

Bugle Call

ECHOES

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October Luncheon Meeting

Captain Rick Price, president the Civil War Reenactment Society, will describe the formation of the 3rd Confederate Regiment at a luncheon meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table Friday, Oct. 25 at the Downtown Club, 2120 Kern Street.

Price has had an interest in the Civil War and military history since childhood. When he and a group of friends decided to create a reenactment group in the Central Valley, it was agreed to represent units involved in the Atlanta Campaign.

After considering several regiments, the 3rd Confederate Regiment was chosen, primarily because there was not much information about it readily available. This began a search of histories and primary sources to complete the history of that regiment.

Reservations may be made by sending checks for \$11 for each luncheon to SJVCWRT, P.O. Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755.

President's Corner

Charlie Jorgensen brought to my attention the need on the part of the SJVCWRT to recruit younger people to our organization. Most of us are 40 or older and, if we wish to pass along this heritage to the next generation we, need to begin now!

We have done several things already. During the '94 Conference we established five full scholarships for college students to attend the event. This past summer Nathan Boyer, a graduate student and SJVCWRT member, gave an excellent paper on the British influence on the Southern war effort. And, two years ago a 13-year-old, Evan Jones, gave a very informative talk on the Battle of Antietam.

If you know young persons of high school or college age who have an interest in history, invite them to attend one of our functions. You might ignite a fire for the future.

—Bill Head



Scene of Sherman's assault on the bluffs at Chicasaw Bayou

A Visit To The Battlefields

By Ken Moats

Members Bill Head, Tim Johnson, Dave Marques and I took a week in early October to visit battlefields in South Tennessee and Mississippi. After renting a car in Memphis we headed for Shiloh on Route 57. It was Dave's first visit to Shiloh and he got an intensive one-hour introductory tour. As we drove out of the park it was dark and we traveled along Grant's defense line for the night of April 6, 1862 -- a different view of the battle.

On our drive from Shiloh to Corinth, Miss., we stopped at Falling Timbers, where Nathan Bedford Forrest was wounded making a successful stand against Sherman's pursuing troops. Our headlights illuminated the slight rise in the ground that is still known as Falling Timbers.

On day two, we drove from Corinth to Iuka, Mississippi where Tim's great-grandfather fought during the conflict. After a brief visit to Alabama we returned to Corinth. This major rail and road junction was much sought after by both sides. A strategic site during the war, Corinth was occupied most of the time. Today Corinth is working hard to develop its battlefield trenches and sites and is in the process of becoming a major historic Civil War site.

Our next stop was Brices Cross Roads Battlefield Park. What a place to ambush infantry out on the road! After a

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Custer's Exploits in the War

Editor's Note:— The author, who lives in Penn Valley, Calif., is a longtime history buff and author of an excellent book about John Charles Fremont and his lost cannon. He is a retired California Highway Patrol commander and occasional college teacher (He has an M.A.), who wrote the following for his grandson after the boy complained that the school library contained nothing about Custer other than several books having to do with the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

By Ernest Allen Lewis

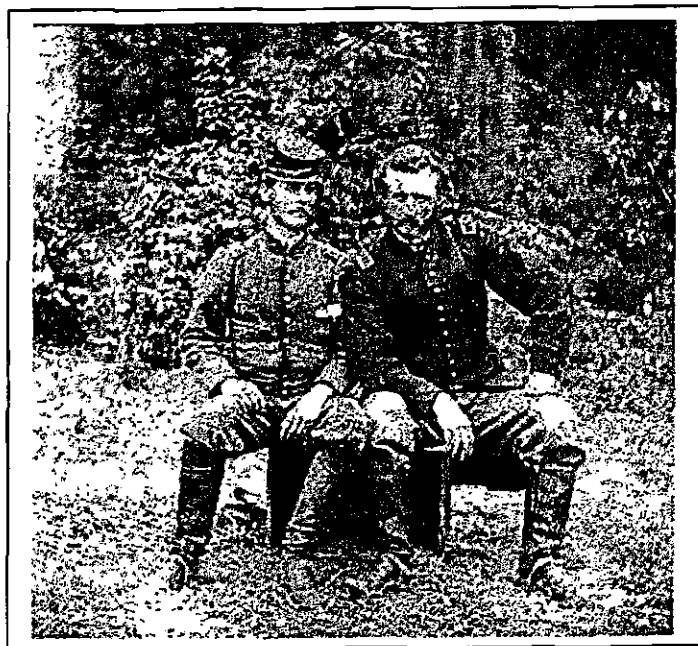
After graduating from West Point at the bottom of his class in the summer of 1861, newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant George Armstrong Custer had the good fortune to have been associated with The Army of the Potomac under its various commanders from the date of its organization to that of its abandonment.

He participated in all of its battles except Fredericksburg, and in most of its important minor skirmishes. Upon the commencement of the battles and skirmishes preceding the great Battle of Gettysburg July 1-3, 1863, his service was principally that of a staff officer.

During the early years of the Civil War he served on the staffs of Generals Phil Kearny, Edwin V. Sumner, George McClellan, Fighting Joe Hooker, Ambrose Burnside and Alfred Pleasanton. On those occasions when he was given a command, he distinguished himself because of his personal courage, innate sense of timing, by attacking with ferocity and, when necessary, retreating in good order.

Because of his staff duties as a cavalryman and the many engagements in which he led his commands, he was rapidly promoted from Lieutenant to Brigadier General in two years (June 29, 1863). From the First Battle of Bull Run to Appomattox, he was usually selected to lead his division as the first attacking unit in most engagements.

General Custer is among the four or five most famous soldiers in American history, but he is remembered only for an insignificant Indian battle in southern Montana, his fatal encounter with an overwhelming number of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors on the banks of the Little Big Horn River on 25 June 1876. Since that time Custer's name has been inextricably linked with his only complete military failure. The mystery, fascination and innumerable controversies that fight has dredged up have succeeded in blotting out every other aspect of his career.



Lt James B. Washington, a Confederate prisoner, left, with Capt. George A. Custer, 5th Cavalry, USA, on May 31, 1862 during the Peninsula Campaign. Photo by James B. Gibson, downloaded by Internet from Library of Congress.

This warped historical focus has been terribly unfair to Custer and has rendered an objective examination of his character and actions nearly impossible. As the noted historian Don Russel wrote, "How can you judge a man when you devote your entire attention to the last day of his life, about which you know almost nothing?"

Custer was one of the top three most popular leaders in the Union Army from the summer of 1863 until the end of the war in April 1865. He was generally adored by the news reporters as the commander of the valiant troopers of the Michigan Cavalry Brigade, "the pride of his country, and the terror of its foes." Perhaps one series of battles can sum up Custer's heroism and leadership qualities.

In October 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant and the Army of the Potomac had finally brought Gen. Robert E. Lee and his splendid Army of Northern Virginia to a defensive position in and around Richmond. With his back to the wall and no place to maneuver, Lee attempted to break Grant's unrelenting pressure with a diversion, sending Gen. Jubal Early and 18,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry down the Shenandoah Valley to threaten Washington D.C.

Grant saw through this clever strategy and instead of breaking off his siege, he put his most energetic subordinate, Major General Phillip Sheridan at the head of 48,000

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Visit To The Battlefields (Cont.)

heated battle that sent the Federals recoiling across swollen Tishomingo Creek, a wagon blocking the bridge caused a panic. Most of the artillery and wagons were abandoned and Forrest scored a brilliant tactical victory. It's amazing how many times this type of accident happened during the war with its ensuing disastrous results.

Large standing maps located at Tupelo Battlefield Park make it easy to follow the action in the area. From Tupelo we took the Natchez Trace to Jackson, Mississippi where we registered for the main event, the Vicksburg Battlefield Conference/Tour, sponsored by Civil War Round Table Associates. Ed Bearss and Terry Winschel, chief historian at Vicksburg NBP, conducted the tour.

What a tour! I was very impressed. Both Ed and Terry will be speakers for our 1998 West Coast Civil War Conference at the Tenaya Lodge.

On the first day of the tour we went to Grant's Canal across the river from Vicksburg. Then to the Chickasaw Bayou where Sherman attempted to close on Vicksburg during 1862. That area is much the same as it was then -- the same roads, same bayous, crops, and river systems. Our next stop was Grand Gulf where we tramped over all the Confederate battle positions.

The second day of touring covered the Battle of Vicksburg and the rediscovered, restored remains of the gunboat USS Cairo, which rests in Vicksburg area

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 the Civil War Round Table Associates.

Registration: \$140. Mail your check, payable to SBCWRT, C/o Helen Trimpi, 1788 Oak Creek Drive, # 103, Palo Alto, CA 94304-2160

For more details, contact Don Pfeuffer, 408-378-4464, or David Lang, 409-735-8092.

National Military Park. Then to the Bruinsburg road, where Grant successfully crossed his troops over the Mississippi, out-flanking the Confederate position at Grand Gulf and went on to the Battle of Port Gibson. On the way to Jackson we visited both the Southern approach and the Northern approach.

On the third day, the tour then took in the Battle of Raymond, the battle for the Big Black River and the fighting at Champion Hill. We covered seven approaches to the Champion Hill battle.

This was a very informative visit to Grant's Vicksburg Campaign. The conference was well organized. The days were long but thoroughly enjoyable.

Studying the Civil War

The Department of History at Fresno City College will offer a college-level course on the American Civil War during the winter session.

The course, which will provide two units of college credit, will run from 8:30 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. from Thursday Jan. 2 to Saturday Jan 11, except for Sunday, Jan. 5. Contact Dr. David Davenport, 442-4600, extention 8361.

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 Linda Clague, membership; Verne Cole, newsletter editor; Rick Kubiak, historian; and the immediate past presidents, John Taylor and Charles Jorgensen.

Change of address? Call Verne Cole, 435-8410 or Wayne Bowen, 291-4885.



Custer's Exploits (Continued)

men in the Middle Military Division and told him to clear the Valley of Early's forces.

Waiting until his army was resupplied and rested, Jubal Early struck like lightning on Oct. 19 and routed Sheridan's Divisions in the first battles. At Cedar Creek, a week later, Sheridan and Custer coolly rallied their crumbling forces and led their Regiments in a devastating counter-attack. They inflicted over 3,000 casualties and sent Early reeling in a disastrous defeat capturing most of his artillery, his wagons, baggage, forage and ammunition.

In the early phases of the battle Custer's 3rd Cavalry Division was the only one of the Union forces to stand firm against Early's onslaught, and he held the line until Sheridan arrived and turned the tide. Custer led a brilliant charge that forced Early's withdrawal into a panic-stricken rout. His troopers captured the battle flags, 45 artillery pieces, numerous prisoners, horses, and wagons. He was promoted to Major General.

During the Civil War, General George Armstrong Custer led more 150 cavalry charges against the Rebel Armies; he had at least 11 horses shot from under him; and, as Gen. Grant would later say, "he never turned his back to the enemy, and gallant officers always make gallant soldiers."

Perhaps his greatest award was at Appomattox after the surrender of General Lee. General Ulysses S. Grant presented to Custer the table on which General Lee had signed the surrender of the Confederate Army.

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Other Programs

Ray Bisio will speak on "The Aftermath of Gettysburg," at the Thursday, Nov. 21, meeting of the SJVCWRT in the Remington restaurant. The annual election of officers also will be conducted at that meeting.

There is no meeting scheduled for December. The first regular meeting of the new year will be a Share and Tell luncheon meeting on Jan 31 at the Downtown Club, 2120 Kern Street. Members are invited to bring and explain souvenirs, or to provide a sketch of a person or event of the Civil War.

The slate of officers proposed for 1997 by the nominating committee are: Barbara Moats, president; Rick Kubiak, vice president; Carol Berry, secretary and Wayne Bowen, treasurer. Bob Wash, Ken Moats and Verne Cole are proposed for directors. The two immediate past presidents, Bill Head and John Taylor, automatically become members of the board of directors. Nominations may be made from the floor.

The first meeting of the new board will be Thursday, Jan 9 at the Moats' 4780 N. Delno, beginning at 4 p.m. All Round Table members are invited to attend.

Coffee and the Civil War, an informal get-together, is being held beginning at 9 a.m. the second Saturday of each month at Le Croissant, First and Nees, Fresno. You are invited to come and discuss the latest book you've read, trip you've taken or your favorite topic of the Civil War.

