

BUGLE CALL ECHOES



Vol. 8 No. 7, July 2000

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

Knowing in part may make a fine tale, but wisdom comes from seeing the whole.

JULY PROGRAM

Phil Avila was born in Oakland, California. He is a retired high school history teacher with a long-standing love of Civil War history. He is past president of the North Bay Civil War Round Table and has spoken to several round tables on various battles and personalities. A highlight of his experience was being able to participate in the 125th reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1988. Phil and his wife Lyn have two children, Aaron, 24 and Rosey, 18.

Phil last spoke to the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table in May of 1999 on California in the Civil War. Phil's topic for his presentation to the SJVCWRT this month is *Brush Strokes of War: A Slide Presentation of Civil War Art*.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

At our July board meeting we discussed the excellent quality of our newsletter. We want to commend Carol for her hard work and expertise in giving us such quality.

We encourage you to forward articles you have written – stories you'd like to share, family history pieces, questions you may have about any aspect of the Civil War to us at 4780 N. Delno, Fresno, CA 93705 and we'll see that they get to Carol. Other members can then respond. There is a lot of knowledge in the group that can be shared.

It's your newsletter. Get your ideas into it.

The fund raiser is a go in October and Vern Crow from the County Historical Society will speak on his book, "Thomas' Legion: One of the Most Unique Commands in the Civil War". (Check the back of the newsletter for program changes.) We had a very successful event last year, taking in about \$900 for preservation. Give this event some thought and bring your fund raising ideas to the July round table meeting. See you on the 27th.

*Ken Moats
President*

JULY 2000 MEETING

The July meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table will be held on Thursday, July 27, 2000, at the Ramada Inn, Shaw Avenue and Highway 41 in Fresno.

A no-host social hour will begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m.

Please send your check for \$15 (\$10 for students under 25) to cover the cost of the meal to Gloria Carter, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755, or call 559/322-9474 to advise her you will be attending the meeting.

I'VE RECENTLY READ

by Rick Kubiak

"Edmund Ruffin: A Biography," by Betty L. Mitchell, published by Indiana University Press, 1981 (306 pages). The book can be obtained from the Fresno Central Library Interlibrary Loan Service.

In "Edmund Ruffin: A Biography," Betty L. Mitchell writes an in-depth portrayal of the flamboyant life of Southern sympathizer, fire-eater, secessionist Edmund Ruffin. In her book Mitchell makes extensive referrals to Ruffin's diary that he kept from 1856 until his death on June 15, 1865. In the preface to her book she writes, "In no sense has it been my purpose or intention to write an apologia or justification of Edmund Ruffin and what he stood for. Nor have I tried to psychoanalyze him. Instead I have endeavored to understand this complex human being, this complicated and essentially tragic figure, and to let my readers draw their own conclusions about him. Wherever possible, I have allowed Ruffin to speak in his own words. As a biographer must do, I tried to remain 'invisible,' to let Ruffin occupy center stage, for this is his story, of course."



Edmund Ruffin was born at Evergreen mansion, Prince George County, Virginia, on January 5, 1794. Ruffin was born into Virginia plantation society, a seventh generation of Ruffins in the "Old Dominion," and was part of the elite organization of FFV (First

Families of Virginia). Ruffin was born sickly and puny. His young mother, Jane Lucas Ruffin, like so many other women, had precious little time to know her firstborn son before she died. Her husband, George Ruffin, feared that their weak infant son would soon follow his mother to the grave. Ruffin surprised his father by surviving childhood and himself by living to old age.

Ruffin received his education from private tutors and was an indifferent and somewhat unmotivated student. Ruffin attended William and Mary College in 1810 for only one term. That year, while he was away at school, Ruffin's father died and left him a modest-looking mansion with extensive farmlands located along the James River at Coggin's Point in Prince George County, Virginia. A beginner to the farming business, Ruffin found himself with a troublesome inheritance. The soil on his plantation was played out. The effects of over two centuries of growing tobacco had robbed much of Virginia's land of its fertility. Ruffin became intent on making his plantation profitable.

Ruffin immersed himself in a study of scientific farming. First he had to overcome his own ignorance and learn all he could about agricultural operations. When he was not busy learning practical farming from firsthand experience, he was in his library, reading everything he could find on the subject. Along with advocating crop rotation, Ruffin became successful in using and recommending the use of marl (an earthy deposit consisting of clay and calcium carbonate) as a fertilizer for the Virginia soil depleted in lime. He increased his own crop yields dramatically and attracted a large number of followers among fellow Virginia plantation owners that had initially ridiculed him. By the 1840s Ruffin

became recognized as one of the South's most progressive planters and the preeminent leader of Virginia agriculture.

In 1833, Ruffin became president of the Virginia Agricultural Society and editor of the "Farmers' Register." He explained his purpose for writing the publication was "to improve the present miserable economic condition of Virginia by disseminating important and up-to-date information about agricultural reforms." It was through Ruffin's writings for the "Farmers' Register" and the publication of his book, "An Essay on Calcareous Manures," that he was able to foster a recovery of the agriculture industry in the Upper South.

In 1856, at age 62, Ruffin retired from farming. He began traveling to several Southern states and writing articles for various publications. He urged and campaigned for the South's secession, Southern nationalism, and the formation of an independent country. Ruffin became well known for his dogmatic defense of slavery. He wrote "Slavery and Free Labor Described and Compared," "African Colonization Unveiled," "The Influence of Slavery, or of Its Absence on Manners, Morals, and Intellect," and "The Political Economy of Slavery."

In "African Colonization Unveiled," Ruffin states, "that it was true that the Fathers of the Revolution, among them Southern slaveowners, had admitted the legitimacy of that 'indefensible passage' of the Declaration of Independence which proclaimed that all men are created equal. But at the time, they had understood this to mean the guarantee of equal rights for all free-born Englishmen, not for all mankind. Thus, he insisted, the slaveholding Southerners who wrote and signed the Declaration of Independence did so inadvertently, for they 'no more thought of legislating for, or producing the freedom and equal political rights of their negro slaves, than they did of their horses and oxen.'"

In "The Influence of Slavery, or of Its Absence on Manners, Morals, and Intellect," Ruffin asked his readers to "suppose for a moment, that slavery was less profitable than free labor. "Even if this were true," he argued, "slavery's moral advantages would far outweigh any economic disadvantages. For in the South, the presence of slavery confined the drudgery and brutalizing effects of continuous toil to the inferior black race, thus affording the superior white race the leisure time to develop its 'manners, morals, and intellect' to their fullest. In the North, though, the absence of slavery forced white yeomen

and often their wives and children to do the work of slaves, including 'degrading menial tasks.' Thus, with so little time for self-improvement, these people became rude, ignorant, and brutish."

In December of 1860 Ruffin attended the secession conventions of three Southern states. Disgusted with Virginia's failure to follow South Carolina out of the Union Ruffin went to the Palmetto State and placed himself in voluntary exile. In Charleston, in anticipation of hostilities, he joined the Palmetto Guard. When Confederate President Jefferson Davis issued the order to take Fort Sumter, the honor was given, by General Beauregard, for the Palmetto Guard to fire the first shot at Sumter. The men unanimously agreed that the honor ought to go to their eldest recruit, 67-year-old Edmund Ruffin.

Highly gratified by the compliment, Ruffin accepted the offer without hesitation, saying that, "he was only too delighted to perform the service." Ruffin's biography describes the scene. "Ruffin, standing proud and erect next to his loaded cannon, a heavy duty sixty-four pound Columbiad, recognized the attack signal. Without a qualm, he jerked the lanyard, stepped back, and watched as his shell speeded toward its target, plunging deep into Sumter's northeast parapet."

Fort Sumter made Ruffin famous. In April when Virginia finally seceded from the Union he left South Carolina and returned to his home state. Cheering crowds gathered at train stations along the way to chant his name and call for a speech. He was finally a prophet with honor in his own country. For the first time, he was the champion of a popular political cause, he was at last an insider.

Upon arriving in Virginia Ruffin rejoined the Palmetto Guard for the First Battle of Bull Run but age and his frail and worn body kept him from being able to participate in any of the fighting. He retired from the field and spent the remainder of the Civil War in the Richmond area.

During the war both of his plantations, Marlbourne and Beechwood, were ransacked and looted by Northern soldiers. This wanton destruction of his property resulted in his increased hatred for "Yankees" and the Union.

In April of 1865, after the Confederate surrender, Ruffin returned with his family to his estate at Marlbourne. Ruffin's biography described his

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reaction to the Confederate defeat, stating that it "broke Ruffin's heart but never his fighting spirit.

"When he learned that Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet had escaped from Richmond, he hoped the government and what was left of the army could regroup somewhere in the Southwest and then eventually 'liberate' the Southeast. If he were younger and stronger, vowed the old fire-eater, there was nothing he would like better than to pack his musket and go west to fight Yankees. But he was neither young nor strong, so he decided to stay put."

Ruffin, after the Confederate defeat, was expecting to be arrested by the Federal authorities and was disappointed when he was ignored by them. In the next few weeks Ruffin became increasingly despondent over the South's defeat and brazenly stated that he would never live under the "Yankee" government that he so bitterly hated.

On June 17, 1865, Ruffin had breakfast with his family and then returned to his room. He wrote the following in his diary: "I hereby declare my unmitigated hatred to Yankee rule, to all political, social, and business connection with Yankees, and to the Yankee race. Would that I could impress these sentiments, in their full force, on every living Southerner, and bequeath them to everyone yet to be born! May such sentiments be held universally in the outraged and down trodden South, although in silence and stillness, until the now far distant day shall arrive for just retribution for Yankee usurpation, oppression, and atrocious outrages, and for deliverance and vengeance for the now ruined, subjugated, and enslaved Southern states!"

After completing his diary entry Ruffin took a handsome silver mounted rifle, placed it in an open trunk with the muzzle facing towards him and then sat down in his chair. Bracing himself, Ruffin picked up a forked stick and pulled the trigger. There was a loud bang, but the cap merely exploded. Ruffin's family heard the noise and rushed to his room. But the determined old "fire eater" managed to fire off another shot.

When his family entered his room they found him sitting up ramrod straight, a lifeless corpse.

WEST COAST CONFERENCE

The 16th Annual West Coast Civil War Round Table Conference will be held November 10-12, 2000, at the Doubletree Inn in Sacramento, California. The lineup of speakers includes Wiley Sword; Charles Roland; Brian Wills; Stacy Allen; James Stanbery; and Blaine Lamb. The topic of the conference is "Before, During and After the Battle of Shiloh, Including the Role of the California Soldier."

For further information about the conference, contact Fred Bohmfalk at 916/965-4776, by e-mail at jbohmfalk@aol.com or on the Internet at www.sacramentocwrt.com.

FROM FLAG TO FLAG**A Woman's Adventures and Experiences in the South during the War, in Mexico, and in Cuba**

by Eliza Moore Chinn McHatton Ripley, 1832-1912

NEW FLAG - CAMPAIGN SEWING SOCIETY

BASKING in the sunshine of prosperity during the stirring events that crowded one after another through the winter of 1860-'61, buoyed up by the hope and belief that a peaceful solution of national complications would be attained, we were blind to the ominous clouds that were gathering around us. Prophets arose in our midst, with vigorous tongue and powerful eloquence lifting the veil and giving us glimpses of the fiery sword suspended over our heads; but the pictures revealed were like pages in history, in which we had no part nor lot, so hard it was for people who had for generations walked the flowery paths of peace, to realize war and all that that terrible word imports.

It was during the temporary absence of my husband, and Arlington full of gay young guests, when our city paper described the device for "the flag," as decided upon at Montgomery, the cradle of the new-born Confederacy. Up to and even far beyond that period we did not, in fact could not, realize the mightiness of the impending future. Full of wild enthusiasm, the family at Arlington voted at once that the banner should unfold its brave States-rights constellation from a staff on our river-front.

This emblem of nationality (which, on account of its confusing resemblance to the brilliant "Stars and

Stripes," was subsequently discarded) consisted of a red field with a horizontal bar of white across its center; in one corner was a square of blue with white stars. There were red flannel and white cotton cloth in the house, but nothing blue could we find; so a messenger was hastily dispatched to town with orders for goods of that color, no matter what the quality or shade.

On a square of blue denim the white stars were grouped, one to represent each seceded State. We toiled all that Saturday, and had no little difficulty in getting our work to lie smooth and straight, as the red flannel was pieced, the cotton flimsy, and the denim stiff. From the negroes who had been spending their half-holiday catching drift-wood, which in the early spring floats from every tributary down on the rapidly swelling bosom of the broad Mississippi, we procured a long, straight, slender pole, to which the flag was secured by cords, nails, and other devices.

When the staff was firmly planted into the ground, on the most prominent point on the river-front, and its gay banner loosened to the breeze, the enthusiastic little party danced round and round, singing and shouting in exuberance of spirit. At that critical moment a small stern-wheel Pittsburg boat came puffing up the stream; its shrill whistle and bell joined in the celebration, while passengers and crew cheered and halloed, waving newspapers, hats, and handkerchiefs, until the little Yankee craft wheezed out of sight in a bend of the river.

Of all the joyous party that danced and sung round that first Confederate flag raised on Louisiana soil, I am, with the exception of my son, then a very small boy, the only one living to-day.

It made such a brave show, and we were so exhilarated, that we passed all that bright Sunday in early spring under its waving folds, or on the piazza in full view of it.

☆☆☆☆

To read the entire text of Eliza Ripley's book, access the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's "Documenting the American South" website, which can be found at:

<http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/index.html>

WANTED: THE REAL RENO

by Guy Rocha, Nevada State Archivist

Who was Reno, Nevada named after? And for that matter, Reno County, Kansas and El Reno, Oklahoma? Those who don't know generally say Major *Marcus Albert* Reno, the officer who, until his exoneration in recent years, bore the blame for the defeat of Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer's troops at the Little Big Horn in June 1876.



But, there was another Reno—Union General *Jesse Lee* Reno was shot off his horse and killed on September 14, 1862 at the battle of South Mountain, Maryland, during the Civil War. Charles Crocker, the railroad construction

superintendent for the Central Pacific Railroad, and his partners at the behest of General Irvin McDowell officially named the new town at Lake's Crossing on the Truckee River for *Jesse* Reno, not *Marcus* Reno. The public first learned of the naming in the April 23, 1868 issue of the Auburn, California Stars and Stripes:

The name of the new town on the C.P.R.R. at the junction of the contemplated branch road to Virginia City in Nevada, is Reno, in honor of General Reno, who fell gloriously fighting in defence [sic] of the flag against the assault of traitors in rebellion

Predating the founding of Reno, Nevada, the Kansas state legislature created Reno County, near Wichita, on February 26, 1867 to honor the fallen war hero who had also served in the Mexican War. El Reno, founded in 1889 in central Oklahoma, was named after Fort Reno, and yes, you guessed it, Ft. Reno was named after Union General Jesse Reno.

So why all the confusion? Because people generally remember *Marcus* Reno for the controversial Little Big Horn campaign, and few persons know today there was an army general by the name of *Jesse* Reno who died in the Civil War.

We can lay some of the blame for the erroneous connection in Nevada on the doorstep of Sam Davis' History of Nevada (1913). An article published in the state history by Major G. W. Ingalls, a former military officer and director of the Nevada Chamber of Commerce, claimed that Reno was named for *Marcus* Reno, although the founding of the railroad

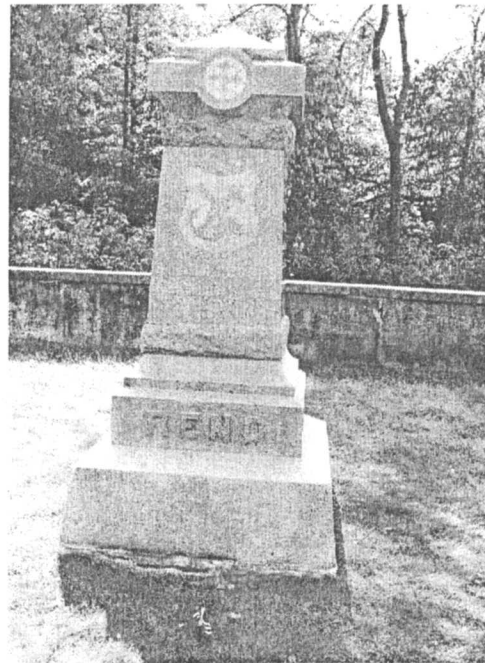
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town was eight years before the battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana Territory.

Marcus Reno prior to "Custer's Last Stand" in 1876 was just another commissioned officer. Major Ingalls had a rich and varied career; however, he was no historian and failed to properly identify Reno's namesake just 45 years after the town began.

Colonel Bill McConnell of Reno, an accomplished military history buff, has done much to set the record straight. In addition, a comprehensive article on the mystery of how the community of Reno acquired its name appeared in the fall 1984 issue of the Nevada Historical Society Quarterly. Reno multi-millionaire Moya Lear purchased some rare documents related to *Jesse* Reno. She intends to display them publicly. That should help clear up the confusion. Maybe one day we can all say: *General Jesse Lee Reno, gone but not forgotten.*

For an excellent biography see: Remember Reno: A Biography of Major Jesse Lee Reno by William F. McConnell (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1996).



Monument where Jesse Reno fell at South Mountain (photo by Gary Tindle)

The above article was printed with permission. Find out more about the State of Nevada's history at:

<http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/nsia/archives/nsa.htm>

Photo of Jesse L. Reno: Nevada Historical Society

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR 2000

Date	Speaker	Topic
January 27, 2000	Membership	<i>Show and Tell</i>
February 24, 2000	Robert Snowden/ Black History Month	<i>The Underground Railroad</i>
March 30, 2000	Cathy Rehart/ Women's History Month	"A Twist of Fate"
April 27, 2000	Fred Bohmfalk	<i>William Sherman: His Early Years</i>
May 25, 2000	Ken Bruce	<i>McClellan and the Seven Days Before Richmond</i>
June 29, 2000	Wayne Bowen	<i>Ella Carroll's Role in the Civil War</i>
July 27, 2000	Phil Avila	<i>Brush Strokes of War: A Slide Presentation of Civil War Art</i>
August 31, 2000	Bob Ritchey	<i>Lofty Goals, Resolute Struggle and Deep Disappointments</i>
September 26, 2000 Note date change! This is a Tuesday.	Bob Blair	<i>General George Thomas: The Battle of Nashville</i>
October 26, 2000	Vern Crow	<i>Thomas' Legion: One of the Most Unique Commands in the Civil War</i>
November 30, 2000	Dave Davenport	<i>The Battle of Stone's River</i>
December 2000	No regular meeting. A potluck and activity are planned.	

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please begin/renew my membership in the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table. My membership category is checked below:

Individual \$25 Family \$35 \$10 Student or Newsletter

Name _____

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Clip this membership form and send it with your check to the SJVCWRT, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755. The membership year is from January to December. Five dollars of each membership goes towards preservation.