



# Bugle Call Echoes

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

September 2006

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San Joaquin Valley  
Civil War Round Table  
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## From the President's Desk:

Welcome back to each of our loyal members. I hope that your summer vacations and activities included rest, amusements, and a touch of history.

Our last meeting was held at our retreat in Shaver, and we were delighted at the turnout to hear Evan Jones speak.

As we head into the new season, we have a delightful list of presentations for our monthly dinner meetings. Your Board has also explored ways to make our experience at Kearney Park as interesting as ever; and we hope for good participation there. We are going to fill our space with evidence of our fund-raising efforts.

We hope that everyone is well and we look forward to seeing you all at the next regular meeting.

Brian Clague,  
President

## Sign up for the 22nd Annual West Coast Conference in Sacramento on Nov 10-12

It's not too late to sign up for "The War on the Waters" West Coast Conference hosted by the Sacramento Civil War Round Table. The order form was included in your last *Bugle Call Echoes* newsletter, or pick up another form at our September meeting. Cost is \$160 for all seminars and meals. Also, call the Double Tree Inn directly to book your room.

Featured presenters include: Ed Bearss, Craig Symonds, Jim Stanbery, Dennis Ringle, and Kevin Foster. Make checks out to *Sacramento CWRT* and mail to: George Foxworth, 9463 Salishan Ct., Sacramento CA 95826-5233.

## Biography for our September Speaker:

Our September speaker, via a recording by C-SPAN, is Dr. Elisabeth Showalter Muhlenfeld, President of Sweet Briar College since 1996. Dr. Muhlenfeld received her bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Goucher College in 1966. After several years of teaching high school and raising a family she completed a master's in English at the University of Texas at Arlington in 1973 and a Ph.D. in English from the University of South Carolina in 1978. From 1978 to 1996 Dr. Muhlenfeld was affiliated with the Florida State University in Tallahassee, first as a Professor of English and then in 1984 as founding Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

She is the author of four books, including a biography of Mary Boykin Chesnut, as well as an edition of Chesnut's original diaries, coedited with historian C. Vann Woodward. Mary Boykin Chesnut: A Biography was a Pulitzer Prize nominee and a Choice magazine "outstanding academic book." She is also the editor of Two Novels by Mary Chesnut, recently published by the University of Virginia Press in the Southern Texts Society series. Dr. Muhlenfeld appears to us on a video tape of CSPAN's "American Writers" series. This was originally broadcast live from Mulberry Plantation, the Chesnut family home built in 1820. It is, today, a private residence owned by the Chesnut descendants. Other properties associated with Mary Boykin Chesnut are also viewed.

The original 2 and 1/2 hour presentation has been edited by Dr. Davenport to approximately one hour with non-germaine viewer questions removed. Dr. Davenport believes this is consistent with the "fair use for educational purposes" provisions of copyright law.

### **MINI-CONFERENCE AT HUNTINGTON LIBRARY** **Wars within a War: Controversy and Conflict over** **the American Civil War**      **Oct. 27-28 (Friday-Saturday)** **8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

The Civil War saw the creation of two enormous armies that waged some of the bloodiest battles in American history. Both the Union and the Confederate armies also dealt with serious strife within their own ranks. This conference explores the internal disagreements that posed serious challenges to both sides' war efforts and carried over into the postwar years. \$25. Registration: 626-405-3432 or [skrasnoo@huntington.org](mailto:skrasnoo@huntington.org).



For dinner reservations for our Thursday, Sept. 26th meeting at the Ramada Inn at the Shaw off-ramp of Freeway 41... contact **Secretary Phyllis Mann** at 229-3778 [afternoons or evenings, please] or e-mail her at: [pfm02@civic.net](mailto:pfm02@civic.net)

### **SJVCW Round Table** **member volunteers for** **Civil War Revisited re-** **enactment at Kearney** **Park needed Big Time**

Our Round Table/Booth at the Civil War reenactment on Sat. and Sun., Oct 21st and 22nd needs members to sit and chat for two hour blocks. It's fun and gives you the opportunity to rest for awhile and talk to the many out-of-towners who come to the event each year wanting to express their enthusiasm and interest in the Civil War. Won't you consider helping out?

Contact Pattie Spencer at 304-8170 to sign up for a two-hour spot. There will always be some 'veteran's' hanging around to help. Times still open include:

Saturday, Oct 21: noon - 2PM;  
2 - 4PM; and 4-6PM

Sunday, Oct 22: 10AM - noon;  
noon - 2PM; and 2 - 4 PM.

If you do not volunteer, Pattie threatens to stick you with the midnight- 8AM shift.

PSS. Tickets for admission will be provided to volunteers.

# MARY CHESNUT Our September Meeting Topic

Mary Boykin Chesnut (1823-1886) is best known today for her firsthand account of the rise and fall of the Confederate States of America. She was a keen observer who kept a diary throughout the War Between the States. A version of her diary were published in 1905 and again in 1949 under the title Diary from Dixie. This tome removed much of what she had written about numerous individuals. In 1982 an unexpurgated version of her journals was republished as Mary Chesnut's Civil War.

Mary Chesnut's record of the war was far from ordinary. Her husband was a member of the Confederate Congress so the family lived in Richmond. Moreover, she was a close personal friend of Varina Davis, First Lady of the Confederacy. As such she was a member of the political and social elite.

Mary was born in Statesburg, South Carolina, in 1823. Her father was politically prominent having served as a U.S. Senator and as a Governor of the Palmetto State. She attended Madame Talvande's school in Charleston, where, at the age of 14, she met James Chesnut, age 23. They married in 1840 when she was 17. Until 1848 she and James lived with his parents at Mulberry Plantation. This was not a happy time for Mary. She was very much an outsider when it came to running the plantation and she had little to do other than read voraciously. Moreover, she and James were childless, a fact of which she was made painfully aware by her mother-in-law.

On the other hand, the fact that she was not burdened with the twin responsibilities of running a plantation and raising a family allowed her to accompany her husband where ever he might go. This included Columbia when he was a member of the state legislature, Washington when he served in the US Congress, Montgomery when he was South Carolina delegate to the Confederates State's Constitutional Convention, and Richmond when he served in the Confederate Congress as a representative from South Carolina. Moreover, since most legislators left their wives and children back home Mary was often called upon serve as official hostess regardless of who was footing the bill for the many dinner parties at which the men "talked shop". As a result she knew a great number of prominent politicians personally.

When the conflict ended in 1865 Mary and hundreds of thousands of other Southerners tried to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. It was extremely difficult to do so. Eventually she and a freed slave operated an "egg and butter" business that provided them with an income. She also began to rework her diaries with the intention of publishing her firsthand account of the war but she died in 1886 at the age of 63 before doing so. The diaries where then put away by a family friend until donated to the South Carolina State Archives at the turn of the century.

2006 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 Post Office Box listed on the return address below:

### Did you know?

Q. The Congress of the Confederacy voted to admit Kentucky as a state on Dec. 10, 1861. Had Kentucky in fact seceded?

A. No. The new Confederate flag adopted after First Manassas had 13 stars, including stars for Kentucky and Missouri, but neither state ever officially seceded from the Union.

Q. In early November, 1861, Gen. Winfield Scott relinquished command of the Union army and Gen. McClellan was chosen to replace him. McClellan was given a huge torchlight parade in Washington on Nov. 11th. On the night of the 13th, Lincoln paid a call at McClellan's Washington home to discuss strategy. What occurred that gave credence to suggestions that the young general's extremely rapid rise to the highest command had swelled his head?

A. He retired for the night without seeing the President.

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