



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes January 26, 2021

Meeting Location: Online via ZOOM Meeting Application

Special Activities & Events:
None

Officer Reports

President

Governmental Impact on Americans

- Number of Government Departments:
 - 1865: 6
 - 2013: 16

Civil War in the News

Last Civil War Widow Dies

- Helen Viola Jackson died Dec 16th 2020 in Marshfield MO, at age 101
- Was almost certainly last remaining widow of a Civil War soldier
- In 1936 age 17, married James Bolin, age 93, a Union Civil War veteran

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- Bank Account: \$3,000
- Checks sent to cover ZOOM meetings and May 2021 presenter Honorarium

Secretary

- December meeting minutes posted on SBCWRT web site
- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Native Americans in the American Civil War? by Mark Costin
- Book Raffle: Special Raffle of presenter David Dixon's book
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 16

Preservation

No Report

Historian

Vacant

This Day in the Civil War: December 29th

1861: In Baton Rouge, LA, state convention votes for secession 113-17, making Louisiana 6th state to secede from the Union. In Savannah, GA, Fort Jackson is seized by state troops.

1862: General Pierre GT Beauregard is ordered by the Confederate government to Tennessee, to be 2nd in command to General Albert Sidney Johnston. Federal naval reconnaissance at Freeborn's Cut, GA

1863: Off the coast of Haiti, CSS Alabama captures and burns US ship Golden Rule. In Fredericksburg, VA. Major General Joseph Hooker takes command of Army of the Potomac. Among other things, Lincoln writes in letter to Hooker: "I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier... You are ambitious, which within reasonable bounds does good rather than harm... I have heard... of you recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a dictator... What I ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship." Skirmishing at Township, FL, Mulberry Springs, AR, and at Grove Church and Morrisville in Virginia.

1864: US Minister to France William Dayton writes to Secretary of State Seward: "I must regret that, of the great number of our ships of war, enough could not have been spared to look after the small rebel cruisers now in French ports. It is a matter of great surprise in Europe that, with our apparent naval force, we permit such miserable craft to chase our commerce from the ocean; it affects seriously our prestige." Skirmishing at Sevierville, TN, Athens, AL, Caddo Gap, AR, and in the San Andres Mountains, New Mexico Territory.

1865: Sherman continues to threaten Charleston, SC; has no intention of attacking Charleston, but believes it's good way to distract enemy from Sherman's real objectives. Skirmishing at Pocotaligo, SC & Point Rock, AL

Person of the Month: Montgomery Blair

Background

- In 1813, Montgomery Blair was born into the politically prominent Blair family
- Studied law at Transylvania University in Kentucky, then practiced law in St Louis, MO; moved to Maryland in 1852

- Served as US Solicitor in the Court of Claims, and as legal counsel to Dred Scott in 1857, when Dred Scott filed suit to gain his freedom from slavery
- After passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, Blair family left the Democratic party and helped found the Republican party
- Montgomery Blair campaigned for Lincoln in the 1860 Presidential election.

During Civil War

- Montgomery Blair served as Postmaster General in Lincoln's Cabinet from 1861 until 1864
- Made important innovations to the US Postal Service, contributing to the transformation of America brought about during the Civil War.
- As Postmaster General, Blair established uniform national postal rates, and mail carrier routes to deliver mail from post offices to homes and businesses
- Before, Americans would go to their local post offices to pick up their mail
- During the Civil War, more families were receiving letters informing them their sons and husbands had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner; mail home delivery was instituted so families could receive this shocking news in the privacy of their homes
- Blair also instituted the postal money order system; this enabled soldiers in the field to safely mail home money from their monthly pay
- Blair instituted the railroad mail car; bags of mail were picked up by trains at railroad stations; bags were opened and mail sorted in the mail cars as the train proceeded; mail was then dropped off, and more mail picked up
- Railroads were now not only the highways of their day; they now became the Internet of the 19th century.
- Blair resigned from Lincoln's Cabinet in 1864, which Lincoln accepted, hoping to ease hostilities with Radical Republicans, who called for moderate Republican Blair to resign
- Blair remained close to Lincoln, and campaigned for his re-election.

Post Civil War

- After Lincoln's death, Blair rejoined the Democratic party since he disapproved of the Radical Republicans' harsh stance towards the South.
- When Montgomery Blair died in 1883, US post offices closed for one day in his honor
- Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, MD named in his honor.

Other Topics

Lincoln as Legalist (Abby Eller)

- Commander in Chief of the Union armies, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg address, first Republican President, first assassinated President...
- We're familiar with these aspects of Abraham Lincoln; the core conviction that guided him, was Lincoln as legalist, firmly believing that the rule of law was vital to America's survival.
- 1830's America saw lots of mob violence and lynchings. In nearby Alton IL, proslavery mob murdered abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy for publishing an abolitionist newspaper; they also threw his printing press into the river
- Lincoln was an up and coming lawyer in Springfield, IL.
- In Jan 1838, Lincoln spoke at the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield, the subject was "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions." Here are some excerpts from this, slightly condensed in the interests of time:
 - In the great journal of things happening under the sun, we find ourselves under the government of a system of political institutions, conducing more to the ends of civil and religious liberty, than any of which the history of former times tells us
 - We have found ourselves the legal inheritors of these fundamental blessings. We toiled not in the establishment of them-they are a legacy bequeathed us by a brave, patriotic race of ancestors. This political edifice of liberty and equal rights tis ours to transmit to the latest generation. This task of gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, and duty to posterity, all require us faithfully to perform.
 - How then, shall we perform it? At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean, and crush us? Never!
 - At what point, then, is danger to be expected? I answer, it must spring up amongst us. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author. There is, even now, something of ill omen amongst us. I mean the increasing disregard for law which pervades the country, the growing disposition to substitute the worse than savage mobs, in place of the sober judgment of courts. Accounts of outrages committed by mobs form the everyday news of the times.
 - Now Lincoln asked, What has this to do with the perpetuation of our political institutions? I answer, It has much to do with it. The innocent, alike with the guilty, fall victims to the ravages of mob law. And all this is not the full extent of the evil. By such examples, by instances of the perpetrators going unpunished, the lawless in spirit are now encouraged to become lawless in practice. With no dread of punishment, they become absolutely unrestrained. On the other hand,

- those who abide by the laws, seeing their property destroyed and their lives endangered, and nothing that forbodes a change for the better, become disgusted with a government that offers them no protection. Thus then, the strongest bulwark of any government may effectually be broken down and destroyed-I mean, the attachment of the people.
- Whenever the vicious portion of our population shall be free to gather in bands, and throw printing presses into rivers, and hang or burn persons at pleasure with impunity, depend on it, our government cannot last. The feelings of the best citizens will become alienated from it. At such a time, men will seize the opportunity to overturn that fair fabric, which for the last half century, has been the fondest hope of lovers of freedom.
 - I know the American people are much attached to their government. Yet if the laws continue to be disregarded, if their rights to be secure in their persons and property are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections from the government must come.
 - In any case that arises, for instance the promulgation of abolitionism, either something is right, and therefore deserves the protection of law. Or if it is wrong, it is therefore proper to be prohibited by legal enactments. In neither case is mob law justifiable.

Other

Tom McMahon: Mount Tamalpais College/San Quentin Prison College Degree Program

- Program awards college degrees: B.A and M.A
- 500 inmates and men who have served their sentences enrolled; their need is learning material
- For 45 years, have collected news clips, etc., 20+ subjects that are being categorizing to make them available to the program
- Donation includes personal collection of 200+. books on the Civil War
- At present, no hard cover books are allowed inside the prison; working to get around that
- Concern that younger generation won't appreciate what a treasure of material exists and material may just be disposed of

How the Civil War Got Its Name By Livia Gershon

- Provided by Tom McMahon
URL: <https://daily.jstor.org/how-the-civil-war-got-its-name/>

January Presentation

Speaker: David Dixon

Topic: “The American Civil War: A Radical, International Revolution”

Book Raffle

Title: Radial Warrior: August Willich’s Journey from German Revolutionary to Union General

Winners: Gary Campagna, Alan Sissenwein, Bill Noyes

February Presentation

Speaker: Alan Sissenwein

Topic: Bad Civil War Generals - Union: Part 3

March Presentation

Speaker: Tom Roza

Topic: 1868 Impeachment Trial of President Andrew Johnson