



# SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

## South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes April 27, 2021

**Meeting Location:** Online via ZOOM Meeting Application

### **Special Activities & Events:**

#### **Ft Point Tour (Tentative)**

- Meet at Holder's Country Inn at Noon on a Sat TBD; park in back parking lot after Restaurant's approval
- Noon-1pm: Carpool to Ft Point in San Francisco
- 1pm-4pm: Tour Ft Point
- 4pm-5pm: Carpool back to Holder's
- 5pm-7pm: Dinner and SBCWRT meeting at Holder's

### **Officer Reports**

#### **President**

- Books
  - Ambivalent Nation – Hugh Dubrelle
  - British Perception of the Civil War
- Special Event
  - See “Special Activities & Events” above
  - More discussion at future meetings

#### **Vice President**

No Report

#### **Treasurer**

- Bank Account: \$2,885 (No new expenses or income)

## **Secretary**

- March meeting minutes posted on SBCWRT web site
- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Money During the Civil War?
- Book Raffle: Suspended
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 14

## **Preservation**

No Report

## **Historian**

Vacant

### **This Day in the Civil War: March 30th**

**1861**: Federal blockade is extended from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina to the coasts of North Carolina and Virginia by proclamation of President Lincoln. He also suspends the writ of habeas corpus, for reasons of public safety. The Virginia convention invites the Confederate government to make Richmond the new national seat of government. US Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles orders all US ships to seize Confederate privateers on the high seas whenever possible.

**1862**: Forts Livingston, Quitman, Pike, and Wood, protecting the city of New Orleans, surrender to Federal forces. Fighting at Pea Ridge, TN, Bridgeport, AL, and at Haughton's Mill near Pollocksville, NC.

**1863**: In Virginia, the Northern Army of the Potomac under Hooker force marches from Falmouth up the Rappahannock. Fighting near White Water Bridge, MO, Carter Creek Pike, TN, at Barboursville, KY, Town Creek, AL and at Murray's Inlet, SC

**1864**: Confederates attack Union lines at Taylor's Ridge near Ringgold, GA. Capt Semmes of the CSS Alabama captures and burns the US ship Tycoon off the coast of Brazil, after seizing the Tycoon's cargo of clothing. During the Red River campaign, the USS Ft Hindman, Champion No 5, and Juliet are badly damaged by enemy batteries on the river shores. Skirmishing near Decatur, AL, Troublesome Creek, KY, and Dayton, MO

**1865**: The Riverboat Sultana, steaming northward on the Mississippi River, overloaded with over two thousand Federal soldiers released from Confederate prisons, explodes from an overheated boiler. Between 1200-1900 men are killed, making this one of the most lethal ship disasters in history. Meanwhile, Lincoln's funeral train makes stops in Rochester and Buffalo, NY on its way to Illinois

## **Person of the Month: Montgomery Meigs - US Army Quartermaster**

### **General**

#### **Background**

- Napoleon famously said, “God is on the side of the biggest battalions.”
- In modern war, the Civil War was the first modern war, victory favors forces backed by the biggest national economies, able to rapidly produce and efficiently distribute materials of all kinds, to forces in the field.
- An army quartermaster is an officer who furnishes transportation and supplies (except weapons) to personnel on duty. A quartermaster general is a staff officer in charge of supplies & transport for an entire army.
- Prior to the Civil War, the Quartermaster Corps, with a staff of 13 and budget of \$3-\$4 million/year, was adequate to supply the needs of an army of 17 thousand officers and enlisted men, either posted at forts and arsenals, or engaged in public works construction projects
- Montgomery Meigs, a West Point graduate and career army officer, served in the US Army from 1836 to 1882. Most of his career was spent in the Army Corps of Engineers.
- A Georgia native, was fiercely loyal to the Union; despised officers who left the Army for the Confederacy as traitors to their oath and uniform.

#### **During Civil War**

- In May 1861, Meigs was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, Quartermaster General of the US Army. He quickly proved to be one of the best Quartermaster Generals the US Army has ever had.
- During War, each soldier was issued 3 uniforms and 4 pairs of footwear
- Each horse or mule consumed 26 lbs of food daily; fully half the money spent on rations went for animal feed
- These supplies were just the beginning of the \$1.4 billion spent by the Quartermaster Corps in 1864, to supply 1 million men in arms, 120k horses, and 60k mules.
- Remarkably, the supply system maintained effectiveness even as the army penetrated more widely and deeply into the South, in many areas with bad to nonexistent roads and dense wilderness
- 16 major depots ran a highly complex system of procurement from government factories and private contractors, then distributing to hundreds of constantly shifting destinations in the field
- Quartermaster General, Meigs also had to deal with each US Congressman anxious to win government contracts for his district.
- One example of the magnitude of what the Corps achieved during the Civil War was supplying and transporting McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign in early 1862, to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond:

- It left much to be desired in terms of achieving this objective, but! It was a marvelous success in terms of transportation and supply
- Over 100k men, 25k horses and mules, and over 400 seagoing vessels, 3600 supply wagons, and 700 ambulances, the largest seaborne movement of troops and materiel in up to that time
- The Quartermaster Corps kept the campaign continually re-supplied, as it inched it way like a giant tortoise towards Richmond. All this, while keeping the rest of the Union army forces supplied as well!
- By the end of the Civil War, the Quartermaster Corps had a staff of over 600, and (in constant dollars) had spent more money in four years than in all previous years combined.
- During each year of the war, the Corps budget was second only to the US Army payroll, as the biggest annual government expenditure; in 1864 alone, the Corps spent \$1.4 billion
- Quartermaster General Meigs had not only rapidly enlarged the size and scope of the Corps, throughout had held the Corps to the highest standards of efficiency and honesty.

### **Post Civil War**

- Montgomery Meigs served as Quartermaster General until his retirement in 1892. He lived the rest of his life in Washington
- Meigs used his well-earned prestige to see to it, that the new national military cemetery, Arlington National Cemetery was established on the grounds of the former family home of an ex-Confederate leader; the location was used to deliberately humiliate the former homeowner, who Meigs hated as the biggest traitor of all: Robert E Lee.
- Jefferson Davis was once asked, why he thought the South lost the Civil War. He replied, “We went to war, without reckoning the cost.”
- The North likewise did not foresee the cost. But unlike the South, the North could and did go on to absorb the cost, to prevail and win
- The greater manpower numbers the North had, would have been far less effective without adequate food, clothing and footwear, and feed for mules to pull wagons, and horses to mount the cavalry
- Secretary of State William Seward said of General Meigs, “without the services of this eminent soldier, the national cause would have been lost or deeply imperiled.”
- The fame and glory have gone to Grant and Sherman; equal credit is due Montgomery Meigs, as the other great general who won the war the preserved the Union.

### **Other Topics**

No Report

### **April Presentation**

Speaker: Dana Lombardy

Topic: Defending the Arteries of Rebellion

### **May Presentation**

Speaker: Bob O'Connor

Topic: Mrs. Slater - Missing Lincoln Conspirator

### **June Presentation**

Speaker: Mark Costin

Topic: 1864 General Sterling Price Raid