



# **SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

## **South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes March 29, 2022**

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

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

None

### **Officer Reports**

#### **President**

No Report

#### **Vice President**

No Report

#### **Treasurer**

- As of Feb 28, 2022, ending Wells Fargo checking account balance was \$1,600.99

#### **Secretary**

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Little Known Civil War Trivia?
- Book Raffle: \$13
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 16 (10 in-person; 6 via ZOOM)

#### **Preservation**

- There is an effort by the Battlefield Preservation organization to collect \$12 million for the purchase of a parcel of land called the “Slaughter Pen” on the Fredericksburg battlefield

## **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 still trying to measure influence of 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: March 29th**

**1861:** The deposed governor of Texas, Sam Houston, refuses the Federal government's offer to re-establish him as Texas governor. Meanwhile, the Federal cabinet is three-to-two in favor of Lincoln's decision to hold Forts Sumter and Pickens, by sending a naval expedition to do this.

**1862:** In the town of Middleburg Virginia, the 28th Pennsylvania Infantry Col Geary commanding, is met by Confederate cavalry and infantry. After brief intense street fighting, the Confederates break up and retreat. This action is noteworthy: For the very first time, a machine gun (Lincoln's

“coffee mill”) is used in combat. Afterwards, Capt Bartlett of the 28th Penn Infantry notes: “it cut them to pieces terribly, quickly forcing them to fly.”

**1863:** Cmdr Duncan of the USS Norwich reports the evacuation of Jacksonville Florida after Federal forces have destroyed over half the city. In Mississippi, Grant orders Gen McClernand to move his troops from Milliken’s Bend to the vicinity of New Carthage on the west bank of the Miss River.

**1864:** In Louisiana near Alexandria, low water on the Red River gives Adm Porter problems getting his vessels moving, for the advance on Shreveport. Meanwhile in Virginia, an expedition of crew members from the USS Commodore Barney and the USS Minnesota rows up Chuckatuck Creek late at night, seeking to capture a party of Confederates in the area.

**1865:** At Mobile Bay Alabama, the USS Osage strikes a torpedo (i.e., an underwater mine) and quickly sinks, with 4 dead and 8 wounded in the explosion. Meanwhile at Petersburg Virginia, Robert E Lee is running out of men to defend the Confederate entrenchments. Grant moves his army to the southwest, at the same time Sheridan’s cavalry moves towards Dinwiddie Court House, attempting to force Lee out of the entrenchments into the open, where Lee’s dwindling troops can be pursued by the more numerous Federals.

## **Person of the Month: Clara Barton**

### **Background**

- March being women’s history month it’s appropriate to take a moment to remember Clara Barton, Civil War nurse, founder of the American Red Cross, ... and more.
- Born in 1812 in Massachusetts, was quite shy and timid. Started gaining confidence by being good at playing outdoor games with boys.
- And, she excelled at school. At age 10 she nursed her severely injured brother David back to full health, after doctors had given up his case as hopeless. Clara’s mother furthered her self-confidence by having one of Clara’s girl cousins teach her “feminine” social skills.
- Clara’s parents encouraged her, at age 17, to become a schoolteacher. Clara spent next 12 years teaching school in Canada, and state of Georgia. Furthered her education at Clinton Liberal Institute in NY.
- In 1855 Clara moved to Washington DC to begin work as clerk in US Patent Office. Was first woman to occupy such a top-level US government clerkship
- She received equal pay as the male clerks, but for 3 years enduring harassment and abuse from the men before being fired by the Buchanan administration for her “Black Republicanism.”

- After living with friends and family for 3 years, Clara returned to the Patent Office, now in a low-level job, which she accepted hoping she might pave the way for other women in the US Patent Office.

### **During the Civil War**

- In 1861, Clara nursed 40 men of the 6th Massachusetts Militia, who had been wounded in the Baltimore riot, over Union troops crossing through the city enroute to Washington
- She brought these men much needed food, clean clothing, and medical supplies, where they lay in the unfinished Capitol Bldg.
- Along with others, Clara quickly learned how to quickly organize and deliver these supplies, while keeping the soldiers' spirits up by praying with them and helping them write letters home
- From that day forward, Clara dedicated herself to aiding and comforting sick and wounded soldiers, despite opposition from the War Dept and US army field surgeons.
- In August 1862 Clara Barton finally received permission from Quartermaster Daniel Rucker to work in field hospitals on the front lines. She also gained the backing of Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts.
- She worked tirelessly to distribute food, supplies, to clean field hospitals and nurse soldiers near the 1st Battle of Bull Run, Cedar Mountain, 2nd Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Cold Harbor.
- She made a point of aiding both Union and Confederate soldiers. She became known as "the Florence Nightingale of America."

### **After the Civil War**

- After the Civil War, Clara Barton discovered thousands of letters from relatives to the War Dept went unanswered, because so many soldiers had gone missing in action.
- Clara spoke personally with President Lincoln, got his permission to respond officially to these letters. She ran the Office of Missing Soldiers in Washington DC. Barton; her assistants helped locate over 22 thousand missing soldiers, and wrote over 41 thousand replies to inquiries.
- She devoted the summer of 1865 to helping find and properly bury 13 thousand Union POWs who had died in Andersonville prison camp in Georgia. She continued at this for 4 more years, seeing that 20 thousand more Union soldiers were located and buried in marked graves. Congress appropriated \$20 thousand dollars for this work.
- After Missing Soldiers Office officially closed in 1868, Clara travelled to Geneva, Switzerland in 1869, where she was introduced to International Red Cross, dedicated to relieving suffering on a politically neutral basis.
- Financial backing from various benefactors enabled Clara to then found the American Red Cross.

- During the administration of President Chester Arthur, Clara finally succeeded in having the American Red Cross officially recognized, after Clara explained that the Red Cross could respond to crises other than war, for example natural disasters.
- Clara Barton became president of the American Red Cross in 1881. Her last field operation was helping the Galveston Tx 1900 hurricane victims.
- Was forced to resign from presidency of ARC in 1904, by a new generation of all-male medical professionals who rejected humanitarianism with professional education. After resigning, founded National First Aid Society, which eventually became part of the ARC.
- Clara Barton's Missing Soldiers' Office in Washington was restored and made a museum in 2015.
- In 1975, Clara Bartons' home in Glen Echo Maryland, was declared a National Historic Landmark, the first such landmark dedicated to the accomplishments of a woman. It preserves much of the history of the first years of the American Red Cross.
- 24 schools in 15 states, and 10 roads in 8 states have been named in honor of Clara Barton.

### **Other Topics**

None

### **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"

### **May Presentation**

Speaker: Tom Roza

Topic: "State of Wisconsin in the Civil War"