

Bugle Call

ECHOES

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San Joaquin Valley
Civil War Round Table

May 1994

Spencer Repeating Rifles

Roy Marcot of San Ramon, author of Civil War books, will be the speaker at the Thursday, May 26, meeting of the Civil War Round Table at the Remington restaurant on Clovis Avenue just south of Kings Canyon Avenue

A social hour will be from 6 p.m. to 7 with dinner and the speaker to follow.

Reservations

Reservations may be made by mailing checks for \$13 for each dinner (which includes tax and tip) to Tim Johnson, 8665 N. Cedar, No. 122, Fresno, CA 93720. Reservations must be received by Tuesday, March 26. Seating will not be guaranteed without a reservation.

shooters became the First and Second Regiments of the Third Corps of the Army of the Potomac.

Marcot, incidentally, will be one of several nationally known authors and Civil War experts who have agreed to participate in the West Coast Civil War Round Table Association Conference to be held in November at the Tenaya Lodge at Fish Camp just outside the south entrance to Yosemite National Park.

Marcot's topic will be "The Impact of the Spencer Repeating Rifles on the War's Outcome." One of his books is "The Spencer Repeating Rifle." His most recent book is a biography of Hiram Berdan, founder of the Berdan Sharpshooters, one of the most elite units of the Union Army.

An actual competition was held in all of the states in the Union to find the best marksmen. The sharp-

Warren Stripped of Command: A Justified Action or Injustice?

It was Wednesday March 29, 1865. The Army of the Potomac and the Army of the James were beginning the final crushing move against General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Petersburg. It had become increasingly evident that the tightening and extending of the Union lines at Petersburg (Virginia) would soon force

Personalities of
the American
Civil War

Lee to evacuate his entrenched works.



For the purpose of intercepting and pursuing Lee in the anticipated event of his withdrawal Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant had ordered his principal cavalry officer, Major General Phillip Sheridan to leave the Shenandoah Valley and to join him at Petersburg.

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The object of what was later to be called the beginning of the Appamottox campaign was to break the last railroad connection between Petersburg and the outside world in order to stop the supplies to the troops in and around the city. This was to cause sufficient pressure to force Lee to leave his entrenchments before he was

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Warren continued

ready to do so. Sheridan was to lead the movement in close cooperation with Major General Gouverneur Kemble Warren, commander of the Fifth Infantry Corps.

General Warren felt honored in being selected by Grant and General George Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, to lead the largest force of the infantry in a maneuver of such vast importance it could assure the final victory for the Union and bring an end to the war. Sheridan and Warren had never met, yet they were selected to lead the joint operation.

Warren was a professional soldier with a great deal of combat experience. He had been in the battles of Big Bethel, Yorktown, Gaines Mill, Antietam (where he lost half his regiment), Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg (On July 2 he occupied and defended Little Round Top, the key to the Union position.) Bristoe Station, Mine Run, The Wilderness and Cold Harbor. He had

the confidence and affection of his men and his courage and ability were beyond question.

Sheridan advanced to Five Forks where he found a heavy force of the enemy. Lee, alarmed by Grant's movements, had drawn all his available troops out of the trenches and assigned General Fitzhugh Lee to Five Forks to hold the important crossroads.

Program tapes

Audio tapes of all C.W.R.T. luncheon and dinner programs since February 1993 are available to members. If you missed a program presentation, or just want to hear it again, contact Rick Kubiak at 251-1505. The tapes can be loaned for not more than 30 days.

A heavy rainstorm began the night of the 29th and continued for more than 24 hours, severely impeding marching troops. Lee, not satisfied with opposing Sheridan with Cavalry, had on the 30th sent General George Pickett with 7,000 infantry to stop the Federal flanking movement. Sheridan's cavalry rode out westward toward Dinwiddie Court House south of Five Forks while Warren's Infantry Corps marched to aid Sheridan. The sharpest fighting occurred near the crossing of Boydton and Quaker Roads where Warren's men fought the enemy back.

On March 31st the heavy rain ended in the morning and the action began again. Now, 10,000 Confederates were pitted against 50,000 Union troops. Sheridan pressed forward from Dinwiddie Court House with a portion of his troops. Confederates drove him back towards the main body of his men at the Court House, bringing about a defeat for the Union and putting Sheridan in some danger.

Testing, Testing . . .

A quiz to test your knowledge of the Civil War.

1. General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson died as a result of wounds suffered at:
 - a. Fredericksburg, during a frontal assault by General Burnside's men at Marye's Heights.
 - b. Chancellorsville, when in the faint light of dusk some of his own men mistakenly fired on him.
 - c. Harpers Ferry, while assaulting the Federal lines during a preliminary artillery barrage.
 - d. Yellow Tavern, during a battle with a brigade commanded by General George A. Custer.

Correct answer on back page.

During the night Pickett, realizing that Sheridan's forces and Warren's Fifth Corps were too strong for him to attack, withdrew noiselessly from Dinwiddie Court House to his strongly entrenched post at Five Forks. Grant, not aware of Pickett's withdrawal, had given orders and suggestions all night to Meade, Warren and Sheridan. Grant's purpose was to concentrate all his forces at daylight and to attack the enemy (thought to be Pickett's forces), in front of Sheridan.

Grant sent a message to Sheridan, "The Fifth Corps has been ordered to your support . . . All these forces except the cavalry will reach you by 12 tonight. You will assume command of the whole force sent to operate with you and use it to the best of your ability

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to destroy the force with which your command fought so brilliantly today."

In Emerson Gifford Taylor's book, "Gouverneur Kemble Warren," he states, "There was no possibility under God's Heaven that Warren, with his Fifth Corps, could get to Sheridan within the time the Commander-in-Chief had laid down. Although Grant may have in part intended, by this amazing promise, to give a momentary lift to Sheridan's morale, even so, considering the effect on the latter (Sheridan) when, after waiting vainly for Warren to arrive at the appointed hour, the fiery rough rider was forced to remain in further doubt till the Fifth C did effect the promised junction, one stands amazed that Grant could have penned such a sentence."

Warren had been handed one of the toughest responsibilities a soldier knows, that of obeying orders which physical conditions, time, weather, road conditions, etc. make impossible. Added to this, Warren received orders to send troops to Sheridan as soon as possible. Warren's troops came in on Sheridan's right about dawn. Grant, unaware of Pickett's departure during the night, was furious at Warren for not having joined forces with Sheridan at midnight, so they could attack Warren at dawn.



The San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table Officers for 1994 are:

Charles Jorgensen, President
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Verne Cole, Secretary & Newsletter Editor
Rick Kubiak, Historian & Contributing Editor

Other board members are Walter Rodgers, Bill Head, Jeff Ennis, Ed Ackley, Wayne Bowen and Barbara Moats.

Dues reminder

Annual dues, which include the newsletter, are \$25 of which \$5 goes to battlefield preservation. Checks should be made out to C.W.R.T. and mailed to Tim Johnson, 8665 N. Cedar Ave. #112, Fresno, CA. 93720.

Grant's dislike of Warren, which had been increasing for months, flamed into active hostility and he sent an aide-de-camp to Sheridan, suggesting that Warren be relieved of command. In an article in Century magazine, November, 1889 on the battle of Five Forks, it was stated, "Through inquiry among friends of both generals it seems to have established the fact that Grant's animosity towards Warren arose from the habit Warren had of discussing his orders, suggesting changes in plans of battle, and movements in support of his own. Grant regarded this habit as lacking in respect to himself, and although Warren was looked upon as one of the ablest and most devoted officers in the army, it was evident that sooner or later Grant's irritation would come to a point which would prove ruinous to Warren."

On the early morning of April 1st. Sheridan hurried up to Five Forks with his cavalry, leaving Warren to bring up his infantry. Lee had strengthened his forces holding Five Forks, but Sheridan was determined to capture the crossroads. When all his troops had arrived he opened the battle late in the afternoon. He engaged the enemy with his dismounted cavalry in front and used Warren's men to strike Pickett's left. In bloody but brief fighting the tactic was successful. As dusk fell there was a complete victory for the Union. Pickett had been routed and the Confederate force crushed. More than 5,000 prisoners were taken. As the battle was ending, Sheridan sent an order to Warren relieving him of command and directing him to report to General Grant for further orders.

Warren was stunned at being relieved of command just after he had won a hard-fought victory, executing every one of Sheridan's orders to perfection. Warren sought out Sheridan and quietly asked him to reconsider his action. It was said that Sheridan answered, "Reconsider? Hell, I never reconsider my determination. Obey the order."

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1861
Warren continued

In Sheridan's personal memoirs, he states that his four reasons for relieving Warren of his command were: "The first implied that Warren failed to reach me on the 1st of April, when I had reason to expect him; the second, that the tactical handling of his corps was unskillful; the third, that he did not exert himself to get his corps up to Gravelly Run Church; and the fourth, that when sections of the line gave way he did not exert himself to restore confidence to his troops."

Warren began at once to press for a court of inquiry to right the injustice of the hot-tempered Sheridan that had tarnished his long and distinguished military career. Warren had been one of the best corps commanders that the Army of the Potomac ever had, and his relief from command caused the regret, if not the anger, of every man who had served under him.

It was not until December 1879, fourteen years after the Battle of Five Forks, that Warren finally received his long-sought court of inquiry. After almost three years of hearings and deliberations (witnesses included Grant, Sheridan and Confederate General Fitzhugh

Lee), the court published its findings. Warren was cleared of Sheridan's charges that he had been negligent at Five Forks. The court also criticized the way in which he was relieved of command. The results of the hearings were published on November 21, 1882 at the request of President Chester A. Arthur. The findings did not comfort the long-suffering soldier, however. Warren died three months prior, a bitter and heartbroken man. He was buried, at his request, in civilian clothing and without military ceremony.

Sources used: "Gouverneur Kemble Warren: The Life and Letters of an American Soldier 1830-1882," by Emerson Gifford Taylor; "The Civil War Day By Day, An Almanac 1861-1865," by E.B. Long; "Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan," by Phillip H. Sheridan; "Campfires and Battlefields," by Rossiter Johnson; "The Civil War, A Narrative: Red River to Appomattox," by Shelby Foote; "Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War," Patricia L. Faust, editor; "Battle of Five Forks," Century Magazine, November 1889.

Quiz Answer
The correct answer to the quiz on page 2 is (b).

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