



Bugle Calls



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Board of Directors President

David Paul Davenport
6156 N Mitre Ave
Fresno CA 93722
Phone (559) 277 3283
E-mail Address:
davidpauldavenport@yahoo.com

Vice-President and Programs

Michael Green
847 E. Pleasant
Tulare, CA 93274
Phone (559) 688-2134
E-mail Address: osogreen@aol.com

Treasurer & Web Master

Walter Schulze [Gail]
1432 Locust Ave
Clovis, CA 93611
Phone (559) 297-4481
E-mail Address: wschulze1@sbcglobal.net

Secretary

Bryce Kuykendall and
[Chauffeur to the Secretary
Neil Kuykendall]
21001 East W. Seldon
Sanger CA 93657
Phone (559) 787 3632
E-mail Address:
bryce.kuykendall@gmail.com

Past President

Brian Clague [Linda]
P O Box 116
Shaver Lake, CA 93664
Phone (559) 841-7161
E-mail Address: bclague@netptc.net

Publicity

Lydia Flores
8316 North Raisina Avenue
Fresno, Ca 93720-2083
Phone (559) 435-7360
E-mail Address: flfyd@att.net

Contributing Editor

Ron Vaughan
730 E Tulare Ave
Tulare CA 93274
E-mail Address: ronvaughan@prodigy.net

Members at Large

Pattie Spencer and Michael Spencer
1548 W Vasser Ave Fresno CA 93705
Phone (559) 233 1059 (559) 304 8170
E-mail Address: pds8919@aol.com



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The next general meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table is Thursday, February 11, 2010. We will again meet at the Denny's Restaurant at the northeast corner of HERNON and Blackstone. There should not be a repeat of the technical "glitch" which precluded us from having a real projector screen. As in January each of us will order from the menu. This is apparently satisfactory to you all and I was pleased to see that the one drawback to not meeting at the Ramada, the lack of alcoholic beverages, is no longer an issue. We can now Eat, Drink, and be Merry while learning of our nation's most difficult domestic crisis.

Feb 12 is President Lincoln's Birthday, so it is fitting that we hear about him on the 11th. Allen C. Gulezo, Professor of Civil War Studies at Gettysburg College, will speak to us on video. As many of you know I purchased Dr. Guelzo's "Mr. Lincoln: the life of Abraham Lincoln" from the Teaching Company. It consists of twelve thirty minute lectures. On the 11th we will view two of these, lectures two and three, the two which deal with Lincoln's years as a member of the "Whig" Party established by Henry Clay to counter the politics of Andrew Jackson. These are roughly the years 1830 to 1854, the years that I venture to say, are those about which we are least informed regarding our 16th President. While the presentation is not related directly to the Civil War it seems to me that learning about the history of Civil War leaders is appropriate. For this reason we will do something similar in May when we view a video

about Jefferson Davis in honor of his birthday.

Reservations for our meeting on February 11 are not needed so you need not notify Walt Schulze that you plan to attend. Assemble at 6 pm or very soon thereafter and place your order for drinks and dinner with the server assigned to us. Perhaps it will again be Jeanne, who I thought did an excellent job of attending to our needs. However, please ask her to bring your check when she serves your meal. This will allow her to avoid disrupting the presentation.

See on on the 11th.

BOOK REVIEW

Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War by David Williams, Professor of History at Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia (New York and London: The New Press, 2008).

Your president has recently finished reading *Bitterly Divided* by David Williams, a book that deals in depth with opposition to secession and the Confederate States of America among residents of the South. Although it does contain information about the opposition of slaves to their bondage, the general premise is that most whites, especially those who owned neither slaves nor land, were opposed to secession and to the Confederacy. Had these poor whites not been barred from voting by poll taxes the Confederacy might never have come into existence. In fact, Dr. Williams points out that election fraud was used to take Georgia out of the Union and that the threat of violence from thugs hired by rich slave-owners prevented fair elections from taking place almost everywhere in the states that did form the original Confederacy.

According to Williams (p.16-7):

“Secessionist forced disunion on a reluctant South largely through subterfuge and intimidation. Samuel Beaty, a Mississippi farmer, was physically threatened because of his Union sentiments and dared not go to the polls. "It would", he said, "have been too dangerous".

“**D**ue in large part to threat tactics, turnout in the popular vote for state convention delegates across the Deep South dropped by more than a third from previous November's presidential election, In Mississippi, the number of votes dropped by nearly half. Still, those opposing immediate secession gave a strong showing. They ran almost neck and neck with the secessionists in Alabama and Louisiana. Georgia's anti-secessionists polled a likely majority of over a thousand. In Texas, two-thirds of voters opposed secession. Throughout the Deep South, official returns gave secession's opponents about 40 percent of the popular vote. However, fraud at the ballot box was so widespread that the returns cannot be trusted as a gauge of popular opinion. Anti-secession sentiment was considerable stronger than the final vote would suggest.”

At January's meeting Charles Baley announced that former Confederates would have a reunion at the Fairgrounds. This writer has been unable to find an record of that gathering but he did find the following of a similar gathering in May 1905 the report of which appeared in the Fresno Morning Republican of May 14, 1905.

CONFEDERATES MEET HELD THEIR ANNUAL RE- UNION YESTERDAY AT PARK.

A Day of Absolute Enjoyment Was Passed by Old Soldiers - New Officers Elected.

Yesterday at recreation park the members of Sterling price camp, Confederate Veterans, held their annual reunion, and from all over the valley the old soldiers assembled to greet one another and talk of the days passed under the battle flag of the South. They became boys again in spirit as they talked over the stirring scenes of half a century ago and some of them so far regained their youth as to take part in the dance with as much vim as any of the younger participants.

Some of the veterans were accompanied by their families, others by friends, and in all about 200 people were gathered at the park. The women brought luncheon and it was served at noon in the refreshment building. For more than an hour the old soldiers and their friends sat around the dining board, and dozens of war time stories were told, which brought back to the

Opposition to the Confederacy then increased after passage of the first Conscription Act in April, 1862. Men in "essential" occupations and all those who owned 20 or more slaves were exempt. The response by the common folks was that the conflict was henceforth "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." The only reason that some enlisted is that they were paid to do so; those drafted received no enlistment bonus. And they and their families were by this date often desperate for food. The Confederate Government had said that it would provide sustenance for all who volunteered but "food production never came close to meeting demand because planters devoted far too much acreage to cotton and tobacco. In 1862 cotton production reached its second highest level on record to that time." This created food shortages and inflation for what did exist. The result was that there were food riots in many Confederate cities usually led by women. When soldiers at the front learned that their families were starving, many deserted. "By September, 1864, two-thirds of Confederate soldiers were absent with or without leave." (p.103). "Between October 1864 and early February 1865, records show that 72,000 men deserting from armies east of the Mississippi River." (p.240) The result was catastrophic for the Confederacy. "Had it not been for the two-thirds of soldiers who were absent by September, 1864, the Confederacy might well have been able to offset the North's population advantage." (p. 242) Moreover, "nearly a half million southerners wore Union blue. Together with hundreds of thousands more who actively and passively resisted the Confederacy, it was southerners themselves as much as anyone else who were responsible for Confederate defeat." (p. 242)

Your president recommends this book to you all.



old veterans thrilling recollections of the battlefield and camp fire and unfolded to the younger members of the assemblage a more minute and accurate knowledge of the great Civil War than can be obtained from the histories. Immediately after dinner the party repaired to the dance hall and the evening was spent in singing the old southern songs and dancing. E. D. Edwards, the new camp commander, made a short address and there was a recitation by Miss Mary Hansen entitled "After Appomattox", which received hearty applause from the old soldiers.

Owing to some confusion, which occurred in arranging for the place of meeting the attendance was not as good as it should have been. It was decided only a few days ago that the meeting should be held at Recreation park and some of the veterans were not notified in time to attend.

At a business meeting held in the office of R. G. Harrell before going to the park this morning the officers for the next year were elected as follows: E. D. Edwards, camp commander; J. H. La Rue, vice-commander; R. G. Harrell, adjutant; I. Poor, quartermaster; T. C. Douglass, commissary; W. T. Maupin, surgeon; J. J. N. Kenney, chaplain; R. B. Shipp, vidette. Rev. Kenney is not a veteran, but the son of a veteran, and for this reason was honored by the office. The day was one of absolute enjoyment for the old soldiers. The ranks of the gallant old veterans are rapidly thinning and in only a few years no repre-

sensation will be left of the men who followed the "Bonnie Blue Flag" through victory and defeat from the day it was unfurled at Manassas until the final struggle at Appomattox.

The next meeting will be held at the same place on May 12th, 1906.



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Website: <http://SJVCWRT.com>

