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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

Greetings everyone,

I have just returned from the Central Coast Conference: "1864 to War's End" in Monterey. I remember hearing from most Speakers about one recurring question - "What was the turning point of the Civil War?" None of the Speakers said Gettysburg. The most answered reply was either Vicksburg or the Maneuver that General Grant took during the Overland Campaign. The previous Commanding Generals of the Army of the Potomac would retreat back North after each Major engagement with the Army of Northern Virginia (except for Gettysburg). However, Grant continued to pursue Robert E. Lee with a continued Offensive to try and box-in the Army of Northern Virginia. One person said the turning point of the War was when President Lincoln appointed General Grant Commanding General of the Union Army and Commander of the Army of the Potomac. Another said the turning point was long before the Civil War, dating back to the day when Grant was born.

The Question I would like to ask all of you is when do you think the turning point of the Civil War was?

Whatever you decide, please have a happy and safe Saint Patrick's Day this month.

James C. Juanitas, President

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Denny's Restaurant, 3520 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento

ATTENDANCE – 13:

MEMBERS – 11: James Juanitas, President; Carol Breiter, Vice President; George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; Steve Breiter, Harvey & Marsha J. Cain, Arnd Gartner, Stuart & Andrea Sheffield, Stephen Shiflett, & Peggy Tveden.

GUESTS – 2: Jennette Calvin & Robert Orr.

1. The meeting was called to order by President James Juanitas at 7:05 PM and he led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. President Juanitas asked for volunteers for the three vacant Board positions. There were no responses.
3. New Members and Guests were introduced. Two Guests were present, including the speaker.
4. The raffle was conducted by Carol Breiter. Books, wine, and other items were offered as prizes. The raffle raised \$47.00.
5. President Juanitas introduced the speaker, Robert Orr. Mr. Orr is a member of the Stanislaus Civil War Association in Modesto and he has relatives that fought on both sides during the Civil War. His topic was the USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia in March 1862 in Hampton Roads, Virginia.
6. John Ericsson built the Monitor and its Commander was John L. Worden. The Commander of the CSS Virginia was Franklin Buchanan. The Battle was a part of the effort of the Confederacy to break the Union blockade, which had cut off Virginia's largest cities and major industrial centers, Norfolk and Richmond, from international trade.
7. On March 8, the Virginia destroyed and damaged wooden Union ships. At the end of that day, the Virginia returned to port due to darkness and for medical and minor repairs. She returned on March 9 and was met by the Monitor as she protected the USS Minnesota.
8. The two ironclads fought for about three hours, with neither able to inflict significant damage on the other. The duel ended indecisively, Virginia returning to her home port for repairs and strengthening, and Monitor to her station defending Minnesota. The ships did not fight again, and the blockade remained in place.
9. The Battle received worldwide attention, having immediate effects on navies around the world. The preeminent naval powers, Great Britain and France, halted further construction of wooden-hulled ships, and others followed suit. Although Britain and France had been engaged in an iron-clad arms race since the 1830s, the Battle of Hampton Roads signaled a new age of naval warfare had arrived for the whole world.
10. After questions and answers, the evening ended at 8:18 PM.
11. The next Executive Board Meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 10:00 AM, at Brookfields near Madison and I-80. All members and guests are welcome.

George W. Foxworth for Vacant, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance on February 14th was \$5,006.96. Thanks to Carol Breiter, members, and guest, the raffle brought in \$47.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Coming Programs for 2024

Date	Speaker	Topic
March 13th	"Arnd Gartner"	"In Defense of Hooker"
April 10th	"Tim Karlberg"	"Civil War Spies in California"
May 8th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
June 12th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
July 10th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
August 14th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"

2024 Membership

The 2024 membership renewal is due on January 1, 2024. 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:

gwoffoxworth@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.

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.

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

Charles Sherwood Stratton

Charles Sherwood Stratton was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on January 4, 1838 to first cousins, Sherwood Stratton, a carpenter, and Cynthia Thompson, a waitress. He weighed nine pounds eight ounces at birth and appeared to be a normal child. At six months, he weighed 15 pounds and was 25 inches long. Then he stopped growing. By the age of one, doctors informed the Strattons that Charles would never reach a normal height. Today doctors believe Charles suffered from hypochondroplasia. This syndrome retards growth but allows the limbs to grow in proportion to the body. Charles's two sisters, Frances and Mary, both grew to average height.

The entrepreneur, P.T. Barnum, had heard about an "extraordinary local boy," four year-old Charles Stratton, who lived in Bridgeport. Barnum came to meet him during the winter of 1842. At this time, the public greatly enjoyed attending "Freak Shows" featuring mermaids and mermen, giants, conjoined twins, fat people, and hirsute men and women. But none of Barnum's shows had ever featured a little person. He felt Charles would be a profitable addition he could feature at his American Museum.

Barnum offered Charles three dollars a week and the boy's parents immediately agreed to the deal. Cynthia Stratton accompanied her son to New York City where they were to live in an apartment above the Museum.

Early on, Barnum recognized that Charles was an "apt student with a great deal of native talent and a keen sense of the ludicrous" and a "flair for improvisation." Barnum acted as mentor, manager, guardian as well as dear friend to Charles.

By age five, Charles was two feet two inches tall. Barnum advertised that his latest attraction was 11 years old, as any five year old boy could probably pass for a little person. He taught the boy to sing, act, mime, and dance. Tutors schooled him in math, history, and foreign languages. He became well educated though he never had any formal schooling nor did he play with other children.

Barnum dubbed his newest find "General Tom Thumb" after a character in an old English fairy tale. Stage outfits of the finest silks were designed for "The General." He was dressed as a Scotsman, Napoleon, and Frederick the Great at great cost. Charles was soon earning \$50 a week.

Rather than pity him, audiences were charmed by the talented entertainer. After Stratton's hugely successful tour of America, Barnum decided it was time to begin a European tour. Charles had such a pleasing personality and put on such a good show, people thronged to see him. He performed twice by request for Queen Victoria in England, where he also met the future king Edward VII, who was three years old at the time. He was so popular in Europe and made so much money, that Charles returned for a second tour in 1847. He met King Leopold of Belgium, Tsar Nicholas 1 of Russia, and King Louis Phillipe of France.

He was treated with great respect wherever he went.

Charles's parents shared in half the profits pulled in by Barnum though Barnum did all the work, booking the tours and making travel arrangements. Conflicts began to arise between the elders as the Strattons and Barnum both wanted to be number one in Charles's heart.

Sherwood Stratton had begun to drink heavily while the family toured Europe with their son. In 1855, he was confined to the Hartford Lunatic Asylum where he died shortly after at the age of 45.

Charles had become an international celebrity. His appearances and interactions with his audience did much to change the perception of how people of the time regarded what they called "freaks." Drama critics "did not compare his skills to those of the freak show community...but judged him on his merits as a professional entertainer." He had become the best known showman in the world.

Barnum and Charles grew rich. Charles owned a townhouse in Manhattan, a yacht which he kept moored at the Brooklyn Yacht Club, and a home on one of the Thimble Islands in Connecticut.

Lavinia Warren Bump (1842-1919) of Middleborough, Massachusetts, was 32" tall. Her family saw to it that she was educated and they insisted that she earn her own living. At 16 years of age, she began to work as a teacher. But she soon entered the entertainment business and started working as a *chanteuse* on a Mississippi riverboat owned by her cousin. Eventually Barnum heard of her and sought her out to work at his American Museum. Charles and Lavinia fell in love at first sight. She was 21 years old, he was 25. One month after their initial meeting, Charles traveled to Massachusetts to ask the Bump family for Lavinia's hand in marriage. Her mother consented on the stipulation that he shave his mustache. Charles agreed.



People were tired of constant news of death and War and needed a diversion.

News of the nuptials knocked headlines of Civil War battles off the front page of the *New York Times* for three days. On February 10, 1863, the couple was married in an elaborate ceremony at Grace Episcopal Church on Broadway and Tenth Street in Manhattan. The wedding pictures were taken by Matthew Brady. Admirers stood waiting in long lines to get into the Church but only 2,000 invited guests were allowed to enter. Attendees even included General Ambrose Burnside and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt. Barnum sold tickets to the reception held afterwards at the Metropolitan Hotel for \$75 a head. "*The New York Times* described the population of New York that day as 'those who did and those who did not attend the wedding'." *The New York World* led with the title, "*Much Ado about Very Little.*"

The couple traveled to Washington, DC and registered at The Willard Hotel. On February 12, they were received by President Abraham and Mary Lincoln at the White House. Mrs. Lincoln had gifted the Strattons ornamental Chinese fire screens as a wedding present. Nineteen year-old Robert Lincoln refused to attend the reception. "I do not propose to assist in entertaining Tom Thumb," he told his mother. His younger brother, Tad, was happy to be an attendee. Other notable guests at the gala were General Benjamin Butler, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Treasury Secretary Salmon B. Chase.

The following day the Strattons visited a Union Army camp in Arlington Heights where they were greeted with rousing hurrahs from the soldiers. One of the cheerers was Lavinia's older brother, Benjamin, part of the 40th Massachusetts Regiment returning from the War front.

Within months of the wedding, newspapers began to report that Lavinia was *enceinte*. Some believed that Mrs. Stratton had given birth to a little girl in England. Lavinia often posed for pictures with a baby on her lap. Baby "Minnie" was said to be named after Lavinia's beloved sister. The gossip went that the baby had lived for two years and died from gastric fever or an inflammation of the brain on September 25, 1866. In a cemetery in Norwich, England, where the Strattons were playing, there is a tombstone with the name Minnie Stratton and the death date etched on it.

People believed the "baby" was a hoax. Rumors flew that Barnum "...hired infants wherever they happened to be, with their mothers as nursemaids." When people began to be angered at the ruse, Barnum said the baby had died. The Minnie Stratton grave in England is said to hold the remains of one of the hired infants who passed away while the troupe was on tour.

In 1869, the couple began a world tour that lasted three years. They travelled through Europe, British India, Japan, and Australia. They met Pope Pius IX and Victor Emmanuel. The little pair made their final appearance together on the stage in 1878.

The Strattons built a custom home in Massachusetts where they lived happily

until Charles died unexpectedly of a stroke on July 15, 1883, age 45. He had started drinking wine and smoking cigars at age 11, while touring Europe. He had easily taken to the life of a rich man and ballooned up to 75 pounds, eating whatever he liked and smoking heavily. Charles was buried at Mountain Grove Cemetery and Mausoleum in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Barnum purchased a life-sized statue of him to grace his grave. The statue was his final height of three feet four inches tall. Eight years later, Barnum was buried just a few feet away.

Charles Stratton had been extravagant and spent freely. When he died, Lavinia was left with some property and \$16,000. Two years later, on April 6, 1885, she married an Italian little person, Count Primo Magri (born 1849) at The Church of the Holy Trinity in New York City. He was several inches shorter than Charles Stratton had been. To earn a living, they traveled constantly doing one night stands across the country wherever they could be hired. They appeared in sideshows in Coney Island. In 1915, they appeared in the silent film *The Lilliputian's Courtship*. They finally returned to Middleborough, Massachusetts, Lavinia's hometown, where they opened an ice cream shop. They still traveled to do shows on the weekends.



Lavinia died on November 25, 1919 of chronic interstitial nephritis. She was 78 years old. She was buried next to her first husband. The inscription merely says "His Wife."

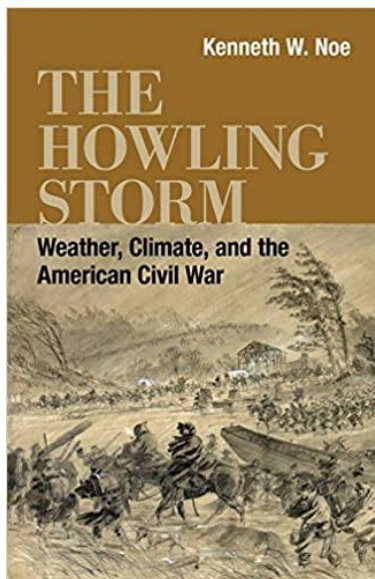
Count Magri died the following year and is buried in Saint Mary's Cemetery, Middleborough, Massachusetts.

Submitted by Judith Breitstein

The Howling Storm: Climate, Weather, and the American Civil War

By Kenneth W. Noe. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2020. 688 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-7320-6.

Reviewed by Lisa M. Brady (Boise State University). Published on H-CivWar, (September, 2021). Commissioned by G. David Schieffler.



Civil War records--whether personal or official--tell the tale of a conflict that often hinged on, and always contended with, the weather. From the newest recruit to the most seasoned general, Civil War soldiers daily confronted nature in its various forms, but few aspects of the environment merited as many mentions as atmospheric and climatic conditions. Indeed, some soldiers' diaries focused entirely on the daily highs and lows, humidity levels, and cloud cover. Civilians, too, took notice of the weather, recording the temperature on battle days, commenting on precipitation and road conditions as armies marched through their towns and farms, and predicting success or failure based on the competing forces' abilities to adapt to the local climate.

Despite the ubiquity of weather in Civil War sources, few historians have given it due attention as a major factor in the conflict. In *Battling the Elements* (1998), geographer Harold Winters acknowledged how droughts and storms influenced specific battles; Robert Krick chronicled temperature changes and precipitation levels in his 2007 book, *Civil War Weather in Virginia*. Environmental historians like Jack Temple Kirby, Megan Kate Nelson, Kathryn Shively Meier, and others stressed

the importance of environmental factors--weather among them--and have provided compelling arguments for integrating nature into our analyses of the War. We nevertheless have not had, until now, an extended, comprehensive exploration of weather and climate in the context of Civil War history.

At a glance, Ken Noe's *The Howling Storm* would seem to add little new to the military history of the Civil War; all good battle histories note the weather and may even ascribe some importance to it. However (and this is a big however), when we read Noe's book as he hopes we will--that is, as an assessment of weather's impact across the entire War and not simply in the context of individual battles--the significance of its contribution cannot be overstated. *The Howling Storm* brings weather front and center, arguing that we cannot understand the military history of the War without accounting for "the metaphorical 'Army of Weather'" (p. 9). Scouring his sources for the most evocative examples, Noe presents a compelling and eloquent assessment of weather's critical place in Civil War history.

Drawing from official reports, periodicals, and personal diaries and letters, he traces long-term trends such as droughts and pinpoints acute weather phenomena like blizzards to demonstrate clearly how such events shaped campaign plans, affected logistical and operational decisions, and occasionally stopped entire armies in their tracks. Across twenty-four chapters and 496 pages of text (plus an additional 106 pages of notes), Noe takes a long chronological view, following weather patterns from the opening shots of the War in April 1861 through to the surrenders in April and May 1865. In the introduction, Noe carefully outlines the broad strokes of climate in each of the main theaters and identifies the predominant soil types in each region; in the following chapters, he pays close attention to how those factors, among other environmental considerations, combined to create favorable or problematic conditions for the forces who fought among them. Noe covers all major battles and campaigns as well as minor engagements and gives ample attention to relevant issues like supply and mobilization. His conclusion is concise yet full of insight. In a scant four pages (pp. 492-495), Noe sums up his argument, noting that although the weather initially seemed to favor the Confederacy, the Union's industrial might--including capacity to produce shoes and uniforms and to transport food and materiel--and its more adaptable, imaginative political and military leadership turned that foe into an ally.

The Howling Storm is a traditional military history in its narrative structure, focusing on the progression of battles and following the movements of armies. This is both the book's strength and its weakness. Readers looking to unearth new battle details or find fresh dirt on commanders instead will find well-trodden ground. Noe's weather argument does not challenge our basic understanding of the War's trajectory, especially when read piecemeal by chapter, but when taken as a whole, it provides essential nuance and forces us to reckon with nature's place in military affairs in a way that cannot be discounted. The sheer amount of evidence is

overwhelming and, when paired with Noe's sophisticated military analysis, convincing. Some readers will be daunted by the book's heft--it is a monumental tome--and some may argue that Noe might have made his case more concisely; however, they would be missing the point. Noe's nearly day-by-day account perfectly illustrates that the weather was ubiquitous, unavoidable, and uncontrollable, and that it must play a central role in future historical analyses of this War and of others.

Where Noe's argument and evidentiary base are sound, his bibliography contains some curious flaws. Inexplicably, Joan Cashin's most recent book, *War Stuff* (2018) is listed as a published primary source (p. 612), which is doubly unfortunate since the cited secondary sources are overwhelmingly (though not surprisingly, considering the demographics of Civil War military historians) written by men. There are other bibliographic oddities as well, including the omission of a chapter in Cashin's *War Matters* (2018) on the environmental history of Antietam (co-written by Timothy Silver and me), as well as a chapter (yes, also mine) in Brian Drake's *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green* (2012) that includes analysis of weather and acoustical shadows. Inclusion of the former would have added nuance and context to Noe's assessment of the single bloodiest day of the War; the latter poses conclusions similar to Noe's about Burnside's Mud March and the Battles at Fort Donelson, Iuka, and Perryville, yet is not cited. Perhaps the general citation in the bibliography to the full volume was meant to cover it, though Megan Kate Nelson's excellent chapter on New Mexico in the same collection merits its own bibliographic line. By the same token, lest I seem unduly concerned only about citations to my own work (and here let me state that Noe cites other publications of mine plenty), Kathryn Shively Meier's chapter in the Drake volume deserves its own entry as well, since weather and climate were such integral aspects to why Civil War soldiers engaged in self-care. I will not belabor the point, especially since Noe is meticulous in his research and conscientious in citing and supporting scholarship by women, but that there are so few citations to women highlights the continued imbalance along gender lines in Civil War military historiography.

On the whole, Noe's book is one to be reckoned with and is a must-read for serious students of the Civil War. Noe's writing is engaging, accessible, and at times lyrical, and will appeal to committed general interest readers. Although not likely to appear on undergraduate syllabi (due to its size, not its quality), *The Howling Storm* should be included on graduate reading lists for students of Civil War, military, and environmental history. It is an excellent book and a necessary and welcome addition to Civil War scholarship.

Submitted by Bruce A. Castleman, Ph.D.