



**Volume 50, No. 4**  
**April, 2010**  
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**Wed. of the month 2 weeks**  
**before the regular meeting.**  
**Items can be given the editor**  
**by hand, mail or e-mail.**

# Battle Cry

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

Ron Perisho certainly came through with another fascinating pictorial presentation, this time on events involving Charleston, S.C. These were digital stereo shots of pre-war slave quarters, Fort Sumter, and damage sustained in the city by cannon fire. Our club was treated to the first presentation west of the Mississippi of digital stereo images. For those who missed this outstanding production Ron has agreed to an encore performance at our 2011 West Coast Conference here in Sacramento next year November. We are honored to have him as a member of our group and congratulate him on his recent appointment to the board of the Center for Civil War Photography. Thank you, Ron.

May is looming close and once again it's time to call out the volunteers to escort the school children at Gibson Ranch on Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. As usual we will need a minimum of fifteen with perhaps a reserve of one or two. A sheet will be passed at the next meeting asking for sign-ups. Any potential interested parties could contact me if they would like to volunteer. It is a pleasant and informative event providing much info to the kids and us. I've been doing it about ten years as have many of our regulars and always seem to glean something new.

Next month's speaker is Tom Mays, a professor from one of our state's northern colleges. His subject is Champ Ferguson, a notorious rebel guerrilla leader whose story promises to hold great interest. This is a part of Civil War history not always discussed thoroughly and I am looking forward to hearing the whole story. Be sure to join us April 14<sup>th</sup> at the Hof Brau, 7 PM. Come early for dinner and/or to meet Tom and your fellow members. See you there.

**Don Hayden, President**

**MINUTES**  
 Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
 March 10, 2010  
 Hof Brau Restaurant, 2500 Watt Ave, Sacramento

Attendance-35

Members-33

Don Hayden, President	Bob Hanley	Donna Nothmann
Silver Williams, Vice President	Scottie Hayden	Bruce Nothmann
George Foxworth, Treasurer	Nancy Hayden	Horst Penning
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Rose Browne	Dennis Kohlmann, PD	Bob Williams
Ardith Cnota	Lowell Lardie	Susan Williams
Mitchell Cnota	Grace Long	Maxine Wollen
Alan Geiken	Jim Middleton, Editor	John Zasso
		<u>Guest-2</u>
		John McCroy
		Robert Schroeder

1. Meeting started at 7:03. West Coast Conference discussed- San Francisco November 12-14. Subject- "Blood on the Ramparts" includes a tour of Alcatraz.
2. Another great evening of 3-D viewing presented by member Ron Perisho. The subject was Charleston and its surrounding military forts. Thanks Ron, it was fascinating.
3. Raffle was held and meeting adjourned at 8:35.

Eddie Keister  
 Secretary

<b>Coming Programs 2010</b>		
Apr. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Mays	Champ Ferguson
May 12 <sup>th</sup>	Larry Tagg	Emancipation Proclamation
June 9 <sup>th</sup>	Sherri Patton	Memphis Riots of 1866
July 14 <sup>th</sup>	Nancy Samuelson	Reconstruction
Aug. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Stanbery	The Cracker Line
Sept. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Lubas	Kansas/Missouri Border Wars
Oct. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Ray Cosyn	Lincoln's Funeral Train

**Treasurer's Report:**

The cash balance following the March 10, 2010 meeting was \$3,073.60. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$74.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

## **“Lincoln’s Men” —By Daniel Mark Epstein.**

Book Review by M. Wolf, March 2010

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Daniel Epstein has written more than fifteen books, the last being "The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage," (2008). He worked on this one for ten years, which seems about right, considering that he had to look into, if not read, the copious letters, newspaper columns, poems, diaries, and memoirs of Abraham Lincoln's three private secretaries: John G. Nicolay, John Hay, and William O. Stoddard. Stoddard died in 1926, just shy of 90, and his granddaughter, Eleanor Stoddard, is now in her late 80s, healthy and sharp as a tack. She is the youngest of the youngest of Stoddard's five children. In 2007, the ubiquitous and prolific Harold Holzer persuaded her to collaborate on "The Adventurous Life of William O. Stoddard." She gave a delightful talk to the Lincoln Forum that November.

This little book is a great read (paper, 242 pages), chock-full of fascinating tidbits that give the reader a remarkable feel for what life must have been like in the Executive Mansion during the Civil War. "Lincoln's Men" doesn't attempt to earn a place next to David H. Donald's "Lincoln," or Doris Goodwin's "Team of Rivals." But it certainly belongs near them on your shelf. It's a unique blend of solid, well-referenced history and backstairs gossip. I learned more about Elmer Ellsworth and his tragic, dramatic death in two pages here than I ever knew before. (And I challenge you to read his last letter to his fiancée with dry eyes.)

We know that Hay and Nicolay affectionately referred to Lincoln as "the Tycoon." How come? They started that "after hearing the funny-sounding word used to designate the shogun of Japan." In addition to "the Hellcat," they called Mrs. Lincoln "Her Satanic Majesty." Mr. Epstein repeatedly and humorously depicts the venomous dislike between them and Mrs. Lincoln. Mrs. L liked Stoddard, who frequently had to be an intermediary when they needed something from her.

Stoddard usually opened the mail, but Hay and Nicolay were much more than secretaries. In 1861, the president sent Hay, and later Nicolay, to St. Louis to investigate the situation caused by the troublesome General John C. Fremont. "They both by now had Lincoln's complete confidence, and were serving double duty as paper and ink secretaries and as emissaries. Their missions always required strict discretion, in some cases more than the State Department or the army could assure the president."

Mr. Epstein notes that "Lincoln would pardon any case he could," and Stoddard writes that "some people think he carries his mercy too far." Stoddard tells, "There came, one day, a pile of influential petitions on behalf of a southwestern guerilla of the most cruel sort. He was unquestionably a red-handed murderer." For some reason, his many defenders included politicians, generals, and financiers. Lincoln requested the petitions, but Stoddard innocently recalls, "They were not in my possession." Inquiry was made to the War Office, "but the papers could not be found." After this innocent explanation, Stoddard writes that "The delegation

went its way and the application for pardon was hung up. So was the woman and child killer who was the most interested party in the case..."

I especially liked the prosaic vignettes of everyday life. One day, "Stoddard was sorting the mail when Hay came in from his office across the hall, wanting to share a story which was droll but unprintable...Hay told a story better than most men, but on this Sunday he was breaking up before he could get well into it...Soon Nicolay came in, hearing Hay's peals of laughter as he struggled to get control..." Hay began again, and soon, Stoddard recalls, "all three of us exploded as one" with laughter. All of a sudden, they heard a voice: 'Now, John, just tell that thing again.' There stood President Lincoln."

Hay started the story again, and told it even better the third time. Stoddard writes, "Down came the President's foot from across his knee, with a heavy stamp on the floor, and out through the hall went an uproarious peal of fun." The doorkeeper broke up the session by announcing, "Mr. Stanton is in the reception room."

"The only time Nicolay ever heard Lincoln curse in his presence was on the night of Feb. 27, 1862." (Who was he mad at? George McClellan, who else?) McClellan had spent "a fortune" to move canal boats up the Potomac to Harper's Ferry. "Somewhere north of the Great Falls the pilots discovered that the lift lock on the canal was too narrow to admit the boats...so they had to turn around.

"Why in hell didn't he measure first?" the president cried...Hearing the uproar, Seward came in, and then General Randolph Marcy, who was McClellan's father-in-law and chief of staff, and they all listened to Lincoln rant and swear, wide-eyed at the wonder of it....'Why in hell and damnation, General Marcy,' the president yelled, 'couldn't the General have known whether a boat would go through that lock before he spent a million of dollars getting them there? I am no engineer, but it seems to me that if I wished to know whether a boat would go through a hole or a lock, common sense would teach me to go and measure it....Everything seems to fail. The general impression is daily gaining ground that the General does not intend to do anything.'" Lincoln later said to a visitor, "He is an admirable engineer, but he seems to have a talent for the stationary engine."

Amusing incidents abound in this book. Hay and Nicolay were sent to St. Louis in response to Gen. William Rosecrans' panicked report of a Copperhead plot to overthrow the government, and encountered a despicable (and murderous) detective named Harry Truman. One Sunday morning, Stoddard decided to visit his two pals in the White House, and "let himself in with his latchkey and went upstairs." Just like that! Even in the middle of a war, it was a simpler time.

Stoddard kept in touch with his two friends after 1865, but Nicolay and Hay remained extremely close all their lives until Nicolay died in 1901. They collaborated on the ten-volume "Abraham Lincoln: A History," which was published between 1886 and 1890. Then they began editing Lincoln's

complete writings, published in 1894. In 1897, Hay was appointed ambassador to England, and became Secretary of State in 1898, a position he held until he died in 1905.

You will enjoy reading about the Civil War from a non-military point of view. Lincoln lovers will love the personal insights this book provides, and the general reader will also find it a delight.

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### "Capitol Men"—by Philip Dray

Book review by M. Wolf: March ,2010

Blanche K. Bruce. Robert Brown Elliott. George H. White. John R. Lynch. Robert Smalls.

Not familiar names today, but these are some of the Negro Representatives and Senators from Mississippi, South Carolina, and other southern states who served with distinction during and after Reconstruction. (Robert Smalls is known to Civil War students as the slave who, on May 13, 1862, took over the small Confederate transport *Planter* at 3 am, and piloted it out of Charleston harbor, reaching the astounded US Navy ships anchored nearby.)

*Capitol Men* (2008, 373 pages, paperback) is a sweeping story of Reconstruction, which officially ended in 1877 with the disputed election of Rutherford Hayes as Republican president. However, the deal that put him into the White House required him to remove the last Federal troops from the south, giving the former rebel states

a free hand to deal with their large African-American populations by themselves, and to circumvent the Fifteenth Amendment, the key to control of southern politics and society. Mr. Dray's story ends on March 4, 1901, when the term of the only African-American left in Congress expired. The dozen or so Negro Congressmen, some born into slavery, some born free, were eloquent erudite, and wise. Not much legislation, if any, bore their names, but they debated without fear or reservation, called attention to social problems, and promoted the interests of their constituents.

*Capitol Men* touches on almost all aspects of Reconstruction, from the end of the war to the triumph of the "Redeemer" governments, focusing on Louisiana, South Carolina, and Mississippi. We learn of Charles Sumner's long fight for the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 and of the Supreme Court's ruling it unconstitutional in 1883. (The only dissenter in this 8-1 decision was John Marshall Harlan, better known for his lone dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.) The horrible massacres at Colfax, Louisiana and Hamburg, South Carolina, and others, are described in just the right amount of detail. On December 6, 1876, as he was leaving office, "President Grant sent to Congress a catalog of outrages carried out against Louisiana freedmen – 98 pages of atrocities, including murders and whippings from 1868 through 1876 that had left about 4,000 blacks dead or maimed. General Philip Sheridan quoted official records indicating that in 1868 alone, 1,884 people had been killed or wounded in Louisiana."

Mr. Dray describes the overthrow of conservative Democratic governor

Wade Hampton (a Confederate cavalry hero in the Civil War) of South Carolina by the populist demagogue "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman. The simultaneous occupation of the state legislature in South Carolina by Republican and Democratic factions is clearly explained, and the intervention of bayonet-wielding Federal troops (commanded by Col. P. Regis de Trobriand) in Louisiana's legislature is vividly described. The author shows how public opinion in the north, exacerbated by the financial panic of 1873 and the ensuing depression, eventually kept President Grant from acting boldly and responsibly by sending troops to restore order and elected governments. Earlier in the decade, he had firmly invoked new laws to suppress the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina, but by mid-decade, the north had grown tired of the freedmen's struggle.

Mr. Dray reviews the history of the American Colonization Society, going back to President Monroe (the capital of Liberia is named for him), and discussing President Lincoln's interest in colonization as late as 1862. He describes unsuccessful voyages of freedmen to Africa and Central America. The fascinating story of the "Exodusters," the organized migration of southern Negroes to Kansas in 1878-1880, when it was clear to them that they could not safely remain in the south and could not emigrate to Africa, is told here. (Nicodemus National Monument in Kansas is today's reminder of this American exodus.) "Probably somewhere between 30,000 and 50,000 blacks departed the South altogether for western lands during the late 1870s...Although Kansas was not the agricultural paradise its boosters had claimed, in many ways the exodus was

in numerous ways a success..." Mr. Dray examines the views of Frederick Douglass, who vehemently opposed the exodus (as strongly as he opposed African colonization), and notes the concern of southern planters that their labor supply would vanish.

The biographies and activities of the Negro legislators wind through this book. Mr. Dray, whose previous books include *At the Hands of Person Unknown: the Lynching of Black America*, has supplied a lot of information in a brisk, well-written, and well-referenced narrative. Considering the wealth of information here, such as the creation and sad demise of the Freedmen's Bank, Mr. Dray has written a remarkable history; books can (and have) been written about each subject he covers, but he knows when enough information is enough. This is by no means "history lite." It's a sad story, but an important part of our history, and we need to know it. I'll close with Mr. Dray's final paragraph:

"On March 4, 1901, at noon, both houses of the North Carolina legislature passed resolutions of thanksgiving that, with the conclusion of White's term, the thirty-one years during which black men had been allowed to occupy seats in Congress, the era of Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce...and the tenacious George H. White, was finally over. With black Americans segregated in public life to the point of invisibility, denied the ballot, and now banished at long last from the halls of Congress, it was safe to welcome the bright promise of a new century."