



South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes November 18, 2025

Meeting Location: Jack's Restaurant & Bar 1502 Saratoga Ave, San Jose, CA 95129 located in the Westgate Center Shopping Mall and via ZOOM

Special Activities & Events:
None

Officer Reports

President

No Report

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- Wells Fargo checking account: \$2,299.62, no change from prior month

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Miscellaneous Topics of the Civil War?
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 14 (14 in-person; 0 via ZOOM)

NOTE: Due to Thanksgiving Day Holiday, the November meeting was scheduled for November 18 at Jack's

This Month in Civil War History: November

1861: President Lincoln appoints General George B. McClellan as General-in-Chief of all United States armies

1862: North Carolina native Richard J. Gatling patents his new rapid-fire weapon, a 6 barrel machine gun. The Union forces use a few of them before the war ends. Ironically, and in common with other inventors of new weapons, Gatling believes his terrible new killing machine will discourage

warfare. His name will become the source of the gangster slang expression "gat" for gun..

1863: Siege of Knoxville, Tennessee. Confederate troops under General Longstreet lay siege to Knoxville held by Federal forces under General Ambrose Burnside. Longstreet finally attacks on November 30 but is repulsed with heavy losses. The arrival of US reinforcements forces him to withdraw to Greeneville, Tennessee, where his corps will spend the winter..

1864: Abraham Lincoln was reelected to a second term as U.S. President, defeating Democrat George B. McClellan.

Event of the Month: March to the Sea: Nov 15-Dec 21, 1864 (Jim Rhetta)

- Debilitated the Confederacy and helped lead to its collapse.
- Sherman's decision to operate deep within enemy territory without supply lines was unusual for its time.
- "Hard War" regarded as early example of "Total War" in modern times

March Preparations

- Only the most physically fit men were accepted; 1% left behind.
- Eighty percent were long-time veterans of campaigns
- Each unit had a supply train; size strictly limited.
- Each regiment had one wagon and one ambulance.
- Each company had one pack mule for the baggage of its officers
- The number of tents was curtailed
- The 62,000 men assembled:
 - 55,000 infantry,
 - 5,000 cavalry,
 - 2,000 artillerymen manning 64 guns – 768 horses
 - Divided into two columns for the march

The Staff Work

- Rations for 62,000 for 20 days at 3lbs a day = 1,860 tons of food
- 7,000 horses and mules at 22lbs of fodder per day = 1,540 tons of fodder
- 3,400 tons of food required
- 6,000 pairs of spare shoes

Sherman's Special Field Orders

- The army will forage liberally on the country during the march
- Power to destroy mills, houses, cotton-gins, &c.
- General Principles:
 - In districts and neighborhoods where the army is unmolested, no destruction of such property should be permitted;
 - Should guerrillas attack or inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads, or hostility, relentless devastation authorized

- Horses, mules, wagons, &c., belonging to the inhabitants, the cavalry and artillery may appropriate freely and without limit, discriminating between the rich and the poor or industrious
- Foraging parties may take mules or horses to replace their own
- Refrain from abusive/threatening language, give written certificates of the facts, but no receipts

Living off the Land

- Sherman used livestock/crop production data from 1860 US census to lead troops through areas best for foraging

The March Impacts

- Wrecked 300 miles of railroad/numerous bridges/miles of telegraph lines.
- Seized 5,000 horses, 4,000 mules, and 13,000 head of cattle.
- Confiscated 9.5 million pounds of corn, 10.5 million pounds of fodder.
- Destroyed uncounted cotton gins and mills.

Assessments

- In 1929, British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart described the men of Sherman's army as "probably the finest army of military 'workmen' the modern world has seen. An army of individuals trained to look after their own food and health, to march far and fast with the least fatigue, to fight with the least exposure, above all, to act swiftly and to work thoroughly."
- After his surrender to Sherman, Confederate General Johnston said of Sherman's men that "there has been no such army since the days of Julius Caesar."

Historian

- Recommended view Ken Burns "The American Civil War" documentary because of the comprehensive backstory of slavery in America prior to the Civil War

Other Topics

High School Essay Contest – Tonya McQuade

- Proposal: Offer a High School Essay Contest
- Monetary Prizes
- Encourage Civil War study and reflection on more personal level
- Topic should not be:
 - One students would encounter on a school Advanced placement test
 - One they can easily have AI write for them.

One Idea: A Reflective Essay

- How one of the following impacted your understanding of the U.S. Civil War:
 - Its Causes
 - Effects
 - Battles
 - Key Figures

- Battlefield, historical site, or museum you have visited
- Workshop or conference you have attended
- Book you have read (fiction or nonfiction)
- Movie, TV series, or documentary you have watched
- Why it's important for young people to develop understanding of Civil War on a personal level (rather than just names, dates, and key events).

Basic Guidelines:

Who: High school juniors and seniors in Santa Clara County

- What: Personal Reflective Essay
- Length: 750-1000 words, typed, double spaced, no use of AI
- When: Deadline March 15, with winner announced April 5
- Prizes: First = \$300; Second = \$100; Third = \$50
- Winners will be invited to present their essays at a future meeting (April?) of the South Bay Civil War Round Table

NOTE: Consider aa venue different a restaurant

Promoting Awareness of SBCWRT

- South Bay Writers(SBW) Meetings: Saratoga Senior Center
- SBW has taken on responsibility of submitting at least three articles each month to the Outlook newspaper, which goes out to quite a few residents in Los Gatos and Saratoga
- Tonya would like to write an article about the group to submit to Outlook
- At Meeting, members completed :Quick Survey: Fill out their responses to a couple quick questions tonight to get some quotes for the article

Conclusions

- Membership voted to move forward with High School Essay Contest
- Tonya McQuade will help lead implementation

November Presentation

Speaker: Davide Hsueh

Topic: "Requiem for Innocence: Destruction of Nature and Animals in the Civil War"

December Presentation

No Meeting in December

January Presentation

Speaker: Alan Sissenwein on "The Checkered Civil War Career of Edwin Vose Sumner"