infantry, a unit raised at Burlington, Iowa, in response to Lincoln's call for volunteers. Interestingly Burlington was founded in 1831 by David's 3d great-grandfather, James Gray, a native of Burlington, Vermont.

As a member of the American Civil War Association David is a private in the 79th New York, which seems appropriate, given his mother's Scottish ancestry.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - Membership year is from January to December

Please begin/renew my membership in the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

___ INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY membership - \$25.00

___ STUDENT membership or NEWSLETTER ONLY - \$12.50

*\$5.00 of each membership goes toward CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

Name _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

Bring this membership form and your check to our next monthly meeting,
or mail it to our P. O. Box below:

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