



**Volume 66, No. 1**  
**January, 2026**

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# ***Battle Cry***

**Founded 1961,**  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
Sacramento, CA 95865-4702  
<http://sacramentocwrt.com/>



## **President's Message**

Well that concludes my first year of our Civil War Round Table Presidency. I'm hoping we will get more members in the next few months.

I'm also happy Ron Grove has stepped up and gotten such great programs for us and for implementing the Zoom feature. Our program this month is going to be Gettysburg Monuments!!

See everyone on the 14<sup>th</sup>! If anyone has any suggestions for our group, I have a new email – [carolbreiter00@gmail.com](mailto:carolbreiter00@gmail.com).

**Carol Breiter, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
Wednesday, December 10, 2025  
R Vida Cantina Restaurant, 7040 Sunrise Boulevard, Citrus Heights

**ATTENDANCE – 18**

**MEMBERS – 14:** Carol Breiter, President; Paul Ruud, Vice President; Jean Breiter, Secretary; George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; Steve Breiter, Ron Grove (Program Director), Brendan Harris, James Juanitas (Immediate Past President), Marsha Jutovsky Cain, Matthew Jutovsky, Mike Lynch, Patricia Ruud, & Stuart & Andrea Sheffield.

**GUESTS – 3:** Jason & Jennifer Crutchly, & Katharine Phillips.

**ZOOM – 1:** John Adolph.

1. The meeting was called to order by President Carol Breiter at 7:02 PM and she led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. President Breiter shared this day in history. General Sherman reaches Savannah, Georgia in 1864; New York Governor Francis Lovelace planned a postal system between New York and Boston in 1672; Massachusetts Colony implemented paper money in 1690; First Edition of Britannica Encyclopedia in Edinburg, Scotland; Mississippi entered the United States as Number 20 in 1817; Emily Dickinson was born in 1730; Wyoming granted the vote (suffrage) to White women; Spain and United States signed "The Treaty of Paris" ending the Spanish-American War in 1898; First Nobel Peace Prize awarded in 1901; first woman Nobel Peace Prize to Selma Lagerlof of Sweden in literature in 1909; and United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.
3. President Breiter introduced new members and guests. One new member and three guests.
4. There was no old business. Announcement: THIRD CENTRAL COAST CONFERENCE – will be held May 1 - 3, 2026 in Monterey, California, "Seldom Heard History of the Civil War."
5. The Raffle was conducted by Ron Grove. Thanks to members and guests, the Raffle collected \$36.00.
6. President Breiter introduced the speaker, Ron Grove. He presented the Annual Trivia Competition and the winning score was 20 out of 25 by Brendan Harris. Top prize was a \$50.00 gift certificate to R Vida! The second place prize of a \$25.00 gift certificate to R Vida went to James Juanitas with 17 out of 25.
7. After discussions and questions, the evening ended at 7:58 PM.
8. The next Executive Board Meeting is Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 10:00 AM, at Brookfields near Madison and I-80. Members and guests are welcome.

**Submitted by Jean Breiter, Secretary**

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance on December 10th was \$5,042.99. Thanks to members, guests, and Ron Grove, the raffle brought in \$36.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

# Coming Programs for 2026

Date	Speaker	Topic
January 14th	"Brendan Harris	"Gettysburg Monuments"
February 11th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
March 11th	"Debby Johnson"	"Pharmacy Practice From the Mid 1800s Through the End of the Civil War"
April 8th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
May 13th	"Doug Bonetti"	"Lincoln in Film, Poetry, & Literature"
June 10th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"

## 2026 Membership

The 2026 membership renewal is due on January 1, 2026. The dues are \$30.00 and you can renew at a meeting or send to the Treasurer through the mail. For all checks, make them payable to **Sacramento Civil War Round Table** and send them to:

George W. Foxworth  
9463 Salishan Court  
Sacramento, CA 95826-5233

## NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the first day of each month for that month's **Battle Cry**. However, you can submit articles at anytime. Please submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

[gfoxworth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gfoxworth@sbcglobal.net)

The **Battle Cry** is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Round Table or the Editor. The official address of this Round Table is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 254702, Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check the web for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

## **Friends of Civil War Alcatraz**

The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz (FOCWA) is a group of individuals interested in the Civil War history of Alcatraz island. We are made up of teachers, veterans, historians, and others who like to research and read about how Alcatraz became an important Fort for the protection of San Francisco during the Civil War.

Some of our members are also National Park Service volunteers who assist the rangers in giving public programs, in uniform, about the Union soldiers stationed on the Island and interesting events that occurred there between 1859 and 1865. We publish a newsletter every month, which can be found on our website [www.friendsofcivilwaralcatraz.org](http://www.friendsofcivilwaralcatraz.org).

We also visit schools and organizations to tell that early history of the Island, long before it became the notorious Federal prison. And we conduct living history days twice a year, in conjunction with the American Civil War Association, to give the public an idea of what the Island was like as a Union Fort.

**Submitted by Steve Johnson**

# Woman of the Month

## Emily Elizabeth Parsons

Nurse, Hospital Administrator



Engraving by John Sartain

Born: March 8, 1824 in Taunton, Massachusetts

Died: May 19, 1880 in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Buried: Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Emily Elizabeth Parsons was the eldest of seven children born to Catherine and Theophilus Parsons. Her father was an Attorney and Professor of Law at Harvard. Emily received a public education, graduating from Cambridge High School. Her

childhood and adolescence were unfortunately marked by injury and illness. One accident left her blind in her left eye, and another crushed her ankle, making it difficult and painful for her to stand for prolonged periods of time. A bout of scarlet fever left her partially deaf.

When the Civil War broke out, Emily, aged 37, desired to be an Army Nurse, despite her father's reservations that her disabilities might prevent her success. Emily shrugged off his admonitions and began training as a nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital. After 18 months, she was placed as matron at Fort Schuyler Military Hospital on Long Island, overseeing a ward of 50 injured men. After two months, she fell ill and was forced to return home.

While recuperating, Emily wrote to Superintendent Dorothea Dix, requesting assignment wherever she was needed. In January 1863, Emily travelled to Saint Louis, Missouri, and was assigned to nurse at the Lawson Hospital. After only a few weeks on the job, she was reassigned to the Hospital Steamship *City of Alton*. The ship travelled to Vicksburg, Mississippi, picking up approximately 400 sick and wounded Union soldiers, plus an uncounted number of enslaved persons who had escaped to Union lines. Many of the soldiers died enroute to Memphis, and Emily contracted malaria. After the surviving soldiers were transferred to Army hospitals, Emily and the other nurses were sent back to Saint Louis.

Emily was next assigned as the Chief Matron of the Benton Barracks Hospital, the largest medical facility in the Western Theater with nearly 2,000 patients. Under her management, the death rate at the Barracks declined. Emily also established a training program for the local women who volunteered to nurse at the Hospital. It was reported that, even as she contended with bouts of malaria, Emily continued her duties, often directing her nurses from her bed.

After the War, Emily returned to Cambridge, and decided to establish her own hospital. After six years of fundraising, the public Cambridge Hospital opened its doors. Sadly, it closed in 1872 due to lack of financial support for its operations.

Emily Parsons died from a stroke in 1880. She was 56 years old.

Throughout the Civil War, Emily corresponded with her family in Cambridge. After her death, her father published *The Memoir of Emily Elizabeth Parsons*, a selected collection of her wartime letters. The proceeds from the book were donated to the Cambridge Hospital Fund, and this money, along with gifts from philanthropic citizens, enabled Emily's Hospital to reopen in 1886. Renamed Mount Auburn Hospital, it remains in operation today.

-- DeAnne Blanton

**Submitted by the "Society for Women and the Civil War - [wwwswcw.org](http://wwwswcw.org)"**

# The Mystery of George Cutter (or Cutler)

James W. Erwin, June 9, 2024 (originally published August 14, 2023),  
[blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)



George Cutler's tombstone | courtesy of the author

Among more than a thousand graves of Confederate soldiers, guerrillas, and civilians in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery is the grave of a lone Union soldier. And not just any Union soldier, but one who served in the United States Colored Troops. The inscription on the headstone is "Geo. Cutter, Lieut. USCT."

Who was George Cutter and why was he buried here instead of with his fellow Union

soldiers? There was no officer named Cutter in the United States Colored Troops, but there was a George Cutler who was a Lieutenant in one of the regiments.

George Cutler was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1831. He had red hair and stood 5 foot 11½ inches tall. In 1860, he was a carpenter living in Saint Louis. Serving in three short-term Missouri regiments, Cutler participated in the capture of Camp Jackson, and the Battles of Carthage and Wilson's Creek. He joined Company E, 30th Missouri Infantry, in the U.S. Army on September 25, 1862.

Cutler had a checkered military career in the 30th Missouri, being alternately promoted and busted over the next year. In August 1863, Colonel Bernard G. Farrar was given the opportunity to raise a regiment of former enslaved individuals from the Vicksburg area, the 2d Mississippi Colored Heavy Artillery (later the 5th United States Colored Heavy Artillery).

Despite a July demotion from First Sergeant to Sergeant in July for "desertion," George Cutler was appointed First Lieutenant and Commander of Company D in the new Regiment. Whatever peccadilloes led to Cutler's promotions and demotions in the 30th Missouri, he must have displayed strong leadership qualities to be approved as a new company commander.

Alas, Cutler was reported as absent without leave on December 2, 1863. Most likely, he went on a drunken bender. Cutler was dismissed from the service on March 25, 1863.

Cutler returned to Saint Louis, probably to serve a sentence in the Gratiot Street Prison, which principally housed Confederate prisoners of war, guerrillas, and civilians accused or convicted of assisting the Confederacy. Cutler was admitted to the U.S. General Prison Hospital in Saint Louis on July 7, 1864, suffering from *delirium tremens*, an often fatal condition experienced by heavy drinkers after withdrawal from alcohol. And sure enough, George Cutler died on Sunday, July 10, 1864. Cutler was buried with the other prisoners from Gratiot Street in a civilian cemetery in Saint Louis.

In 1867, Cutler's remains and those of Confederate soldiers, guerrillas, and civilians were re-buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in the "Confederate Section" of the Cemetery. In 1908, the distinctive pointed Confederate headstones were erected at Jefferson Barracks.

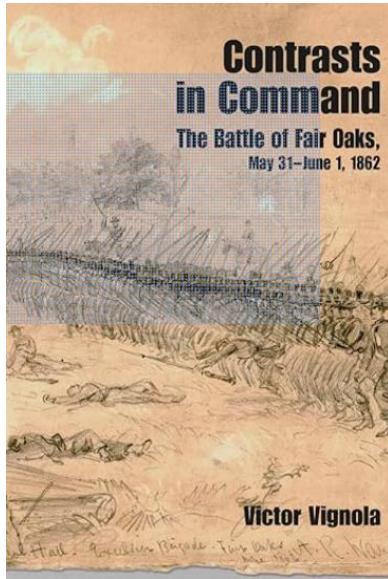
Someone must have checked the records on George Cutler because his headstone—alone among those in the Confederate Section—has the rounded top used for Union veterans. Whoever authorized the headstone got his name wrong by drawing a line through the "t" and the "l" in his last name, making it appear as "Cutter," not "Cutler." Unfortunately, the mistake was permanently engraved on George Cutler's tombstone.

**Submitted by the Blue and Gray Education Association**

# Contrasts in Command: The Battle of Fair Oaks

By Victor Vignola. May 31-June 1, 1862. El Dorado Hills. Savas Beatie, 2023. 288 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-61121-682-0.

Reviewed by Richard Forziati (Independent Scholar). Published on H-CivWar (May, 2024). Commissioned by G. David Schieffler.



In *Contrasts in Command: The Battle of Fair Oaks, May 31-June 1, 1862*, Victor Vignola provides a detailed account of the Confederate Army's first attempt to take the offensive to relieve the Federals' mounting pressure on the Capital at Richmond. The phrase "contrasts in command" aptly describes Vignola's central thesis, which focuses on the differences between the generalships of the Union and Confederacy's leading commanders. Despite the vulnerability of the Army of the Potomac, which was separated by the flooded Chickahominy River, the Confederate commands of Joseph E. Johnston, supplemented by those of James Longstreet, blundered due to miscommunication, disorganization, and even neglect. Meanwhile, Union Generals Edwin Sumner, Darius Couch, and John Abercrombie prevailed through initiative, sensible decision-making, and determination. Although the tactical result of the Battle of Fair Oaks was inconclusive, strategically the Confederates failed in their initial attempt to break the impending Union stranglehold on Richmond.

Vignola uses twelve chapters to prove his case that faulty rebel leadership in the Battle was defeated by superior Union generalship. The text covers the first day of fighting, which set the executional tone of the Battle, and then continues through the following morning of the conflict. Three appendices are included at the conclusion of the narrative. The first, which is instrumental to Vignola's thesis, explains the supposed "misunderstanding" between Johnston and Longstreet on May 30. As Vignola explains, Johnston established this myth to explain the miscommunication between himself and Longstreet during the Battle and to absolve the two generals of responsibility for Confederate failure. After the Battle, Johnston and Longstreet blamed another Division Commander, Benjamin Huger, for being too slow. Vignola dispels the

"misunderstanding" theory by pointing out clear decisions that Johnston and Longstreet made during the Battle that contributed to the defeat. Johnston mistakenly issued verbal instead of written orders, and he remained away from the center of the action and thus was unable to ensure that his attacks were executed. Longstreet, for his part, only engaged 30 percent of his Division in the fight. Vignola's other two appendices provide tactical movements of the Twentieth Massachusetts Regiment and topographical maps of the Battle site.

The Battle of Fair Oaks has been largely ignored in the existing historiography. One reason for this is the higher profile, competing battles of 1862 that have captured much of the public's attention: the Seven Days' Battles, Second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg Campaigns in the East, and the Battles of Shiloh, Perryville, and Stones River in the West. As a result, there are many more publications on these Battles than there are on Fair Oaks. Further shifting public attention is the number of casualties, a metric that can improperly rank a battle's significance. At eleven thousand killed, wounded, captured, or missing, the Battle of Fair Oaks (or Seven Pines) does not rank in the top ten costliest battles of the Civil War, which causes some to overlook it. There is also the Robert E. Lee factor to consider. The predominant takeaway from Fair Oaks has been the wounding of Johnston, which paved the way for Lee to take command and organize the Army of Northern Virginia. But Lee did not command in this Battle, and his later influence overshadowed the rest of the War in the East. Finally, as R. E. L. Krick writes in this book's foreword, the displacement of the Fair Oaks Battlefield by modern development has removed its importance from public consciousness and, by doing so, obscured our understanding of it. Vignola's book, therefore, fills a void in the literature by analyzing a Battle that had major consequences in the high stakes struggle for Richmond.

Most previous books on the Battle have not focused on the northern side of the action at Fair Oaks, as Vignola does. The most popular related source is Stephen W. Sears's *To the Gates of Richmond* (1996), a text that covers the entire Union effort along the Virginian peninsula in 1862. Other works such as Joseph P. Cullen's *The Peninsula Campaign 1862: McClellan and Lee Struggle for Richmond* (1956), the multivolume essay collection *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862* (1997), edited by William J. Miller, and Steven H. Newton's *The Battle of Seven Pines: May 31-June 1, 1862* (1993) cover the Battle in some detail, but Vignola goes farther in explaining Confederate failures and Union successes.

Vignola also focuses on Battle idiosyncrasies such as independent command decisions, important topographical features, and political influences at Fair Oaks. As expected in any book on a Civil War Battle, Vignola emphasizes tactical leadership and execution, especially decisions that shaped the Battle's outcome. More specifically, he stresses Johnston's incapacity to coordinate multifaceted attacks, arguing that the commanding general's "performance suffered from apparent paralysis as he lacked necessary foresight to counteract the current adversity" (p. 38). He also highlights Longstreet's arrogance, writing that "Longstreet clearly blundered in his attempt at leading a general engagement and, as history would show, it would not be the last time" (p. 42). Vignola pulls no punches in his criticisms of the leading Confederate commanders. Meanwhile, he mostly praises the Union's leadership, especially Sumner, who supervised the construction of the Grapevine Bridge before the Battle. When the fighting began, that

Bridge proved crucial to the Battle's development because it allowed John Sedgwick's Division to arrive in time to support Darius Couch, who was already in the throgs of a hard fight. As Vignola shows, Sumner built upon this early success with strong leadership in his placement of critical artillery, establishing an inverted salient, and ordering timely counter-charges that crushed the Confederates' disjointed attacks. Vignola also analyzes the performances of some lesser-known soldiers who nevertheless played important roles in the battle, including William H. C. Whiting, James Pettigrew, Micah Jenkins, D. H. Hill, Benjamin Huger, Erasmus Keyes, and Samuel Heintzelman.

Unlike other authors who have written about Fair Oaks, Vignola shows that politics proved pivotal on both sides. For example, he describes George B. McClellan's unsuccessful effort to convince President Lincoln to release Irwin McDowell's First Corps to strengthen the Union presence on the Peninsula. Without McDowell, the Union line was unbalanced, and McClellan's decision not to send more forces south of the Chickahominy to circumvent this liability was a mistake. On the other side, Confederate President Jefferson Davis's uncompromising pressure on Johnston's replacement, Gustavus Smith, resulted in a second day of poorly coordinated attacks that were no more successful than those on the first. Vignola also devotes significant attention to Battlefield topography beyond just that related to the Chickahominy. For example, he introduces us to the swamps, fence lines, and wooded lots that previous authors have not considered but that nevertheless were important to the Battle's outcome. Vignola also reminds readers that battle is more than a series of chess movements between two opposing sides; it also causes irrevocable harm, both physical and psychological, to its combatants, which he reveals through vivid anecdotes.

Vignola's bibliography includes a diverse selection of sources. Unpublished manuscripts and archival documents abound, while Vignola does not ignore the well-known sources, both primary and secondary. Soldiers' personal accounts from letters and regimental histories give granularity to the experience of the Battle. And the book's maps, thirteen in total, are clear, concise, and strategically placed throughout the text.

Civil War aficionados and students of military history will find much to like in Vignola's work, including his clear thesis that the primary reason the Union won the engagement is because of its superior generalship. Prior knowledge of the Battle is helpful, but not necessary, to appreciate this book because Vignola's concise writing gives even novices the ability to walk away with a firm understanding of the engagement's importance. It is difficult to appease both well-informed readers and beginners, but Vignola successfully strikes this balance. The work is substantive in its evaluation of the military leadership while also providing an gripping narrative of the challenges of battle. In sum, *Contrasts in Command* is highly recommended for those who wish to understand a critical but often overlooked juncture in the Civil War.

**Submitted by Bruce A. Castleman, Ph.D.**