



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Meeting Minutes November 30, 2021

Meeting Location: Holder's Country Inn – Cupertino, CA

Special Activities & Events:

None

Officer Reports

President

- Civil War in the News
 - No Report
- Book Review
 - No Report

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- Obtain copies from Wells Fargo of last 3 months checking account statements. The month ending balances are listed below.
 - 9/30/21..... \$1,567.20
 - 10/31/21..... \$1,625.20
 - 11/30/21..... \$1,645.20

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Unusual or Unique Battles and Engagements of the Civil War? Mark Costin
- Book Raffle: \$13
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 15 (13 in-person; 2 via ZOOM)

Preservation

No Report

Historian

No Report

This Day in the Civil War: November 30th

1861: Along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, planters are burning cotton to prevent it from being taken by the Federals. British Foreign Secretary Lord Russell informs the British Minister to the US, Lord Lyons, that the Trent affair constitutes aggression against Britain. If Mason and Slidell are not released and an apology given within the next 7 days, Lyons is to close his office, depart Washington and return to Britain.

1862: Skirmishes in Mississippi at Chulahoma and along the banks of the Tallahatchie River. A Federal expedition in Missouri from Rolla to the Ozarks goes on until Dec 6th

1863: In Virginia, skirmishing along Mine Run at Raccoon Ford and at Licking Run Bridge. Genl Braxton Bragg receives a telegram from the War Dept in Richmond accepting his offer to resign from command. Bragg is now to turn over his army to Genl Hardee.

1864: The Battle of Franklin, TN takes place. Hood's forces attack Schofield's Federals. The Confederates lose 6300 out of a force of 27,000, the Federals lose 3,000 out of a force of the same size. The Confederates fail to break the Federals' lines, but manage to proceed on to Nashville. Likewise, Schofield pulls his men out of Franklin at night and heads towards Nashville. Meanwhile in Georgia, Sherman crosses the Ogeechee River unopposed. Skirmishing at Kabletown, WV, and Snicker's Gap, VA.

Ship of the Month: The CSS Shenandoah

Background

- Australia was still a British colony in the 1860's, and as such adhered to the British policy of neutrality during the Civil War; even so, Australia had benefitted from the war's influence overseas
- Many emigrants from the British Isles now preferred to make new homes in Australia, rather than in war torn America
- Now that American cotton bales were unavailable, Australian cotton cultivation greatly expanded to meet demand
- As in Britain, sympathy in Australia was divided between the Union and the Confederacy.
- On the morning of January 25, 1865, the city of Melbourne, Australia was quite surprised to find in their harbor a large Confederate warship,

pleading neutrality in order to make repairs, take on provisions and re-coal. What was a Confederate warship doing there?

- Therein lies the tale of the commerce raider CSS Shenandoah, which would earn a unique place in Civil War history.
- Commerce raiders are naval ships, manned by uniformed naval personnel. Commerce raiding aims to harm the enemy by capturing enemy merchant shipping, rather than by engaging enemy naval ships in combat.
- Privateers are civilian ships, government authorized for the same purpose. Pirates prey on merchant ships (and passenger ships), outside the law, solely for their own gain.
- The ship Sea King was built in Glasgow Scotland as a merchant ship

During the Civil War

- In Oct 1864, the Sea King was secretly purchased by the Confederate government in Liverpool England. Liverpool shipowners and merchants did a brisk business with the Confederacy, while taking care to stay within the letter of the British Neutrality Act
- Once outside British waters, the Sea King met with the Laurel, was converted to a commerce raider, and now renamed the CSS Shenandoah, under the command of Capt James Waddell.
- Waddell began seeking Union merchant ships off the coast of South Africa and then the Indian Ocean, with few results. Waddell then decided to go after New England whaling ships in the North Pacific. But first, the Shenandoah needed repairs and provisioning, therefore the stop in Melbourne
- The law officers of the Crown in Melbourne granted permission. (The US consul protested, but was politely ignored.)
- In the spring and summer of 1865, the Shenandoah finally hit the jackpot, so to speak, taking as prizes 25 Yankee whalers in the Bering Sea
- Then on June 27, Capt Waddell learned from one of the prizes, the Susan and Abigail, of Genl Lee's surrender at Appomattox
- The captain showed as proof the article in a San Francisco newspaper. But this newspaper also reported Jefferson Davis declared "war would be carried on with renewed vigor"
- So the Shenandoah resumed taking whaling ship prizes. Then on August 3rd, Waddell encountered the British ship Barracouta, who told of the surrender of Johnston's and Kirby Smith's armies, and the capture of Jefferson Davis

After the Civil War

- The war was really over. The Shenandoah now lowered the Confederate flag, stowed the guns below deck, her commerce raiding career finished.

- Captain, officers and crew assumed that return to the US likely meant being tried as treasonous pirates. If they were hanged, the Union no longer had to reckon with retaliation against Union prisoners of war
- When they learned of Lincoln's assassination by a Southerner, they lost all hope of leniency. So the Shenandoah now made the final journey back to Liverpool.
- 3 months later the Shenandoah reached Liverpool, and for the last time raised the Confederate flag. On November 6th, 1865, Capt Waddell formally surrendered the ship to Capt Paynter of HMS Donegal, marking the very last formal surrender of the Civil War
- The Shenandoah had fired the last shot of the Civil War, across the bow of a New England whaler. The ship's flag was the last Confederate flag to be officially lowered and furled. The Shenandoah was the first and only Confederate ship to circumnavigate the globe.
- In 1869, the US sought reparations for damages to US merchant ships, inflicted by British built commerce raiders. The Alabama Claims (named after the most notorious commerce raider CSS Alabama) was settled in 1872 by an international court of arbitration, awarding \$15.5 million damages.
- The case set a legal precedent: A nation's government and private enterprise could be held liable for damages done by a ship sold to a country at war, even if the ship departed from the shipyard unarmed.
- Even after war's end, the impact of the Civil War continued to be far reaching, even up to the present day.

Other Topics

None

November Presentation

Speaker: Kristin Patterson

Topic: United States Tax Stamps Used to Raise Funds for the Civil War

December

No Meeting

January Presentation

Speaker: Meg Groeling

Topic: New book: "First Fallen: The Life of Colonel Elmer Elsworth, the North's First Civil War Hero"