



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Meeting Minutes February 22, 2022

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

Special Activities & Events:

None

Officer Reports

President

New Civil War Book

- “Secret Army Behind Enemy Lines” by Stephen Romaine is available from Amazon Kindle this week
- Based on real people and real events, examines behind-the-scene activities on both sides of the Mason Dixon, extending into Canada
- Presents case on how most unlikely group of agents led by women fought behind enemy lines against the tyranny of Confederate slavery and provided consequential intelligence to senior Union Command - both Confederate military intel with advance warning on planned terrorist attacks targeting northern cities.
- Despite life threatening consequences if captured, repressive cultural and governmental barriers, and with no formal training in spy craft, Mary Bowser, Elizabeth Van Lew, and their secret army made this the most successful spy ring during the American Civil War.

Civil War in the News

Unknown Civil War Soldier Laid to Rest In Arkansas

- The remains of a male age 18-25 were found in 2011 by a farmer plowing his fields near Chopin in an area where the Battle of Monett's Ferry, part of the Red River Campaign was fought on April 23, 1864
- Artifacts found: buttons, the belt buckle - were all consistent with the 1860s; buttons were made of porcelain, metal and some possibly wooden. Also found were possible iron nail fragments, shoe or boot remnants, glass and shells, fabric, and other unidentified debris

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- As of January 31,2022, year ending Wells Fargo checking account balance was \$1,635.93
- There have been no transactions since that date.

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About the Underground Railroad?
- Book Raffle: \$10
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 15 (10 in-person; 5 via ZOOM)

Preservation

No Report

Historian

War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters

- Book by James M. McPherson; Originally published: 2015
- More than 140 years ago, Mark Twain observed that the Civil War had "uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations."
- Five generations have passed, and Americans are still trying to measure the influence of the immense fratricidal conflict that nearly tore the nation apart.
- McPherson considers why the Civil War remains so deeply embedded in our national psyche and identity. The drama and tragedy of the war, from its scope and size--an estimated death toll of 750,000, far more than the rest of the country's wars combined--to the nearly mythical individuals involved--Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson--help explain why the Civil War remains a topic of interest
- But the legacy of the war extends far beyond historical interest or scholarly attention. Touching upon themes that include the war's causes and consequences; the naval war; slavery and its abolition; and Lincoln as commander in chief, McPherson ultimately proves the impossibility of understanding the issues of our own time unless we first understand their roots in the era of the Civil War

- From racial inequality and conflict between the North and South to questions of state sovereignty or the role of government in social change- these issues, McPherson shows, are as salient and controversial today as they were in the 1860s.
- Thoughtful, provocative, and authoritative, *The War that Forged a Nation* looks anew at the reasons America's civil war has remained a subject of intense interest for the past century and a half, and affirms the enduring relevance of the conflict for America today.

This Day in the Civil War: February 22nd

1861: In San Francisco Calif, a mass meeting declares Calif for the Union. In Philadelphia PA, the day being the anniversary of George Washington's birthday, Lincoln speaks at Independence Hall, remarking " I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all men should have an equal chance."

1862: In Georgia, Union gunboats enter the Savannah River through Wall's Cut, thus isolating Ft Pulaski from Confederate defenses. Union Flag Officer Farragut orders the Union coast survey team to mark the safest channel for the approach to New Orleans.

1863: Between Murfreesboro and Manchester in Tenn, the pickets of Bragg's Army of Tenn exchange a few shots with Rosecrans' Union forces

1864: Louisiana, the qualified voters (who've sworn the oath of loyalty to the Union) restore the Union government to the state, and elect Michael Hahn governor. In Florida, Brigadier General Truman Seymour's Union troops reach the port of Jacksonville, and the protection of the Union gunboats lying in the harbor. In Georgia, Major General George Thomas chases away Confederate cavalry. The Federals then move towards Tunnell Hill, Dalton, and Rocky Face Ridge.

1865: Wilmington N Carolina falls to the Federals. In honor of Washington's birthday, at 12noon a 35 gun salute is fired, to recognize the Union flag now raised at Fort Strong in Wilmington. In S Carolina, railroads are the special target of Sherman's troops. Kentucky rejects the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

Person of the Month: Doctor Alexander Augusta

Background

- In Arlington National Cemetery, on a headstone above the name AUGUSTA is inscribed the epitaph: Commissioned surgeon of colored volunteers April 14, 1863, with rank of Major - Commissioned

regimental surgeon of the 7th Regiment of US Colored Troops, Oct 2nd, 1863 - Brevetted Lieutenant Colonel US Volunteers, March 13, 1865, 'For Faithful and Meritorious Services.'

- Dr Alexander Augusta MD, was all of the above...and much more.
- He was born a "free person of color" in 1825 in Norfolk VA. As a consequence of the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion, VA placed many restrictions on African-Americans, slave and free alike
- It being illegal now in VA to impart literacy to African-Americans, as a teenager Alexander Augusta learned to read and write in secret. He refused to be discouraged in pursuit of an education, to qualify him to practice medicine
- Rejected by the University of PA when he applied to study medicine, Augusta arranged private tutoring by a medical professor at the University. To support himself and his wife, he worked as a barber, a druggist, a chemist, as he pursued his ambition to practice medicine.
- In 1850 Augusta passed the entrance exam to enroll in The University of Toronto Trinity College, where he graduated with a degree in medicine in 1856
- He then practiced medicine in Toronto. The city of Toronto appointed him director of an industrial school. He founded the Provincial Association for the Education and Elevation of the Colored People of Canada. Among other things, the association donated books and school supplies to Toronto's black schoolchildren.

During the Civil War

- At the outbreak of the Civil War, Augusta travelled to Washington DC to offer his medical services to the US Army
- The Army Medical Board initially rejected him because of his race, and his having taken residence in Toronto
- The US Army could have been accused of violating Britain's Proclamation of Neutrality, which extended then to the British province of Canada.
- In 1863, the US Army reconsidered Augusta's application for Army medical service, now that Army enlistments were open to African Americans. Commissioned with the rank of major, Augusta was one of 8 of the first US Army's African-American physicians
- Once given the opportunity to serve his country, he rose in rank to muster out at war's end, as Lieutenant Colonel. He stood his ground even after he was assaulted by a gang of whites in 1863, for wearing an Army officer's uniform. (3 of these whites were arrested afterwards for this crime.)
- In 1863, Augusta was appointed administrator of the Freedman's Hospital in Washington DC, becoming the first African-American hospital administrator in the US, civilian or military

- In October of that same year, Augusta was commissioned regimental surgeon of the 7th US Colored Troops, and then in March 1865, commissioned brevet Lieutenant Colonel.
- In Feb 1864, in Washington DC, Augusta hailed a streetcar in a pouring rainstorm. The conductor told him he couldn't ride inside; he'd have to ride on the outside of the car. Augusta refused to do so. The conductor ordered the streetcar to go on
- Augusta reported this in a letter to Judge Advocate General Captain Clippington; the letter was published in Washington and New York City newspapers. US Senator Charles Sumner of MA introduced a resolutions in the Senate that "colored persons" be provided legal guarantee of equal use of railroad privileges in the District of Columbia.

After the Civil War

- Augusta left the army in 1866 with this rank, making him at that time the highest ranking African-American officer in the US Army.
- Augusta now took a position with the Freedman's Bureau, heading the agency's Lincoln Hospital administration in Savannah GA. He then became attending surgeon at the Smallpox Hospital in Washington DC and served on the staff of the Washington DC Freedman's Hospital.
- In 1868 Dr Augusta was appointed to the medical college faculty at Howard University in Washington DC, becoming the first African-American to become a professor of medicine in the US. He taught anatomy there until 1877.
- When the American Medical Association refused membership to African-American doctors, Drs Alexander Augusta, AWT Tucker, and Charles Purvis founded the National Medical Association, which continues to this day with 30k+ physician members, as advocates for the healthcare interests of the US African-American community.
- An amazing, admirable list of accomplishments by Dr Alexander Augusta, made all the more remarkable by the fact that over and over again, he had to contend with the entrenched racism of his time
- He circumvented the literacy laws in Virginia by learning to read and write in secret. Barred from medical school in PA on account of his race, he realized his ambition to practice medicine by emigrating to Toronto
- To Dr Alexander Augusta's epitaph, it would perhaps be fitting to add: HE NEVER GAVE UP. So much of Civil War history is about so many different kinds of courage. Dr Augusta was possessed of remarkable courage, and so deserves to be remembered and honored.

Other Topics

None

February Presentation

Speaker: Mark Costin

Topic: “The Overlooked Conflict, the Trans-Mississippi Operations,
Part II: The Battle of Pea Ridge”

March Presentation

Speaker: Alan Sissenwein

Topic: “Joseph Hooker: Greater Asset or Liability to the Union”

April Presentation

Speaker: Mark Costin

Topic: “Battle of Wilson's Creek”