



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes September 27, 2022

Meeting Location: Denny's Restaurant located at 2077 N First St, San Jose, CA 95131 and via ZOOM

Note: The October/November, 2022 meetings will also be held at this Denny's

NOTE: THE HOLDER'S COUNTRY INN ON DE ANZA BLVD IN SAN JOSE, CA WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE ON JULY 27, 2022. A SEARCH FOR A NEW MEETING LOCATION IS IN PROGRESS

Special Activities & Events:

Annual SBCWRT Picnic CANCELLED

2022 West Coast Civil War Round Table Conference

Date/Time: November 4th (5:00) Thru 6th (Noon), 2022

Theme: "Combat Strategy and Tactics in 1864 Virginia, Grant VS Lee in 1864."

Host: San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

Location: Wyndham Garden Fresno Airport
5090 E. Clinton Way, Fresno
(559-252-3611) \$103 per night.

Event URL: <http://www.sjvcwrt2.com/events.html>

Attendee Registration: \$200 Per Person including meals (Breakfast on your own; coffee & pastries provided.) (Non participants who wish Dinner Fri or Sat Night: \$30 each meal)

Questions? Email: ronvaughan@prodigy

Election of Officers 2023

Deferred to October meeting

Officer Reports

President

- Meeting Location
 - Will remain at Denny's through Nov 2022 meeting
 - Holder's owner plans to rebuild restaurant at same location; in interim, plans to open temporary location
 - If Holder's temporary location meets RT meeting requirements, will hold meetings there; otherwise remain at Denny's which has a \$200 dining fee for use of room

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- Wells Fargo account balance as of September 2022: Approx \$1,599
- Sale of 2 Civil War Statues on eBay: \$155
- Provided a sheet showing income and expenses from 2018-2022
- Out-of-town presenters will be paid \$50 to cover travel expenses
- ZOOM monthly fee: most members who are not attending meetings in-person are also not attending via ZOOM; will assess whether to maintain ZOOM or not
- Dues:
 - Increased as follows: Individual: \$25; Family: \$40
 - Dues period changed to January thru December

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About the Copperheads?
- Book Raffle:
 - The process of selling raffle tickets as a fund raiser has been discontinued due to lack of interest by members
 - New process called "Take What You Want, Pay What You Want" has been implemented where when books are available, meeting attendees can take as many points as they want for free or donate in the amount of their choosing
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 10 (9 in-person; 1 via ZOOM)

Preservation

No Report

Historian

April 9, 1865 Confederate Surrender at Appomattox Courthouse

- Web site Wikipedia contains incorrect information that one of the last battles of the Civil War was fought at Appomattox Courthouse; No battle was fought there; it's only the place of the surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia
- After the fall of Richmond, VA on April 2, 1865, Robert E Lee abandoned the lines around Petersburg and moved his army west in search of supplies
- One of the last battles was when Union General Sheridan captured 7,000 Confederate troops; at this time Grant sent Lee a request for him to surrender his army; this was rejected by Lee
- After the Union troops seized the food supplies that Lee was counting, he agreed to surrender his army
- Wilmer McLean's house was used for the surrender; the McLean family had moved from Manassas, VA to Appomattox Courthouse to escape the war

Civil War Almanac This Day in the Civil War History: Sept 27

1861: In Washington, a rather heated discussion develops when the lack of aggressive action on McClellan's part is brought up at a Cabinet meeting attended by McClellan.

1862: The Confederate government raises the age limit for the conscription of troops, to 45 years old. In New Orleans, a regiment of free negroes is mustered in as the First Regiment Louisiana Native Guards.

1863: In Washington, Lincoln expresses dismay at Burnside's lack of movement to relieve Rosecrans. But Burnside is having difficulty disengaging from problems in Knoxville Tenn. In Franklin County Ark, Jo Shelby's raiders are active at Moffat's Station. Meanwhile, Federals are scouting in Bates County Mo, and on Hazel River, Vir. In Tenn, skirmishing at Locke's Mill and at Athens and Philadelphia in east Tenn.

1864: In Missouri, Brig Gen Thomas Ewing evacuates Ft Davidson at Pilot Knob, after having held off Confederate Gen Sterling Price's forces with only 1200 men. A small guerilla force, led by "Bloody Bill" Anderson, one of the most vicious Confederate guerilla leaders, attacks the town of Centralia. (Anderson's force, incidentally, includes Frank and Jesse James.) Federal troops hurry to the rescue of Centralia; 116 of them are killed. In North Carolina at Smithville, the CSS North Carolina sinks at her pier, because the bottom of this ironclad has been eaten through by worms. Elsewhere in NCar, Acting Ensign Semon, USN, makes a daring and

dangerous trip by small boat to Masonboro Inlet and Wilmington, to gather intelligence on the Confederate defenses and blockade runners.

Person of the Month: Grant's Memoirs: How and Why They Came to Be Written

Background

- Ulysses Grant: The great general of the Civil War, his strength was an iron will, and nerves of steel, that kept him decisive and determined under conditions of unimaginable stress.
- Friendship and loyalty meant everything to Grant. But his weakness was inability to realize that some people, no matter how friendly and persuasive, should not be trusted.
- As a result, Grant was a business failure before the Civil War, and his presidency was disgraced by his trusting some men who didn't deserve it.
- But then, Grant's weakness and strength would unexpectedly collide, to produce the masterpiece Personal Memoirs of US Grant.
- In 1884, Grant and his family were living in the finest part of Manhattan New York City. Financier Ferdinand Ward had formed an investment banking partnership with Grant, and convinced Grant to put all his money into this enterprise; And leave the investing management up to Ward. Grant did so without asking questions.
- Grant & Ward Co generated fabulous returns for Grant and other investors. Then it all came crashing down in May 1884; Ward had been running a Ponzi scheme all along. Grant and his family, along with hundreds of others, were suddenly ruined.
- Grant had given up his army pension when he was elected President. Fortunately, he and Julia owned several real estate properties, which they now hastily sold off to raise money.
- They were then shocked to discover they were in danger of losing their home in Manhattan. They thought they owned it free and clear, but they'd trusted Ferdinand Ward to arrange the purchase of the home for them.
- But Ward had made only a small down payment; the rest of the purchase money had gone to keep the Ponzi scheme going. To the rescue came Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the wealthiest men in America. Grant now refused to take anyone's charity; Vanderbilt paid off the mortgage before Grant could stop him.
- Only one month later, in June 1884, Grant was diagnosed with throat cancer. This, in an era when a cancer diagnosis was a death sentence.

Writing the Memoirs

- During the Civil War, Grant had shown great skill as a writer of field orders. No matter how hastily written, his orders were crisp, clear, and instantly understandable. For examples:

In field, Culpeper CH VA, April 9, 1864

- Maj Gen Geo G Meade, Com'd'g Army of the Potomac,
- For information and as instruction to govern your preparations for the coming campaign, the following is communicated confidentially for your own perusal alone.
- So far as practicable all the armies are to move together, and towards one common center. Banks has been instructed to turn over the guarding of the Red River to General Steele and the navy, to abandon Texas except for the Rio Grande, and to concentrate all the force he can, not less than 25,000 men, to move on Mobile. This he is to do without reference to other movements. ... Sherman will move at the same time you do, or two or three days in advance, Joseph Johnston's army being his objective point, and the heart of Georgia his aim. ...

New Bethel, VA, May 22, 1864

- Major General Meade, Commanding Army of the Potomac,
- Direct corps commanders to hold their troops in readiness to march at 5 am tomorrow. At that hour each command will send out cavalry and infantry on all roads to their front leading south, and ascertain, if possible, where the enemy is. If beyond the South Anna, the 5th and 6th corps will march to the forks of the road, where one branch leads to Beaver Dam Station, the other to Jericho Bridge, then south by roads reaching the Anna, as near to and east of Hawkins Creek as they can be found....

Surrender at Appomattox Courthouse

- In meeting at Wilbur McLean's house to dictate terms of surrender to Robert E Lee, Grant said:
 - What General Lee's feelings where I do not know. As he was a man of much dignity, with an impassible face, it was impossible to say whether he felt inwardly glad that the end had finally come, or felt sad over the result and was too manly to admit it.
 - Whatever his feelings, they were entirely concealed from my observation; but my own feelings, which had been quite jubilant on the receipt of his letter, were sad and depressed.
 - I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people fought, and one for which there was the least excuse.

- Ever since the Civil War, Grant had flatly refused to write anything about himself for publication. Now, the editor of the popular magazine Century asked Grant to write a series of articles about his recollections of major Civil War battles.
- Now Grant, betrayed by his willingness to trust a thief, summoned up his iron resolve and steady nerves and rose to the occasion. He furnished the articles promptly, was well paid for them; the articles boosted the magazine's sales.
- Mark Twain first met Ulysses Grant in 1866. For years, Twain had encouraged Grant to write his memoirs. By 1884, Twain had established his own publishing company, Charles Webster & Co, having learned the hard way what a treacherous business the publishing industry could be. When Twain learned Grant was about to sign a contract with Century magazine to publish his memoirs, Twain stopped Grant just in time. Twain insisted Grant's son Fred read the contract out loud.
- Century offered Grant 10% of the book's sales. But! To be deducted from Grant's 10%, would be all expenses for "promotion" of the book. Twain convinced Grant to sign with Charles Webster & Co instead.
- Grant's share would be 30% of gross sales receipts, meaning 30% of sales before anything else was deducted. Furthermore, Twain arranged for this 30% to be held in trust for Julia Grant.
- Grant was assisted in writing his memoirs by son Fred, Adam Badeau, and stenographer Noble Dawson. Badeau and Dawson had served previously on Grant's White House staff.
- Grant now worked several hours a day, six and seven days a week. His staff fact checked, using Grant's excellent home library. Evenings, the memoirs were read aloud to Julia, for her comments on the narrative quality.
- Twain did the final editing; he was amazed at how little editing was needed; Grant's writing was so good.
- Grant grew weaker by the day; he raced against time to complete his memoirs before he died.
- When Congress restored Grant's pension in March 1885, Grant was relieved to know that regardless of how well the book would sell, his beloved Julia's financial security was assured.
- Grant concludes his memoirs, saying:
 - It is probably well that we had the war when we did. We are better off now than we would have been without it, and have made more rapid progress than we otherwise should have made...
 - But this war was a fearful lesson, and should teach us the necessity of avoiding wars in the future...I feel that we are on the eve of a new era,

when there is to be great harmony between the Federal and the Confederate.

- I cannot stay to be a living witness to the correctness of this prophecy, but I feel it within me that it is to be so.
- Grant died in July 1885 3 days after he completed the Personal Memoirs of US Grant.

Afterwards

- Mark Twain sold the 2 volume memoirs by subscription. Several thousand door-to-door salesmen, a good many of them Civil War veterans wearing their old uniforms, sold copies in advance.
- The volumes would then go to press as a specific number of copies were sold. The sets were sold with the identical same text in 5 different bindings, ranging in price from \$7 in the low-quality binding, to \$25 in the top-quality binding.
- Sales began in Dec 1885; by Feb 1886 the sales resulted in \$200k royalties for Julia Grant. The Memoirs would remain a runaway best seller in the closing years of the 19th century.
- Scores of memoirs were written by Union and Confederate veterans. Since Grant's memoirs were published 137 years ago, they remain one of the very few Civil War memoirs that have never gone out of print; Grant's memoirs first rate military history and American literary classic.
- Grant had long desired for reconciliation between North and South. These volumes are dedicated to the American soldier and sailor.

Other Topics

New Presentation Approach

- Opposing Views Format: Which side of which topic could you present?
- Proposed Topics:
 - #1: If the Battle of Antietam had been a draw with both armies still in the field, would England and France have recognized the CSA?
YES: Jean Libby
NO: Alan Sissenwein
 - #2: If Lee had dissolved his Army to link up with other Confederate forces, and not surrendered, would the war have continued in a long partisan warfare struggle?
YES: TBD
NO: Jim TBD

#3: If the newly formed Confederate government had chosen to immediately export as much cotton as possible, instead of withholding it from European markets, could the Confederacy have prevailed?

YES: Abby Eller

NO: Jim Rhetta

September Presentation

Speaker: Abby Eller

Topic: “Grant’s Memoirs: How and Why They Came to Be Written”

October Presentation

Speaker: Abby Eller

Topic: “The Grand Army of the Republic”

October Presentation

Speaker: Jean Libby

Topic: “Kansas Free State Battery, 1856”