



Bugle Calls



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH 2015

Wow what a month February has been. We have been working hard at getting ready for the West Coast Conference. Ron has been setting up the speakers and working on the program. I have been running around trying to make arrangements for hotels in Tulare. It has all been quite an interesting process. While we have been doing this Mike Spencer has been compiling a list from the last several conferences so that we can communicate with people who have participated in previous conferences. So things are progressing.

Ron put on a good program at our last meeting. His program was about the end of the war in Texas. I am sure that he will make a great report about it in his minutes of the meeting.

I have been on the road for most of the end of the month. I was on a Civil War tour of the end of the Red River Campaign of 1864. We were centered in Shreveport Louisiana and went north into Arkansas and followed Union General Steel's march from Little Rock South to link up with Union General Banks as Banks worked his way up the Red River along with a Union fleet commanded by Admiral Porter.

Banks was defeated at the battle of Mansfield and the next day at the battle of Pleasant Hills. We

went to both battlefields. What is happening in that area is a company is strip mining low grade coal on the remains of the battlefield. I have some pictures of the strip-mining in this report.

One of the exciting things that I learned and got to see was why Porter almost lost his fleet because the Red River fell so low that his ships couldn't get back past the rapids at Alexandria. We found out that the Confederates redirected the Red River just below Shreveport and let the water flow out into the vast flatland that is located in area. Most information about this campaign doesn't know about this crucial move that the Confederates had accomplished. It was a very interesting and exciting program.

I will be looking forward to seeing you on March 12 at Denneys on Shaw Ave. in Clovis. As usual, if you want dinner come about 6 P.M. The meeting itself will start at 7.

Yours

Michael Green



Panorama strip mine



Shovel in hole



Danger sign

These are pictures from Louisiana. This is a coal strip mine and it is on ground that was fought over during the Red River Campaign of 1864.



Look at the size of that bucket



Panorama reclaiming the land

West Coast Civil War Round Table Conference - 2015 Speakers

Our 2015 seminars are listed below and more information about our seminars can be found at www.civilwarseminars.org. If you would like more information, or are interested in us mailing hard copies of our brochures to your Round Table, please contact me.

"Ed Bearss Symposium: Leadership and Combat in the Civil War"

April 10-12, 2015

This event features speakers and guides including Ed Bearss, Dennis Frye, Tom Huntington, Perry Jamieson, Wayne Motts, John Priest, Dr. Richard Sommers, and others. The weekend will include sessions and a bus tour of Gettysburg. Based in Chambersburg, PA and **back by popular demand**.

"On the Trail of Those Damn Black Hats: Weekend with Lance Herdegen and the Iron Brigade"

May 15-17, 2015

Weekend will include a bus and walking tour of South Mountain, Antietam, and Gettysburg along with sessions by Lance Herdegen, Tom Clemens, Gordon Dammann, Joe Mieczkowski, Dan Welch and others. Based in Chambersburg, PA.

"The End of the War: Richmond, Petersburg, and Appomattox"

July 22-26, 2015

Join Dr. Richard Sommers, Dr. James "Bud" Robertson, Ed Bearss, Robert E. L. Krick, Lt. Col. Ralph Peters, Chris Calkins, Ted Alexander, and many others as we explore 1864 and 1865 battle sites. Based in Richmond, VA.

"Lincoln"

Sept. 24-27, 2015

Join Ed Bearss, Bob Allen, Dr. Edward Steers, and others with bus tours of Gettysburg, the John Wilkes Booth Escape tour, and sessions by leading Lincoln historians. Based in Chambersburg, PA.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

SJVCWRT MEETING OF 2/12/65

By Ron Vaughan

*Meeting called to order by President Green at 7:00. 12 persons were present at the meeting. We missed Walt and the Moats.

*Since it was Lincoln's Birthday, and Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Scott were attired as the First Couple, we all sang "Happy Birthday" to President Lincoln!

*Treasurer Lisa reported our bank balance is \$1898, plus \$597 in cash and checks.

*Patty reported that she still needs to find speakers for March and April, but has speakers for the rest of the year.

*I was asked to report on the progress for the Nov. 2015 conference. So far the speakers lined up are Thomas Cartwright on Forrest vs. Wilson's Raid in 1865, Jim Stanbery on The strategic situation in Jan. '65 and early reconstruction, Ron Perisho's 1865 photos. Michael Oddanino on Appomattox & the Causes of the War, Evan Jones on Confederate Veterans (not yet confirmed), Mike Green on Bentonville, Dr. Clague on the progresses made in medicine by 1865, myself on Palmito Ranch and the exodus of bitter enders to Mexico, Jim Collins's Banjo. We have not yet been able to get any big name speakers, but Ted Savas has graciously volunteered to help find a good speaker who can cover Petersburg to Appomattox, and a speaker on the CSS Shenandoah. Other possible topics would be Fort Fisher, the taking of the Mobile Forts. This list pretty much covers almost everything that happened in 1865.

*Brian brought a convention raffle donation, three commemorative coin sets, sent by Mr. & Mrs. Beitzel from Elk Grove.

*Since I was speaking on the war in Texas, I decided to put on a Confederate uniform, to represent a Texas cavalryman, with a display of a typical M.L. Carbine, Griswald revolver, and saber, with a small Texas flag all laid out on a patch-work quilt.

*My topic was the Myths and Mysteries of the Last Battle of the War, at Palmito Ranch.

Many popular histories of the war end with Lee's surrender April 9th 1865, and sometimes Joe Johnston's surrender April 17th is considered the end of the war. However, it was still going on in Texas! Kirby-Smith, Magruder and Walker were determined to fight on, and were preparing last ditch defenses around Austin. March 6, 1865, General Lew Wallace had gone on a secret mission to Point Isabel, to meet with Confederate general Slaughter and Col. Ford, to discuss a fantastic proposal for the Texans to surrender, then rejoin the Union, where upon the combined U.S. and ex-

C.S. forces would join with President Juarez to kick the French out of Mexico. An agreement was reached, but when it was forwarded to General Walker, he rejected it, and reprimanded Slaughter and Ford. Still, both sides recognized a truce in the lower Rio Grande valley. The local leaders felt there was no sense in shedding more blood in a war that seemed to be winding down.

Then Col. Theodore Barrett stirred things up. At age 30, he had been an officer since 1862, but without any combat experience. In 1863 he was appointed Colonel of the 1st Missouri Colored Infantry, which was federalized in 1864 to be the 62nd U.S. Colored Troops. Barrett's unit was part of a brigade garrisoning Brazos Santiago Island off the mouth of the Rio Grande. Brigade Command had evolved upon Barrett, when Brigade commander Col. Jones resigned to go home.

Despite the fact that there was an informal truce, and he had been forbidden to try to capture Brownsville, on May 11th 1865, Barrett ordered Lt. Col. David Branson to take 200 men of the 62nd U.S. Colored Troops, and 50 men of the U.S. 2nd Texas Cavalry (dismounted) to attack the Confederate outpost at Palmito Ranch. Branson had enlisted as a private in 1861, in the 28th Illinois Volunteers. He rose to the rank of Sgt. Major, then was appointed Lt. Col. of the 62nd U.S.C.T.

Why the battle happened is a mystery! Why did Barrett disobey orders and break the truce? Barrett's detractors suggested that he had desired "a little battlefield glory before the war ended altogether." Others theorized that he wanted to get horses for his dismounted cavalry, or needed to forage for food and fodder. Barrett never told anyone his reason.

At 2:00 am on the 12th, the Union troops surrounded the ranch and attacked, only to find it empty, except for three sick Texans. Some believe the Confederates had been warned of the Union approach by French or Mexicans across the river. During the afternoon, Capt. William Robinson counter-attacked with less than 100 men of the 2nd Texas Cavalry (CSA). The aggressive rebels made Branson think he was outnumbered, so he fell back to White's Ranch. Both sides sent for reinforcements.

When word of the Yankee invasion reached Brownsville, Gen. Slaughter was unnerved. There were few Confederates left in Brownsville. Slaughter said they should evacuate the town and retreat. Col. Salmon RIP Ford's explosive reply was, "You can retreat and go to hell if you wish! These are my men, and I am going to fight!"

Ford was a fantastic but now nearly forgotten frontier figure. At nearly fifty, Ford had lived a picturesque career—doctor, lawyer, journalist, two-term state senator, captain of the Texas Rangers and a veteran of the Mexican American War. Restless, impatient, brilliant, sometimes erratic, yet above all compulsively self-disciplined, Ford was a man who instinctively entered into the middle of the action. Profane in the extreme and a born gambler, he was free with both "his money and his pistol," a leader of renown and a diplomat of considerable merit. He was nicknamed "Rip" for rest in peace, because he had signed so many Confederate soldier death certificates. His

men admired him and loyally served him during the war. Ford had raised the Cavalry of the West, which eventually was re-named the 2nd Texas Cavalry.

After the meeting with Slaughter, Ford sent out orders for his scattered cavalry men and artillery horse teams to gather from their grazing areas. It took most of the night for them to assemble. Slaughter had some citizen militia to defend the town, but he was worried that the infamous border raider, Juan Cortinas, might make a surprise attack, so he crossed over to Matamoros to negotiate with the French. They agreed to send over troops to defend Brownsville, if needed. Also, because Ford was short of gunners, they sent over a dozen or so artillerymen to help. A couple of myths about the battle is that a unit of the French Foreign Legion and or Imperial Mexican Cavalry participated in the battle, but the truth is that there were only the few gunners. Another myth is the assertion that Santos Benevides' Tejano Regiment was in the battle (it is even marked on the map), but actually it was stationed 200 miles to the north.

After an all night march Barrett had come up with the 34th Indiana Veteran Volunteer Regt. (200 men). The 34th Indiana was an experienced regiment, having seen combat at Shiloh and Vicksburg. It was reorganized in December 1863 as a "veteran" regiment, re-enlisting veteran troops of several regiments whose original enlistments had expired. The 34th was commanded by Lt. Col. Robert Morrison. Only 25 years old, he was a captain in 1861. He was a capable leader and an experienced fighter, who earned his promotion to Lt. Col. in Dec. 1863. Unfortunately, he was not in command of the brigade!

As the Sun rose on the 13th, the final show-down began to unfold. Barrett decided to advance his combined force towards Palmito Ranch. He had already made some tactical mistakes and miscalculations: He had no artillery or cavalry for reconnaissance of the unfamiliar terrain, his troops were exhausted by the night marches, he had unfounded over-confidence, and had underestimated the enemy.

Two companies of the 34th, under Lt. Charles Jones led the advance past Palmito Ranch. They soon encountered Robinson's cavalry, who skirmished and slowly retired. Barrett had not given any instructions to Jones on how far to advance, so Jones's skirmishers kept pushing ahead. Jones felt very isolated and lacking support. Eventually Col. Barrett rode up and asked Jones "How are you getting along?" Jones replied, "Very well, Sir." Then Barrett inquired of Jones, "What do you think is best to do?" Junior officers are rarely asked to give advice to Colonels, but Jones ventured to point out that "It is not at all probable that infantry can catch cavalry." After a little more skirmishing, Barrett eventually realized that further advance would be profitless, and deferentially told Lt. Jones, "Well, if you think it best, we will return to the bluffs and eat supper." It was about 3:00 pm, and all they had to show for their efforts was exhaustion, sore feet, hunger, and sweat soaked uniforms. Historian Jeffery Hunt opined that Barrett's real accomplishment was to put his force far out on

a limb!

The Union troops stacked arms munched on hard tack or lay down and tried to sleep. Col. Barrett ordered out no skirmish line or picket posts, to provide security. He only posted four men on 60 foot high Palmito Hill to keep an eye on the surrounding terrain.

Meanwhile, Col. Ford had assembled about 200 troopers, with 6 cannons, and they were riding to link up with Robinson. About 3:30, Ford arrived near Palmito Hill, and made a personal reconnaissance of the Union position. His 300 troopers faced 500 federal infantry. What the Confederates lacked in numbers, they made up for with mobility and the firepower of their artillery. Both sides were tired out by the activities of the past two days.

What was most important to Ford at this moment was the question--were his men ready to fight and risk their lives in what could be a fight for a cause that was already lost? Ford eased his horse through the ranks, bantering with the men. He found out that they were willing and eager to fight!

He then devised a battle plan to trap Barrett's force. Ford never gave a thought to standing on the defensive. The Union brigade was concentrated at the bottom of a great loop of the Rio Grande. If he could get a force to cut off the Union at the north-eastern end of the loop, Barrett would likely be doomed! Ford deployed his troopers in a growth of chaparral on the edge of the plain, with Captain Wilson's Btn on the right, with 2 guns manned by Frenchmen, and two more cannon in the rear on the road. Their job was to pin the Federals. Robinson's Btn deployed on the left, with 2 guns, with orders to circle around behind the Union to cut off their line of retreat.

About 4:00 pm, Confederate muskets and artillery opened fire. No one had expected a Confederate counter-attack! As the drummers beat the long roll, and the soldiers fell in, Barrett's was at first at a loss as to what to do. Soon he ordered the 34th Indiana to deploy on top of Palmito Hill, and the 62nd on their right. But with the dust clouds of Rebel cavalry moving towards his rear, the more experienced Branson suggested they needed to get back to Palmito ranch. Barrett finally made up his mind to say, "Very well then, we will retreat in good order." Jeffery Hunt wrote, "Having belatedly come to a solution to his tactical problem, unfortunately, his execution of the withdrawal left a great deal to be desired."

Barrett ordered two 34th companies under Lt. Templin to deploy forward as skirmishers. They would be the rear guard. Then he ordered the infantry to march off by the right flank at the double, 165 steps per minute. No one thought to give any orders to the Templin's unsupported skirmishers! Rip Ford saw an opportunity—he ordered his main body to charge and gobble up the isolated skirmish line. With cries of "Rip! Rip!" and a rebel yell, nearly 200 cavalry charged toward the 50 Hoosiers. Barrett realized he needed a new rear guard, so he ordered the U.S. 2nd Texas to deploy.

Ford had been delayed by rounding up the prisoners from Templin's command. When the Confederates came upon the U.S. 2nd Texas, the earlier scene was repeated, except this time many the hapless Unionist were able to scatter into the chapparel. Some tried to swim the river and drowned, or were caught and killed by Mexican bandits.

Soon Robinson's Confederates were approaching the critical point where the road passed by the river loop. Barrett ordered two companies of the 62nd to shake out as skirmishers. This time the skirmishers had the desired effect, and the Confederates pulled up their horses. The infantry had won the race to this point, partly because of the longer distance the rebels had to travel, the terrain was difficult for the horses to traverse, and the Texas steeds were just as worn out as the Union soldiers.

The retreat would continue, and long after dark, the Union troops would finally reach Boca Chica, and the safety of Union heavy guns and reinforcements.

Ford had a fantastic victory, but not the complete one he had hoped for. Still, he had captured over 100 prisoners, and chased the Union invaders back where they came from. The cost of the victory was only 1 Texan killed and 5 wounded. The Union had lost 4 killed, 12 wounded, and 101 prisoners. Col. Barrett's dreams of glory were in tatters. He would try to put the blame on Col. Morrison, and courts-martial him. (Morrison was found innocent.)

The battlefield today is much as it was, prairie and chapparel. There is only one historical marker and a couple of roadside signs.

CIVIL WAR HUMOR

From "The Blue & Grey Laughing"

"When our army (Confederate) entered Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, some of the Union females of the town, relying on their sex and the gallantry of the 'Rebels' for protection, jawed the troops from windows and doors as they passed by. There was one woman, whose tongue, we suppose, could not do justice to the occasion, who flourished from her bosom a small Union flag and who, made all manner of ugly faces at our soldiers as they marched along. But ... a tall, ragged Rebel in the ranks who, fixing his eye on the flag, said 'Madam, you had better tear that thing from your bosom—we Rebels are hell on storming breastworks, when Yankee colors are on them!'"

CIVIL WAR EVENTS OF MARCH 1865

March 2: Battle of Waynesborough-- George Custer defeats Early.

March 4: Lincoln's Address: Outlines his attitude toward restoring the Union "with malice toward none; with charity toward all.

March 8: Battle of Kinston, NC-- Gen. Schofield moves from Wilmington to link up with Sherman. Gen. Bragg's troops attempt to block him, but are defeated.

March 11: Sherman captures Fayetteville, NC.

March 16: Battle of Averasborough, NC-- Gen. Hardee attempts to halt the Federal advance near this small town.

March 19-21: Battle of Bentonville, NC—Slocum encountered Johnston and was attacked. Heavy fighting. Sporadic fighting the next day. On the 21st a Union Div. tried to cut off the Confederates, but was forced back. Confederates retreated.

March 22: Gen. Wilson began a raid on Selma, AL.

March 25: Battle of Ft. Stedman-- Gen. Gordon breaks the Union line around Petersburg, and heads for the Union supply base at City Point. Overwhelming Union forces counter-attack and drive them back, recapturing Ft. Stedman.

March 27: Siege of Spanish Fort, AL-- Gen. Canby's forces besiege the fort, one of the defenses of Mobile. It is finally captured on April 8th.

March 31: Battles of White Oak Rd. and Dinwiddie Courthouse—Grant attempts to extend his lines east of Petersburg with Sheridan's Cavalry and elements of the 5th Corps. They are defeated by Pickett's forces.



Ron Vaughan in Texas Uniform



Wayne Scott AKA Mr. Lincoln



Jeanne Scott AKA Mrs. Lincoln