



# SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

## South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes January 31, 2023

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

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

#### **Model Ship Tour**

- Dr. Arnold Kriegstein's Collection
- Admiralty ship models and art from the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries.
- Location/Date/Time:
  - Mill Valley
  - 1:00PM
  - Sat 11 Feb
- Contact Jim Rhetta for additional information and attendance

### **Officer Reports**

#### **President**

- **Future Meeting Location Plans**
  - The Denny's on North First Street has increased their Room Fee and their Internet service is unstable and unreliable
  - Temporary of Holders Country Inn located in Main Street Cupertino Complex:
    - A private meeting room has been created
    - Reports of other organizations having good experiences holding their meeting at this location
    - Need to consider relocating meeting to this Holder's

#### **Vice President**

No Report

## Treasurer

- Wells Fargo account balance as of January 2023: Approx \$2,228

## Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About The Union Naval Blockade?
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 13 (9 in-person; 4 via ZOOM)

## Historian

### **Gone With the Wind**

- 1936 novel by Margaret Mitchell
- 1939 historical romance film adapted from the book
- Set in the American South against the backdrop of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era, the film
- Tells the story of Scarlett O'Hara, the strong-willed daughter of a Georgia plantation owner, following her romantic pursuit of Ashley Wilkes and her subsequent marriage to Rhett Butler
- Was immensely popular when first released; became the highest-earning film made up to that point; it is still the highest-grossing film in history
- Film has been criticized for glorifying slavery and the Lost Cause of the Confederacy myth
- It has been credited with triggering changes in the way in which African Americans were depicted cinematically.

### **Civil War Almanac This Day in the Civil War History: January 31st**

**1861:** In New Orleans, Louisiana state troops seize the US Branch Mint, the Customs House and the US revenue schooner Washington. (The revenue cutter service provided armed revenue customs enforcement.)

**1862:** In Britain, Queen Victoria declares it is her purpose to observe neutrality in the American Civil War. In Washington DC, Congress authorizes President Lincoln to take possession of railroads and telegraph lines whenever public safety requires it. Lincoln issues Special War Order No 1, pertaining specifically to the Army of the Potomac. This army is ordered to form an expedition to seize and occupy a railroad point southwest of Manassas Junction, to be done by no later than February 22nd. Lincoln is trying to force McClellan to commence offensive operations in Virginia.

**1863:** Two Confederate rams, the CSS Chicora, Cmdr John R Tucker, and Palmetto State, Lt John Rutledge, leave Charleston harbor to attack the blockading fleet. They destroy the USS Mercedita and Keystone State. Gen Beauregard, commanding the Charleston district, exults that the blockade of Charleston has been lifted. But more Federal ships soon arrive. Meanwhile

in Tennessee, a Federal expedition from Murfreesboro to Franklin includes skirmishing at Unionville, Middleton and Dover.

**1864:** President Lincoln tells Gen Banks in New Orleans that he is “at liberty to adopt any rule which shall admit to vote, any unquestionably loyal free state men and no others. And yet I do wish they would all take the oath.” In Virginia, there is fighting at Smithfield.

**1865:** Jefferson Davis proposes, and the Confederate Congress promptly approves, the appointment of Robert E Lee as General-in-Chief of all Confederate armies. In South Carolina, Sherman continues his nonstop march towards the state capital Columbia. In Washington, Lincoln directs Secretary of State Seward to go to Fort Monroe to meet with the peace committee from Richmond and present three non-negotiables: One common country, an end to slavery, and disbandment of all forces hostile to the Union. Last but not least, the US House of Representatives passes the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, previously passed by the Senate, abolishing slavery in the United States. By December 1865, two-thirds of the states will have approved the amendment, thus making it law.

## **Other Topics**

### **Civil War Medicine: Treatment of Diseases and Wounds- Abby Eller**

#### **Background**

- Half those wounded in combat died from their wounds, whether they received medical attention or not. Twice as many soldiers died from disease, as from being wounded or killed in combat. Both Armies sometimes had up to a third to a half of their men prostrated with disease.
- These illness and mortality rates, in Civil War camps and on the battlefields, seem appalling to us now. Why were they so high?
- Illness and mortality rates in Civil War armies would've been worse, had it not been for progress in medical practice made by the mid-19th century
- Real progress in surgical skills had been made, thanks to the medical profession overcoming religious resistance to dissection to train physicians in human anatomy
- Napoleon's armies had improved survival rates of the wounded, by using trained ambulance corps to get the wounded to treatment faster than ever before. To ensure that those who needed treatment the worst got it first, the triage system was invented
- Smallpox, a former major killer, was vanquished by safe and effective vaccination. Quinine was used to effectively treat malaria. The chemical elements bromine, chlorine and iodine had been discovered; compounds of these were found to be powerful antiseptics
- Last but not least, the anesthetics ether and chloroform eliminated agonizing pain during surgery.

- Even so, medical progress was held back by centuries-old erroneous beliefs explaining disease: One of these was the belief that disease was by “miasma” a mysterious substance that somehow originated in the air and could sometimes be identified by a bad smell
- If a soldier fell ill after drinking bad smelling pool of stagnant water, he was thought to be sick not from the water, but from inhaling the miasma hovering over the stagnant water. Soldiers did learn that water from clear fast running rivers and streams was less likely to make them ill, but a big reason for Civil War disease mortality rates was lack of clean safe water.
- Dysentery was the most frequent illness. Dysentery dehydrates the body, and can kill quickly in hot weather, which was when most of the campaigning was done.

### **During the Civil War**

- Other major killers in Civil War army camps were scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough and diphtheria. Until the close of the 19th century, smallpox would be the only communicable disease that could be prevented by vaccination.
- At field hospitals near battlefields, the main medical skill needed was limb amputation. As yet, no skill had been developed to repair chest, abdominal or head wounds. These either healed up on their own somehow, or proved fatal
- The only way surgeons could deal with most arm and leg wounds was by amputating the injured portion of the limb. Repairing a wounded limb was beyond medical skill at that time.
- Wounded limbs left unamputated for too long were almost always fatal, due to infection. This is why even though chloroform rendered patients unconscious during amputation, battlefield surgeons continued to do amputations as quickly as possible
- Roughly one-half of amputees succumbed to post-operative infection.
- Real progress was made in battlefield medicine during the Civil War. For the first time, physicians were now required by the US Army to furnish proof of surgical skills, before being allowed to perform surgeries.
- “Surgeons” were emerging as a distinct medical specialty. Thanks to General McClellan and Dr Jonathan Letterman, the creation of a specialized ambulance corps with trained drivers and stretcher bearers, meant increasing odds of survival for the wounded.
- Those fortunate enough not to succumb to disease and wounds, but would still need time and care to recover, were then transported to army hospitals. How this was done, and what these hospitals were like, will be the subject of a future presentation on Civil War medicine.

### **January Presentation**

Speaker: Ron Vaughan

Topic: "Franco-Mexican Conflict"

NOTE: Presentation was suspended due to poor Internet service at Denny's Restaurant. It was agreed with the speaker to reschedule later in 2023

### **February Presentation**

Speaker: Jean Libby

Topic: "Kansas Free State Battery, 1856"

### **March Presentation**

Speaker: Alan Sissenwein

Topic: "Antietam: A Pivotal Diplomatic Turning Point in the Civil War"