



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes May 19, 2026

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

High School Essay Contest

- Essay Finalists
 - 1st Place: Emmett Spear
 - 2nd Place: Madelyn Leigh Holzhey
- Good turnout; Saratoga Senior Center accommodations were very good
- Plenty of Food and Refreshments donated by SBCWRT members

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- The closing balance on our SBCWRT Wells Fargo checking account per our latest statement as of 4/30/26 is \$2,466.87, an increase of \$117.25 from the prior month.

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About Philip Sheridan?
- Meeting Attendance: Total: 7 (6 in-person; via ZOOM)

This Month in Civil War History: May

1861: United States forces cross Potomac River & occupy Arlington Heights, home of future Confederate General Robert E. Lee. During the occupation of Alexandria that Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, commander of the 11th New York Infantry and close friend of the Lincolns, is killed by the owner of the Marshall House just after removing a Confederate flag from its roof. Ellsworth is the first US officer killed in the war

1862: First Battle of Winchester, Virginia. After two weeks of maneuvering and battles at Cross Keys and Front Royal, Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson attacks US forces at Winchester and successfully drives them from the city. The victory is the culmination of his 1862 Valley Campaign

1863: The US War Department issues General Order No. 143 establishes the United States Colored Troops

1864: Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia. Lee successfully stalls Grant's drive toward Richmond

1865: Confederate President Jefferson Davis is captured near Irwinville, Georgia

Place of the Month: New York City 1860

New York City History:

- Founded 1624; part of New Netherlands colony; run by the Dutch West India Company
- Was diverse, populated by various ethnic/religious groups
- Promoted trade and eschewed democracy while exhibiting tolerance
- Conquered by England in 1664; remained culturally Dutch

Politics:

- Tolerant of slavery; aligned with Southern-dominated Democratic Party
- Upstate New York joined Lincoln's new, antislavery Republican Party
- Disagreements over police, selling of alcohol and major public works

Mayor Fernando Wood

- Expected peaceful breakup of the United States with New York State joining the secession
- 1860 Presidential Election: Lincoln sweeps almost all counties in the Northeast and Midwest; none in the South

Secession Talk:

- Nov. 1860, Wood holds private secession planning meetings with William Astor, August Belmont, Samuel Tilden
- Dec. 1860, Congressman Daniel Sickles delivered fiery speech on the U.S. House floor. "Secession, although it may begin at the South, will not end at the South"
- Merchants feared staying with the Union would mean losing the city's lucrative Southern trade/dominated by Yankees

- January 1861, Wood advises NYC would proclaim its independence

Civil War:

- South Carolina's attack on Fort Sumter, quells secession talk
- Wood rallied to the restoration of the Constitution and the Union
- Sickles raised four regiments

More Secession Talk:

- Long desire for NYC to become its own U.S. state
- 1919 plan proposed a new state of Greater New York (southern New York State)
- 1959 statehood effort endorsed by City Council; 1966 statehood plan was floated by State Supreme Court Justice Emeritus Hofstadter
- Author Norman Mailer made an unsuccessful 1969 mayoral run on a secession platform
- High-water mark 1971: Representative Bella Abzug's "51st State" plan had support of 4 of US House colleagues, 7 state senators, 33 assembly members, 22 city councilors and 3 borough presidents; effort died for financial reasons

Historian

No Report

Other Topics

None

May Presentation

Mark Costin on "Battle of Cerro Gordo – Training Ground for the Civil War"

June Presentation

Kristin Patterson on "The Funding of the Gettysburg National Cemetery"

July Presentation

Tonya McQuade on "Mary Brown, the Wife of John Brown"