



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes August 31, 2021

Meeting Location: Online via ZOOM Meeting Application

Special Activities & Events:

Open House/Marin South County Airport

- Saturday September 11
- On Display are numerous military vehicles

Officer Reports

President

- Fort Point Tour
 - 4 people attended
 - Guided tour of the facility
- Election of Officers
 - President.....Jim Rhetta
 - Past President.....Robert Burch(Pending Member Status)
 - Vice President.....Alan Sissenwein
 - Treasurer.....Pending Resolution of SBCWRT Tax Status
 - Secretary.....Tom Roza
 - Preservation.....Bill Noyes
 - Publicity Director.....[position vacant]
 - Membership.....Rene Accornero
 - Historian.....Tom McMahon
 - Webmaster.....Hal Jespersen
- Civil War in the News
No Report
- Book Review
 - Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause by Ty Seidule

- Ty Seidule grew up revering Robert E. Lee. From his southern childhood to his service in the U.S. Army, every part of his life reinforced the Lost Cause myth: that Lee was the greatest man who ever lived, and that the Confederates were underdogs who lost the Civil War with honor.
- Now, as a retired brigadier general and Professor Emeritus of History at West Point, his view has radically changed. From a soldier, a scholar, and a southerner, Ty Seidule believes that American history demands a reckoning.

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- Bank Account: \$2,784
- Annual Dues Being collected:
 - Individual: \$20
 - Couple: \$35

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Joseph “Fighting Joe” Hooker?
- \$30 collected for book raffle
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 13

Preservation

No Report

Historian

- Tom McMahan voted as new Historian
- Report was not provided due to ZOOM technical problems

This Day in the Civil War: August 31

1861: In Richmond, the Confederate Congress adjourns. The Confederate government announces the appointment of 5 full generals: Albert Sidney Johnston and Robert E Lee, both former Colonels in the US Army; Joseph Johnston, formerly Quartermaster General in the US Army, PGT Beauregard, a previous Superintendent of West Point. And Samuel Cooper, formerly US Army Adjutant General, now appointed CSA Adjutant General. At the end of the Civil War, Cooper turned over intact records of the

Confederate armed forces, for which historians have been grateful ever since.

1862: In the aftermath of the Second Battle of Bull Run, the wounded are gathered for evacuation, the dead are buried, and the battered forces rested. At Fredericksburg VA, the Federals evacuate, abandoning large quantities of supplies. On the Tennessee River, the Federal transport WB Terry runs aground, after a brief defense surrenders to Confederate attack. Fighting at Little River Bridge MO, Stevenson AL, Roger's Gap TN and Franklin VA.

1863: Skirmishing at Winter's Gap TN and Will's Valley AL

1864: At the Democratic national convention in Chicago, George McClellan is nominated as the Democratic party Presidential candidate. Meanwhile in Georgia, Hardee with 2 corps of Hood's Confederate army attacks Oliver O Howard's Army of the Tenn near Jonesboro, south of Atlanta. The attack fails; Sherman does not bother to pursue Hood's retreating forces. His priority is the capture of Atlanta. Schofield's Army of the Ohio cuts the last rail link to Atlanta, on the Macon & Western RR. Sherman tells Slocum to attempt entry into Atlanta. Skirmishing near Clifton TN and Steelville MO.

Person and Place of the Month: James Buchanan Eads and the Union Ironworks

Introduction

- James Buchanan Eads was born in 1820 and grew up in St Louis MO. (Incidentally he was named after his mother's cousin-yes, THAT James Buchanan-who became President in 1856.)
- At age 13, Eads had to quit school to help support his family. Fortunately, his employer, Barrett Williams, saw the boy's intelligence and allowed Eads to spend time in his library, where he took to studying physics, mechanics, and engineering
- Years later, when Williams suffered hardship, Eads, by now wealthy and successful, returned his former employer's generosity by taking care of him financially.
- At age 22, Eads designed a river salvage boat equipped with a diving bell. At that time, salvaging on the Mississippi River was virtually impossible. But the demand was great
- More than 700 steamboats would be using the Mississippi River by 1860. Between 1845-1852, St Louis alone had over 22,000 steamboat arrivals. These could be lined up on the riverfront for over a mile
- The Mississippi River was perilous to navigate, with treacherous currents and obstacles hidden underwater. Some claimed that there averaged one boat wreck per mile on the river between Cairo, IL and St Louis

- James Buchanan Eads showed his salvage boat design drawing to shipbuilders Calvin Case and William Nelson. They were so impressed, they promptly made Eads their business partner
- Eads also designed salvage craft to raise the remains of sunken ships from the river bed. Eads' creations worked so well that he went on to make a fortune in river salvage operations.
- By 1861, Eads had developed detailed knowledge of the Mississippi River from Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico. He was expert at determining what ship designs worked best on the river
- In the 1850's, one Primus Emerson founded the Carondelet Marine Railway Co in St Louis. A shipbuilding and ship repair enterprise, it had equipment that could haul a ship up out of the water, then taken away on railroad tracks to a repair shed

During the Civil War

- During the Civil War, the Union was fortunate to have the abilities of one of the great 19th century inventor-engineers, and the resources of the Union Ironworks in St Louis, MO.
- In 1861, James Buchanan Eads leased Carondelet and renamed it the Union Ironworks, to now build and repair the gunboats of Eads' design. As for Primus Emerson, he relocated to Memphis TN where he built gunboats for the Confederacy.
- Attorney General Edward Bates called Eads to Washington to consult on shipbuilding, to help wrest control of the Mississippi River from the Confederacy. Eads was quickly contracted to design and build ironclad river gunboats for the Union. By war's end, Eads would design and build over 30 of these vessels.
- Eads' salvage boats had been so successful, largely because he operated many of them himself, to determine what design corrections might be needed, and what improvements might be made. Moreover, Eads listened to what riverboat pilots had to say. Likewise, Eads worked closely with Navy officers, to continually improve his ironclad gunboats.
- These ironclad river gunboats formed the nucleus of the US Army's Western Gunboat Flotilla, which was then transferred to the US Navy as the Mississippi River Squadron. These were in fact the US forces' first ironclad warships; the more famous USS Monitor (the "cheesebox on a raft") came along shortly afterwards
- Eads' gunboats took part in almost every action on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, starting with the Battle of Ft Henry until the war's end. Genls Grant and Sherman, no less, claimed that Eads' vessels had been vital to achieving victory in the West.

Post-Civil War

- After the Civil War, Eads went on to other accomplishments in civil engineering. By the time he died in 1887, he was internationally renowned in the engineering world
- His crowning achievement was the design and construction of the first combination road and rail bridge to span the Mississippi River at St Louis. Built 1864-1874, this bridge is still used today. Officially named the Eads Bridge, it is the only bridge to be named in honor of its engineer.
- One last thing to say about James Buchanan Eads: at the end of the Civil War, he was one of the wealthiest men in America. He donated generously to aid former servicemen and their families who needed help, Federals and former Confederates alike
- By holding a fundraising fair, he raised thousands of dollars to aid the numerous homeless refugees in postwar Missouri. James Buchanan Eads was not only a great engineer, he was a great philanthropist as well.

Other Topics

None

August Presentation

Speaker: Abby Eller
Topic: King Cotton

September Presentation

Speaker: TBD
Topic: TBD

October Presentation

Speaker: Robert Sweetman
Topic: Book Presentation via ZOOM: The Loyal, True, and Brave.
Covers the period between the beginning of the battle of Chancellorsville to the end of the battle of Gettysburg.