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# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
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## President's Message

When someone starts studying a particular time in history, they eventually get interested in what lead up to the event and what flowed from it. The period from the end of the Civil War to about 1900 is called the Gilded Age.

Because of the War, the industrial revolution in the North was greatly accelerated. The United States was now a major industrial power. Steel, oil, and railroads led to extremely wealthy individuals called Robber Barons. The top 1% of the of the US population owned 51% of all wealth in the Country. The top 12% owned 86% of the wealth. The average annual wage rose 48% from 1880 to 1890. Conversely, this was an era of abject poverty and inequality as many immigrants poured into the United States. The high concentration of wealth became more visible and contentious.

Today, many people write that we are living in a second Gilded Age. The top 1% now own 40% of the Country's wealth. The top 1% of households own more wealth than the bottom 90% combined. This gap, between the ultra wealthy and everyone else, has only gotten wider in the past several decades.

## Dennis Kohlmann, President

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**Wednesday, January 8, 2020**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 28:**

**MEMBERS – 21:** Dennis Kohlmann, President; Donald Hayden, Vice President; George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; Steve Andrews, Harvey & Marsha Cain, Arnd Garnter, Ron Grove, Wayne & Nina Henley, Jane Jackson, Arnold Kunst, Joseph & Michelle Matalone, Paul Ruud, (MAL); Nancy Samuelson, Tracy Samuelson, Roxanne Spizzirri, Peggy Tveden, Ray Valdez, John Zasso.

**GUESTS – 7:** Esther Boeck, Robert & Jacque Bundy, Antonio Magana, Larry Spizzirri, Richard Spizzirri, Don A. Zajic.

1. President Dennis Kohlmann led the Pledge. President Kohlmann recognized new members and guests. The raffle was conducted by John Zasso.
2. President Kohlmann conducted Sacramento CWRT election of Officers: President, Dennis Kohlmann, Vice President, James Juanitas; Treasurer, George W. Foxworth; Program Director, Bernie Quinn; Member-at-Large, Paul Ruud; Member-at-Large, Richard Sickert. The election was done by a voice vote. There were all ayes and no nays. No members volunteered to be Secretary or Editor. As a result, those positions are Vacant.
3. President Kohlmann introduced the speaker, Robert Bundy. His topic was the 15th Ohio Volunteer Regiment. The 15th Ohio Infantry was organized at Columbus, Ohio, on April 27, 1861 and mustered into service on May 4, 1861. The Regiment was ordered back to Columbus and mustered out August 27–31, 1861 after 3 months of service guarding the railroads.
4. The 15th Ohio Infantry was reorganized at Mansfield, Ohio, in September 1861 and mustered in for three years. The Regiment served in the Western Theater for the rest of the War. That included Shiloh, Corinth, Huntsville, Stones River, Liberty Gap, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Nashville, Chattanooga, Reseca, Pickett's Mill, Kennesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, Lovejoy's Station, Franklin, and others.
5. When General Lee surrendered in April 1865, the Unit was in Nashville. In June, the Unit moved to New Orleans, and then to Texas. Duty at Green Lake until August 10, and at San Antonio until November. The Unit was mustered out November 21, 1865. They reached Columbus, Ohio, December 25, and were discharged from service December 27, 1865.
6. The Regiment lost a total of 315 men during the War; 7 officers and 172 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded, 1 officer and 135 enlisted men died of disease.
7. Mr. Bundy's great great grandfather, David Stanton McMasters, was in the Unit. He enlisted in Saint Clairsville, Ohio, in September of 1861 along with his brother George and several friends. Mr. McMasters stayed with the 15th for the entire War, was never wounded, and mustered out in San Antonio, Texas in November of 1865. He was captured at Stones River on New Year's Eve of 1862 and spent a month in Libby Prison in Richmond. Mr. McMasters rejoined the Regiment in June of 1863 after being paroled.
8. Mr. McMasters was born in Farmington, Belmont County, Ohio in 1842. He was a farmer after the War and lived out his life in the Town of Mount Pleasant, Ohio. He passed away in 1922 and is buried in Highland Cemetery. His brother George, Mr. Bundy's, great, great uncle, was wounded at the Battle of Peachtree Creek in Atlanta but survived and stayed with the Regiment for it's entire time 1861 - 1865.
9. Notable members: Private Robert B. Brown, Company A - Medal of Honor recipient for action at the Battle of Missionary Ridge. Corporal William E. Richey, Company A - Medal of Honor recipient for action at the Battle of Chickamauga.
10. The next Board Meeting will be Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 10 AM, at Brookfield's Restaurant.

**George W. Foxworth for Vacant, Secretary**

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance on January 8th was \$5,066.08. The raffle brought in \$42.00. Many thanks to John Zasso, members, and guests. Correction to the December 11, 2019 Raffle: The Raffle brought in \$34.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

# Coming Programs for 2020

Date	Speaker	Topic
February 12th	Robert Orr	"Civil War Music"
March 11th	Abigail Eller	"Benjamin Judah: The Brains of the Confederacy"
April 8th	Joe Maxwell & Jack Tucker	"What Happened After the War? Flights of the Confederates"
May 13th	Carl Guarneri	"Lincoln's Informer"
June 10th	John Scales	"The Campaigns & Battles of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest"
July 8th	Dennis Kohlmann	"Battle of Sabine Pass"

## **2020 Membership**

The 2020 membership renewal is due as of January 1, 2020. The dues are \$30.00 and you can renew at a monthly 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

Remember, you can also pay at any monthly meeting.

## **NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES**

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the 1<sup>st</sup> 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:

[gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gwfoxworth@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 organization or the Editor. The official address of this organization 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.

## **NORTH & SOUTH IS BACK!**

Re-Launched in July 2019, three issues have already appeared. Each 100-page issue is packed with 7 - 8 articles plus the familiar Departments--Knapsack, Crossfire, and Briefings-- and a new one, *Civil Warriors*, that looks at little known participants in the War.

Lead article in Issue 4 is a detailed examination of whether Meade could have - and should have - trapped and destroyed the Army of Northern Virginia. (Editor says yes, 98%.) There will be a follow-up discussion article.

To subscribe go to [northandsouthmag.com](http://northandsouthmag.com) or call Keith on (559) 260 3852 (Pacific time).

# Lafayette Curry Baker

Lafayette Curry Baker was born on October 13, 1826 to Cynthia and Remember Baker III in Stafford, New York. Lafayette's great grandfather, Remember Baker II, had fought alongside Winfield Scott during the War of 1812. Remember Baker II was also first cousin to Ethan Allen and a member of The Green Mountain Boys, originally formed to protect property rights in Vermont from New York. In 1775, while on a scouting expedition at Fort Ticonderoga, Remember was captured by Indians. They cut off his head and thumb, put the head on a pike and tried to ransom it to the British. The officers, being gentlemen, paid for the head and buried it along with Remember's body.



Like many early pioneers, Cynthia and Remember Baker preferred wide open spaces. In 1839, they moved to the wilderness of what was to become Michigan. There they raised their family of ten children. Lafayette inherited their restlessness. He worked as a mechanic, moving constantly around the country. Baker ended up in San Francisco with his wife, Jenny, who he had married on December 24, 1852. They arrived there a few years after gold had been discovered at Sutter's Mill. San Francisco had been a town of under nine hundred souls before the Gold Rush. During the height of "gold fever," over two hundred

thousand people had descended on the City. Mixed in with the gold panners was every type of criminal, prostitute, murderer, and scam artist known to man.

At the beginning of 1856, Baker joined the San Francisco Vigilance Committee, also known as the Vigilantes or "*Purifiers*." In cleaning up their City, the Vigilantes did not worry over much about due process and Baker took part in many lynchings. He also worked as a bouncer in a saloon. Another member of the Vigilance Committee was Junius Booth Jr, the son of the great actor, Junius Booth, and brother of John Wilkes Booth. Junius had abandoned his own acting career in Maryland, along with his wife and family, and was living in sin with an actress on Telegraph Hill. The Vigilantes officially disbanded on August 11, 1856 when William Tecumseh Sherman was appointed Commander of the California State Militia and brought some order to the city.

What was cruel and avaricious about Baker did not show on the outside. He was a good-looking man with grey eyes and a thick head of reddish colored hair who always dressed elegantly. He was a member of the Sons of Temperance, was soft spoken and never used profane language. Extolled as an excellent shot, he was also a fine horseman. Baker seemed ready made for service to the United States Federal Government when the Civil War began.

After an interview with General Winfield Scott, Baker went South to try and infiltrate Confederate lines. He was captured several times, impersonating a fictitious photographer named Sam Munson, but each time escaped with his life. Back in Washington, DC, Edwin Stanton, impressed with Baker's derring-do, appointed him Chief of the National Detective Service. His duties ranged from, "*...paymaster embezzlement, postal disloyalty to the Union, military desertion, horse thievery, drug smuggling, vice, claim jumping to infiltrating the South, and interrogating traitors and spies.*" Baker established a headquarters for himself next to the prison in the Old Capitol Building. He took as his motto, "*Death to Traitors*" and was given *carte blanche* as to who he wanted to question and punish. He did it "*without warrant, or the semblance of law or justice*" using the same "*...savage methods of questioning...*" he had used when employed as a Vigilante. In 1864, Baker uncovered fraud in the United States Treasury Department. It was insinuated that the only reason the fraud was revealed was because Baker had been refused a piece of the rotten proceeds. Previous inmates of his prison had been released when they offered to share their ill-gotten gains with him.

No one knows what secrets Lafayette Baker uncovered through his network of spies and moles. One official said that Baker "...became a law unto himself. It was an open secret that he was "*the most corrupt official*" in the Capitol. When Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, began to suspect that Baker was wire-tapping the telegraph lines to his office, he didn't fire him. He sent him to work in New York under Charles Dana, the Assistant Secretary of State. But two days after Lincoln was assassinated, Baker was recalled. Eager to catch the assassin and claim some of the reward money, Baker immediately got in touch with his informants.

Within two days of his return to Washington, Baker had arrested Mary Surratt, Lewis Powell, George Atzerodt, and Edman Spangler. He dispatched his cousin, Detective Luther Baker and Detective Everton Conger, along with the 16<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment in the hunt for Lincoln's murderers. On April 26, 1865, at 3 AM, Luther Baker delivered Davey Herold and the dead body of John Wilkes Booth into Baker's eager hands. Luther also gave Baker Booth's leather bound diary. Lafayette Baker insisted that when he gave the diary to Edwin Stanton, it was intact. The diary was not used during the trial of the conspirators. Legend says that when it finally came to light, eighteen pages had been torn out. By Booth? Or possibly by Stanton? Could the missing pages have implicated a high government official? It's been proven that forty two pages, not eighteen, were ripped out of what was not a diary but an outdated 1864 appointment book. These pages could have been used by Booth as a diary or, as suggested by historian, John Fazio, as toilet paper. The missing pages have given rise to multitudes of conspiracy theories.

When the reward money was doled out for Booth's capture, Detective Conger received \$15,000, Lieutenant Doherty of the 16<sup>th</sup> NY Regiment got \$5,250. Lafayette Baker received \$3,750 and Luther Baker received \$3,000. Boston Corbett, the man whose bullet had killed Booth, received \$1,653.85 and the twenty five cavalymen who rode with him received the same amount as Corbett. Baker was promoted to Brigadier General.

When President Johnson discovered he was being spied upon in the White House by Baker, Baker was immediately dismissed as head of the Secret Service on February 8, 1866.

In January, 1867, Lafayette Baker published his book, "*The History of the Secret Service.*" He admitted to spying on Andrew Johnson but only at the behest of Edwin Stanton. He also admitted to spying on Edwin Stanton for Andrew Johnson. Since the book was obviously ghost written and full of exaggerations and lies, none of the charges were taken seriously. Early in 1868, Baker testified at Andrew Johnson's impeachment hearing. He accused Johnson of colluding with the Confederate Government. No one believed a word he said. Benjamin Butler said he doubted if "*Baker had ever told the truth, even by accident.*"

When Lafayette Baker died on July 3, 1868, at the age of forty two, the official cause of death was listed as meningitis. His hair was tested many years later and rumors begin to spread that he had died of arsenic poisoning. Baker's wife, Jennie, believed that her brother, Wally Pollack, also a detective at the War Department, had poisoned her husband with his gifts of imported arsenic laced beer. Apparently, Baker was no longer a son of temperance. Baker's poisoning has led to many more conspiracy theories.

Lafayette Baker was originally buried in the Mutual Family Cemetery, not far from Philadelphia. By the 1940s, the Cemetery had been in disuse for many years and was weed covered and uncared for. All the graves were moved to the Forest Hills Cemetery in Huntington Valley, Pennsylvania. Today Baker lies in an unmarked grave in the Hanover-Kensington Memorial Plot.

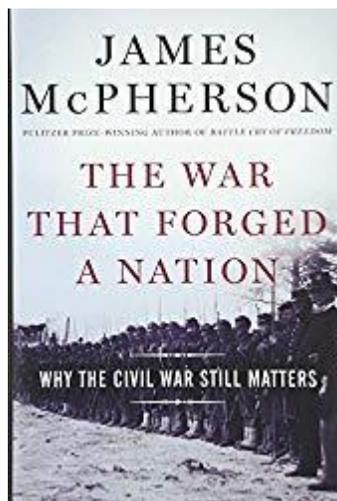
**Submitted by Judith Breitstein**

# The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters

By James M. McPherson

Review by Brian Matthew Jordan, Sam Houston State University  
New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015. Pp. x, 219. ISBN 978-0-19-065853-3.

James McPherson (Princeton University) is the Dean of Civil War Historians, best known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece *Battle Cry of Freedom*. The present book assembles twelve of his essays; some of them will be familiar to readers of the *New York Review of Books*. While a few chapters "have been substantially revised," only the eponymous essay appears here in print for the first time. Taken together, they offer crisp, discerning, accessible, sometimes pungent meditations on Civil War historiography at the dawn of the Twenty-First Century.



McPherson opens with an original, somewhat autobiographical piece on the enduring relevance of the Civil War, a case he first argued in the 1960s against the backdrop of the modern black freedom struggle. If the nation's costliest conflict in no way resolved the "tension between negative and positive liberty" (13), it nonetheless "accomplished a historic shift in American values in the direction of positive liberty" (12), a shift, the author stresses, symbolized by the addition of the three "Civil War amendments" to the US Constitution.

Faintly echoing "revisionist" histories written in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, some recent scholars have emphasized the War's "dark side" and questioned whether the struggle was "worth" its enormous toll in human life and suffering. Considering the unsightly history of Reconstruction and the Jim Crow years that followed, did Union victory accomplish anything at all? McPherson has no patience for such proponents of this line of questioning as Harry S. Stout and David Goldfield. He stresses that the War's (admittedly horrific) costs in blood and property were justified by its transformative effects on the Constitution: "the meaning of the War inhered at least as much in its results as in its cost" (63).

Two of the essays treat the Civil War at sea. In the first, he maintains that "the actions of Union and Confederate Navies [were] the single most important factor that directly or indirectly shaped Anglo-American and Anglo-Confederate relations" (66). Foreign recognition of the Confederate experiment was "a very near thing," as McPherson demonstrates in his persuasive analysis of the *Trent* affair, the Federal Blockade, and the Rebels' persistent attempts to acquire European-built warships. But (uncharacteristically during a civil war) politicians and diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic "acted rationally to prevent" the rebellion from metastasizing into a wider conflict (65–66, 78–79).

The second Naval essay is a welcome appreciation of David Farragut, the "wiry" Rear Admiral whose feats "entitle him to virtually equal status with [Ulysses S.] Grant and [William T.] Sherman in winning the War" (80). McPherson casts the hero of New Orleans and Mobile Bay into sharp relief, comparing him favorably with the once promising yet ultimately dissatisfying Admiral Samuel DuPont.

Several essays concern the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, whose "trajectory ... had propelled him from the gradualist and colonizationist limitations of his antislavery convictions in earlier years toward the immediatist and egalitarian policies" (115) he espoused in a White House speech just three days before John Wilkes Booth fired his fatal bullet. McPherson marvels at the relative dearth of scholarship on Lincoln as commander in chief, especially the dramatic story of his self-education in military strategy, his management of recruitment, and his frustrating dealings with languorous, borderline mutinous generals (123–43) like the so-called "young Napoleon" Major General George B. McClellan, the politically minded Commander of the Army of the Potomac (1861–62). McPherson argues that Lincoln's keen "sense of history" fostered his guiding conviction that the fate of the Union was likewise the fate of Republican Democracy in the world (169, 164).

In the book's final essay, summarizing the Reconstruction years, McPherson forcefully debunks the myth that "the North won the War, but the South won the peace."

In the War of 1861–65, the North had prevailed and unequivocally achieved the principal goals of that War: preservation of the United States as one nation, indivisible, with liberty for all. A third goal, justice for all, was achieved on paper with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Moreover, it had come tantalizingly close to success on the ground for a few brief years. In the end, justice was sacrificed for the unjust peace ushered in by "redemption" of the South, a peace marred by disfranchisement, Jim Crow, poverty, and lynching. Yet the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments remained in the Constitution.

This "more interpretive than monographic" anthology of articles is a fine, superbly well-informed introduction to key questions, debates, and tensions in the study of the US Civil War. Occasional (unavoidable) overlap aside, all the essays brim with the sort of judicious and acute insights we have come to expect from their author. They will provide students, general readers, and experts alike with needed models of clear-eyed and civil scholarly discourse. At a time when the democratic virtues of decency, rationality, and compromise appear to be on life-support, James McPherson reminds us "why the Civil War still matters."

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