

## **“The Late Unpleasantness”**

**March 2010**



## **South Bay Civil War Round Table**

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#### **March Meeting Speaker:** *Tom*

*Rosa on “General Winfield Scott Hancock, A Man for the Ages”*

#### **Holder's Country Inn**

**(408) 244-2798 998 South De Anza Blvd.**

**(near Bollinger) San Jose, California**

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#### **The President's Message**

##### **The Amazing Mr. Lincoln**

The more one learns about Abraham Lincoln the more amazing a personality he becomes. If you were not a student of our 16th President, you would have benefitted from a great introduction presented by our February guest speaker, Dr. Gerald Henig, Professor Emeritus, Cal State University, East Bay. It appears that what all his distractors considered his shortcomings, a backwoodsman, lack of formal education, lack of executive experience, even his bouts of depression, combined to create a

singularly unique individual, a man at the right place at the right time, with all of the strengths and attributes needed to preserve the Union and save the Constitution - “the last great hope for humanity.” One has to wonder how a nation came to be so fortunate, first with the Founding Fathers at the creation, and then a man like Abraham Lincoln at our greatest crises.

##### **A Generous Donation**

As reported earlier, we voted to purchase a new power point projector. While costs

have come down considerably over the past years, it was still a challenge to find one at \$500 with the features we needed. Larry Comstock and Renee Accornero found the best value at \$700, and individually donated \$50 each to the

purchase and Judy Pyeatt one of our newer members made a most generous contribution of \$100 to cover the cost of the purchase. Thank you to Judy, Larry and Renee!

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## **SBCWRT Authors Series - Book Review submitted by Bill Noyes**

Sharpshooters 1750 to 1900 by Gary Yee  
*Sharpshooter Press, 2009, 750 plus pages*

Just finishing up Gary Yee's massive work, "Sharpshooters 1750 to 1900". It is a well crafted story and let me tell you why. Concerning Civil War history there are many "well-crafted" stories, some fiction, some history, though I doubt many are more energetically crafted than Gary's. His is different because his truth, his story, is sought and revealed in an unusual way. It is crafted from abundant evidence using his discerning style and with his complete appreciation of the subject. He gives enough of an overview of tactics and technology, events and repercussions, but stays focused on individual instances during battles. In our voyeuristic world any war related subject gets focused away from whatever reality in which it might once have occurred. Such is the power of our selectivity as we, authors and readers, choose what elements of reality or historic fact warrants our attention. Fiction becomes shaped into our fact and fact warped, acceptably, into fiction. This effect is minimized in Gary's work by his astute and comprehensive treatment of black-powder sharpshooting. He delivers a "one shot, one kill" revolution in how you will see and understand the Civil War battlefield. All questions may still persist – such as, was Sharpshooting more important to the final outcome than the Emancipation Proclamation – but you will no longer ignore that sharpshooting was an important factor in the war. Gary has delivered a long overdue look at the reality of Civil War battlefields with the precision of a Whitworth bolt at a mile target. He has shown the ghastly effect of precision shooting in practically every battle situation leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### **Retirement Announcement from Hal Jespersen, our Web Master** *Congratulations, Hal*

Hi. This is sort of a form letter going out to a number of my Civil War friends and acquaintances to let you know about a rather momentous, life-changing week for me. Some of you do not hear from me very often (or perhaps don't remember me--check out <http://posix.com/CW> for a memory refreshment), but I thought it would be nice to keep in touch.

Last weekend I retired after 44 years in the computer business. Yes, my first paying job in the industry was as an IBM 1401 and EAM (electronic counting machine) operator in 1966. Although part of my career was as a U.S. Army officer, a number of my Army assignments were computer or electronics oriented. I had been working at a consulting company founded by a friend and colleague from Sun Microsystems for a few years, but I found that the job I was doing in the quickly expanding company was changing into a role that I no longer relished. So we agreed that my retirement plans were probably a good idea for both me and the company.

While this was going on, my father was experiencing health problems and I knew I needed to spend more time traveling to see him while he was laid up, so an accelerated transition to early retirement made sense. On Thursday, March 4, he died, almost at the age of 92. A very long life, but he

obviously missed my mother, who died in 2008, very deeply, so I am grateful that the two of them are now together. And that his end came relatively quickly and peacefully.

## Scheduled Speakers

**March 30:** Tom Rosa "General Winfield Scott Hancock, A Man for the Ages"

**April 27:** Helen Trimpi On her recently published book: Crimson Confederates: Harvard Men Who Fought for the South

**May 25:** Larry Comstock's talk in May is titled "The Lincoln Writ" - Abraham Lincoln and the New Almaden Mine.

**June 29:** Dr. Joe Wagner "Medicine in the Civil War"

**July 27:** Dr. Libra Hilde (SJSU) To be announced

So now I am retired and although it came very suddenly I am really looking forward to it, actually. I have found that over the last few years my interests in traveling and studying the Civil War gave me a lot more pleasure than my real job. I have a pretty full schedule coming up this year, starting with the Atlanta Marathon this month, my father's burial in Providence, RI (just yards away from Ambrose Burnside's grave, by the way), and at least four or five other trips spaced out through the year. And I have a giant list of improvements to make to Wikipedia articles. My wife Nancy is still working in her graphic design business, but I think she is going to start getting pretty envious of my free time one of these days and I wonder how long it will be before she hangs it up as well and devotes full-time to her horse riding hobby.

I hope to see you again soon on a battlefield somewhere.

Best regards, Hal

## Preservation Report

*The Civil War Sesquicentennial is fast approaching as cities throughout the East are gearing up for tourism and the potential for economic growth. The following editorial appeared in the Clarksville Leaf-Journal last month. – editor. (Edited for space)*

### **Connect City to Civil War for Sesquicentennial**

**Clarksville Leaf-Journal**

**2/17/2010**

**Clarksville Leaf-Journal (TN)**

**<http://www.theleafchronicle.com/article/20100217/OPINION01/2170327>**

The sesquicentennial for the Civil War is fast approaching. The 150th anniversary commemoration runs from 2011 to 2015. The timing is perfect for Clarksville. It can capitalize locally on the national and international attention that the sesquicentennial will bring through the renovation of Fort Defiance, located at 120 A St. in New Providence near Sevier Park.

Confederate troops originally built the fort in November 1861 on the confluence of the Red and Cumberland rivers as a way to defend the river approach to Clarksville. It was abandoned as Union troops seized Clarksville in February 1862. Confederates briefly recaptured the city and the fort from August to September 1862. Then, Union troops retook both, and Clarksville remained occupied for the remainder of the war... The fall of Fort Defiance helped to open Middle Tennessee up to the Union forces. This event, along with surrender of Fort Donelson and the battle of Fort Henry, eventually led to the fall of Nashville.

Today, the earthworks remain, and Clarksville will be building a 4,700 square foot Fort Defiance Interpretive Center near the site to complement and enhance it. Rufus Johnson Associates has produced an architectural rendering of the center. The Customs House Museum is bringing an educational element to the building, and the Clarksville Museum Board is selecting the appropriate artifacts. Nature trails, landscaping and paved access drives will be included.

Clarksville's role in the Civil War received national attention back in 1990 when it was one of the places profiled in Ken Burns' PBS documentary, "The Civil War." The city didn't take full advantage of the attention then, but it's not too late.

With the renewed focus on Fort Defiance, the city can build on that base of interest — as an historic treasure and as an economic engine through increased tourism.

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