

ECHOES

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Civil War Round Table
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JUNE PROGRAM

June's program will feature Robert M. Wash on the topic, "The Frémonts—John and Jessie, The Rest of the Story." The talk will include John's brief command of the West during "The War Between the States" and their dramatic after years.



Gen. John Charles Frémont

Mr. Wash is a retired lawyer who served as Fresno County Counsel for many years. His avocation has been primarily California and local history. He is the grandson of a Confederate veteran and member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Past president of the Fresno County Historical Society, Mr. Wash has authored many articles on California and local history.

The meeting will be held at the Remington Restaurant on Clovis Avenue on Thursday, June 20 (note: this is not the usual meeting day). The no-host cocktail hour begins at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m.

Cost is \$15 (\$10 for students under 25). Send your check (made payable to the SJVCWRT) to PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755, or contact Wayne Bowen at 291-4885 to advise him you will be attending the meeting. Seating cannot be guaranteed without a reservation.

REENACTING HISTORY

by Steve Madden

Reenacting is not new. Bringing the drama of war to an audience for enlightenment and entertainment should be a "no-brainer." Emperors in ancient times entertained the masses by recreating their victories through extraordinary staged battles. These enormous stadium spectacles must have been exciting.

Today, anyone can enter a video store and rent a movie with more action and drama than Caesar could imagine. Civil War reenactments can't compete with the movies or a Roman circus, but they do offer something. The trick is to understand and appreciate their strengths and limitations. This article will try to do so.

If war is Hell, you don't want it recreated. This simple and Almighty truth should temper any appreciation of reenactments. The nature of war is such that it cannot—and should not—be accurately recreated.

While admitting that war is a great evil, should reenacting have nothing to offer the serious Civil War student? The answer is that despite the difficulties in recreating a war, reenactors have much to offer and should be expected to do so.

In a conversation at the first West Coast Civil War Conference, historian Grady McWhiney said, "The thing with reenactors is that they have energy, passion—and time. I don't have the time to focus on the details they do. My job as a professor is to get them to harness their energy and interests through serious

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(Reenacting History continued)

scholarship." Anyone who has sat around a reenactors' campfire and heard arguments about this obscure carbine and that shade of gray can attest to the focus on details. The study of history is certainly advanced through this detailed, although restricted, scholarship.

Grady's comments are typical of a great man and a scholar, and refute one argument against reenactors. Many professors dismiss reenactors as upstarts and troublemakers, much too narrowly focused on too many narrow topics to be of scholarly use. Grady would tell you that a teacher's job is to encourage a student to study, not to criticize a student for studying too diligently. A teacher's job is to provide new ideas and new tools that will better lead a student down the path he or she is determined to take. And reenactors are determined, if nothing else, in choosing the paths they will take.

Reenactors and reenactments have much to offer the serious historian. First, the best reenactors have camps and equipment that are authentic and accurate, a living time capsule. The focus on camp details was not the interest of the average soldier. The men who fought the war saw it as just that: the war. Their letters, diaries and post-war papers concentrated on the fighting they saw and their role in it. Historians who use these resources are limited to that focus: campaigns and battles. Reenactors may run into many limitations in reenacting a battle, but they shouldn't have problems recreating an accurate Civil War camp.

Second, even the worst reenactors can be used to provide perspective for battlefield photographs. Happily, the best battlefield histories and commentaries now include pictures of the fields that provide important perspectives. The problem is that without men to give the ultimate perspective—how did the field look with a line of battle upon it—the reader sees a mere landscape. Reenactors provide the perspective and authenticity to turn a landscape into a battlefield.

Regretfully, many of those who reenact the war know little about it. Look around you at a serious Civil War gathering. How many able bodied men are reenactors? The fact is that when it comes to round tables and conferences, reenactors are few and far between. Sadly, reenacting attracts many who want to play war and picnic with their families. What playing and picnicking have to do with a serious study of the Second War for Independence has never been clear.

However, what is clear is that the reenacting community has failed the historical community. Reenacting companies have camps that are loaded with modern comforts and sleeping bags, more tents than a regiment would employ, coolers and plastic that never existed until the Vietnam War, plus more superfluous, incompetent and harmful officers and more stupid and obese yahoos than ever cursed any volunteer American army. The truth is, most reenacting companies couldn't exist a week in the field.

In truth, reenacting means burning precious powder where no one is shot, or injuring fellow reenactors at close range with ill-planned close combat. It means driving a truck into camp and unloading more 20th Century gear than a thousand Boy Scouts would be ashamed to use. What does this have to do with recreating a Civil War battlefield? Not a thing. Not one damn thing.

What is clear is that since the Civil War Centennial, reenacting has grown but not grown up. Professional historians have much to teach reenactors, but they also have much to learn. Returning to the initial argument—that war is an evil that should not be recreated—it is important that all realize the enormity of the evil must be fully understood and that ignorance is an evil that must be overcome together.

Steve is a member of the Long Beach CWRT and reenacts with the 1st Texas.

DUES

Annual dues for the San Joaquin Valley CWRT are \$25, \$40 for families, \$10 for a newsletter subscription only. If you haven't joined the round table yet and wish to do so, send your check made payable to SJVCWRT to PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755.

DONATIONS

Our thanks go to The Civil War Society and publishers of The Civil War News for donating to the SJVCWRT a year's subscription to their publications to be used in our raffle drawing.

Five prizes were given out at the May meeting, including "Lee's Last Campaign" by Clifford Dowdey, "Soldiers Blue and Gray" by James I. Robertson, a bottle of Chenin Blanc, a packet of four publications (issues of recent copies of Civil War News, Civil War Times Illustrated and America's Civil War) and a box of notecards depicting scenes from Gettysburg Military Park. A total of \$57 was collected from the sale of tickets.

Donated items for the raffle are appreciated. Barbara Moats is the contact person.

Other donations:

From Ballantine Publications - a copy of the newly released "Gods and Generals" by Jeff Shaara, the prequel to "Killer Angels" by Michael Shaara, Jeff's father. This newly released book deals with four Civil War generals: Stonewall Jackson, Winfield Scott Hancock, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Robert E. Lee during the period of time from John Brown's capture at Harpers Ferry in 1859 to just before the battle at Gettysburg.

From HERITAGEPAC - a copy of the Warren Map, produced by the Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides. This map of the Battlefield at Gettysburg was surveyed and drawn under the direction of Gen. G. K. Warren, Major of Engineers from October 21, 1868, to October 23, 1869. Historian J. B. Bachelder assisted in the project.

Both "Gods and Generals" and the Gettysburg Battlefield map will be raffled at a future meeting of the round table.

DISCUSSION GROUP

General Joe Johnston, in describing Stonewall Jackson's assignment in the Shenandoah Valley, stated, "After it had become evident that the Valley was to be invaded by an army too strong to be encountered by Jackson's Division, that officer was instructed to endeavor to employ the invaders in the Valley, but without exposing himself to the danger of defeat, by keeping so near the enemy as to prevent him from making any considerable detachment to reinforce McClellan, but not so near that he might be compelled to fight."

A discussion group to study the Shenandoah Valley Campaigns of 1862 and 1864 will begin meeting in June for 6-8 weeks. At the first meeting on June 27, 1996, a bibliography will be distributed along with maps pertinent to the campaigns.

Meetings will be held at Ken and Barbara Moats' home, 4780 North Delno, Fresno, beginning at 7:15 p.m. For further information, contact Barbara or Ken at 229-3654. Everyone is welcome to attend.



Army Signal-Telegraph

PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

Donations have been sent recently to the following organizations in the name of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table:

- Friends of the National Park at Gettysburg
- James Longstreet Memorial Fund
- HERITAGEPAC

\$5 of each member's yearly dues is earmarked for preservation. Also, throughout the year, contributions are sent to various preservation groups from funds raised from the raffle, etc.

WEST COAST CIVIL WAR CONFERENCE

November 8-10, 1996
Red Lion Hotel
San Jose, California

"BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS OF THE CIVIL WAR"

Speakers include:

- ***** *John Hennessy, Historian at Fredericksburg*
- ***** *Charles P. Roland, author of "The Confederacy" and "Albert Sidney Johnston: Soldier of Three Republics"*
- ***** *Ted Savas, co-founder of Savas/Woodbury Publishers*
- ***** *Mark Stephens, former director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites*
- ***** *Jerry Russell, noted preservationist and founder of Civil War Round Table Associates*

Full registration: \$120 before October 1,
\$140 after October 1

For more details, contact Don Pfeuffer,
408/378-4464, or David Lang, 408/735-8092.

BOARD MEETING

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for Thursday, July 11, 1996, from 4 to 6 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Moats' home, 4780 North Delno in Fresno.

All round table members are welcome to attend board meetings.

JULY NEWSLETTER

Items for the July issue of the newsletter should be sent to Carol Berry, 1010 Bel Air Drive, Merced, CA 95340, by July 15, 1996.

UPCOMING EVENTS

***"Above and Beyond Duty" is the title of the second symposium on Lt. General James Longstreet to be held September 28-29, 1996, in Richmond, Virginia. Guest speakers include William Garrett Piston, Carol Reardon, Robert E. L. Krick and Richard DiNardo. The symposium is sponsored by The General James Longstreet Memorial Committee. Contact Debbie Petite, PO Box 10045, San Jose, CA 95157 for details.

***Jeff Shaara will be at the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum and Research Library in Wilmington, CA, on June 15, 1996, to autograph copies of "Gods and Generals." Contact the museum at 310/548-7509 for further details.

***The Civil War Education Association presents seminars throughout the year in various parts of the country. From July 17 to 21, 1996, they are sponsoring "Cavalry Operations in the Eastern Theater," in Winchester, Virginia, with trips to Brandy Station, Aldie, Middleburg, Upperville, and the Opequon River area. Proceeds will go to the Brandy Station Foundation. For further information contact Bob Maher at 800/298-1861.

***The Vicksburg Campaign led by Ed Bearss is scheduled for October 3-6, 1996, in Jackson, Mississippi. Speakers include Bearss, Dr. Bobby Roberts, Terrence Winschel of Vicksburg NMP, David Madden, and Dr. John Simon. Tours will include stops at Grand Gulf, Port Gibson, Bruinsburg and Vicksburg. Call 501/225-3996 for more information.

***"Shiloh: The Western Campaign of 1862" is being offered by HistoryAmerica Tours September 19-22, 1996. Stacy Allen, historian guide, tracks Union troop movements from Dover, Tennessee, and the nearby battle for Fort Donelson through Shiloh to the strategic railroad junction at Corinth, Mississippi. HistoryAmerica Tours can be reached at 800/628-8542.





Last Confederate Gun at Gettysburg

REENACTMENT NEWS

The calendar for the National Civil War Association (NCWA) for the remainder of the year includes public reenactments on the following dates:

July 13-14	Naval Weapons Station, Concord
Aug 10-11	Johnston House, Half Moon Bay
Sept 7-8	Pioneer Park, Nevada City
Oct 12-13	Kearney Park, Fresno
Nov 2-3	Kautz Ironstone Winery, Murphys

The NCWA recorded event information line (408)927-7651 provides further details about the above events.

THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OFFICERS FOR 1996 ARE:

President	Bill Head
Vice President	Barbara Moats
Secretary	Carol Berry
Treasurer	Wayne Bowen

Other board members are:

Membership	Linda Clague
Publicity	Tim Johnson
Newsletter Editor	Verne Cole
Historian	Rick Kubiak
Immediate Past Presidents	John Taylor Charlie Jorgensen

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Change of address? Call Wayne Bowen at 291-4885.

THE BATTLE OF CHAMPION HILL

When General Ulysses Grant, Union commander of the Army of the Tennessee, learned that Confederate forces were preparing to march east from Edwards Station, Mississippi, he ordered his soldiers at nearby Bolton and Raymond to meet the rebel forces. First contact was made with Confederate pickets by the southernmost column of the Federal forces at the Davis Plantation in the morning hours of May 16, 1863. Confederate General John C. Pemberton then deployed three divisions along a three-mile line, placing pickets at the crest of Champion Hill, his left flank. When Pemberton learned that Union forces were marching on his left, more troops were sent to the crest of the hill, and the battle began in earnest.

General Grant, who arrived at the field around 10 a.m., made the Champion House his headquarters. Mrs. Matilda Champion, who was in the building when the fighting began, escaped with her four children, some valuables and extra clothing. Colonel Champion was taking part in the battle.

Confederate resistance was eventually broken and the rebel army began a retreat across Baker's Creek towards Vicksburg. Confederate General Lloyd Tilghman, left to guard the army's rear, was killed on Cotton Hill as he directed cannon placement. Tilghman was buried in Vicksburg but, at the request of his sons, was reburied some years later in New York City. A marker stands at the spot on the battlefield where he fell.

The fight at Champion Hill is considered by some to be the decisive battle of the Vicksburg Campaign. Vicksburg was soon under siege and fell July 4, 1863. The loss of Vicksburg helped give the North control of the Mississippi River and split the Confederacy in two.

Pemberton's losses from the battle at Champion Hill were 3,840 killed, wounded and missing out of 25,000 troops. Of Grant's 32,000 troops, losses numbered 2,441.

Source: Champion Hill: A Battlefield Guide by Terrence J. Winschel

TESTING

by Rick Kubiak

Match the famous Union or Confederate general with his sometimes equally famous war horse.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Richard Ewell | a. Billy |
| 2. Phil Sheridan | b. Sam |
| 3. Robert E. Lee | c. Cincinnati |
| 4. George B. McClellan | d. Traveller |
| 5. Ulysses S. Grant | e. Bayard |
| 6. George Meade | f. Almond Eye |
| 7. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson | g. Fire-eater |
| 8. William T. Sherman | h. Highfly |
| 9. "Jeb" Stuart | i. Old Sorrel |
| 10. George Thomas | j. Rifle |
| 11. Joseph Hooker | k. Nellie Grey |
| 12. Phil Kearny | l. Lookout |
| 13. Albert Sidney Johnston | m. Baldy |
| 14. Fitzhugh Lee | n. Daniel Webster |
| 15. Benjamin Butler | o. Rienzi |

Answers:
1j, 2o, 3d, 4n, 5c, 6m, 7i, 8b, 9h, 10a, 11l, 12e, 13g, 14k, 15f

Source: The Photographic History of the Civil War by Robert S. Lanier, Managing Editor, "War-Horses," by Theo R. Rodenbough, pp292-318

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P.O. Box 5695
Fresno, CA 93755

