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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

**No Message for now.**

**Vacant, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**Wednesday, March 9, 2022**  
**DENNY'S RESTAURANT, 3520 AUBURN BOULEVARD, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 17:**

**MEMBERS – 15:** James Juanitas, Vice President; George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; James Armstrong, Harvey & Marsha Cain, Mark Carlson, Arnd Garnter, Wayne & Nina Henley, Bernie Quinn, Program Director; Nicholas Scivoletto, Stephen Shiflett, Larry Spizzirri, Richard Spizzirri, & James Taff.

**GUESTS – 2:** Dr. Tad Smith, Preston Smith.

1. Vice President James Juanitas led the Pledge. Vice President Juanitas recognized new members and guests. The raffle was conducted by Nicholas Scivoletto.
2. Program Director Bernie Quinn introduced the speaker, Dr. Tad Smith. Dr. Smith's topic was the "Dred Scott Decision."
3. Dred Scott was a slave who was owned by John Emerson of Missouri. In 1833, Emerson undertook a series of moves as part of his service in the U.S. military. He took Scott from Missouri (a slave state) to Illinois (a free state) and finally into the Wisconsin Territory (a free territory). During this period, Scott met and married Harriet Robinson, who became part of the Emerson household. Emerson married in 1838, and in the early 1840s he and his wife returned with the Scotts to Missouri, where Emerson died in 1843.
4. Scott attempted to purchase his freedom from Emerson's widow, who refused the sale. In 1846, with the help of antislavery lawyers, Harriet and Dred Scott filed individual lawsuits for their freedom in Missouri State Court in Saint Louis on the grounds that their residence in a free state and a free territory had freed them from the bonds of slavery. It was later agreed that only Dred's case would move forward; the decision in that case would apply to Harriet's case as well.
5. *Scott v. Emerson* took years to be resolved. In 1850, the State Court declared Scott free, but the verdict was reversed in 1852 by the Missouri Supreme Court (which thereby invalidated Missouri's long-standing doctrine of "once free, always free"). Emerson's widow then left Missouri and gave control of her late husband's estate to her brother, John F.A. Sanford, a resident of New York State (his last name was later incorrectly spelled Sandford on court documents). Because Sanford was not subject to suit in Missouri, Scott's lawyers filed a suit against him in U.S. District (Federal) Court, which found in Sanford's favor. The case eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which announced its decision in March 1857, just two days after the inauguration of President James Buchanan.
6. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney reasoned that Scott was not a U.S. citizen and could not sue in the courts. The South was happy with the Supreme Court's 7 - 2 decision in 1857.
7. When Taney died in 1864, he was denounced and vilified in the North. Senator Charles Sumner predicted "his name will always be linked with that of a slave who wanted nothing more than his freedom."
8. Dred Scott did get his freedom, but not through the courts. After he and his wife were later bought by the Blow family (who had sold Scott to Emerson in the first place), they were freed in 1857. Scott died of tuberculosis in Saint Louis in 1858. Harriet Scott lived until June 1876, long enough to see the Civil War and the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolish slavery in the U.S.
9. The next Board Meeting is Wednesday, April 13, 2022.

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

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance on March 9th was \$4,450.54. The raffle brought in \$26.00. Many thanks to Nicholas Scivoletto, members, and guests.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

# Coming Programs for 2022

Date	Speaker	Topic
April 13th	"Ted Savas"	"1861 & the Big Bluff"
May 11th	"Carl Guarneri"	"Lincoln's Informer"
June 8th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
July 13th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
August 13th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
September 14th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"

## **2022 Membership**

The 2022 membership renewal was due as of January 1, 2022. The dues are \$30.00 and you can renew and 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 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:

[gwofforth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gwofforth@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.

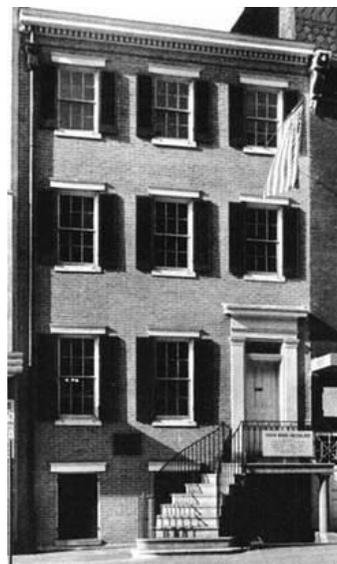
Some of our members are also National Park Service volunteers who assist the rangers in giving public programs, in uniform, about the Union soldiers stationed on the Island and interesting events that occurred there between 1859 and 1865. We publish a newsletter every month, which can be found on our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

# William Petersen

William Petersen and his wife, Anna Klomann Petersen, were both born in Germany. The couple met, married, and immigrated to the United States, arriving on June 3, 1841. They moved almost immediately to Washington, DC. William made a good living plying his trade as a tailor in his shop on Eighth Street. In February, 1849, he purchased a plot of land for \$850 at 516 Tenth Street NW between E and F Streets and for an additional \$2,100 built a three story red brick townhouse with a basement.



After five years in the United States, William and Anna both became naturalized citizens. Anna gave birth to ten children in their home, five of whom survived to adulthood.

The Petersens raised their family on the second and third floors, renting out the first floor and basement to lodgers and tourists who were always coming and going in the DC area. By 1858, the living quarters had become cramped. Petersen put on an ell addition in the rear of the house for \$1,200. By the beginning of the Civil War, there were 21 people living in the Petersen home, including one servant girl.

Census records show that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, almost half of the residents in Washington, DC, either owned boarding houses or were tenants in one. William was making more money than ever before sewing high quality uniforms for Union officers. The boarding house was always full. In 1850, Congressman William Newell, later Governor Newell of New Jersey, and in 1853, Congressman John Breckinridge, later Vice President of the United States, boarded at the Peterson house.

On January 13 and 14, 1863, tragedy struck when two of the Petersen's little

girls, Anna Augusta, five years old, and Caroline Augusta, two years old, died within a day of each other. Their cause of death was not recorded.

On Good Friday of 1865, President Abraham Lincoln, his wife, and their guests Major Henry Rathbone and his stepsister/fiancée, Clara Harris, were attending a production of *My American Cousin* at Ford's Theater, directly across the street from the Petersen home. The actor John Wilkes Booth stepped into the Presidential Box and shot Lincoln once in the head. Within seconds of the shooting, he leapt to the stage and disappeared out the rear door.

Doctor Charles Leale and Doctor Charles Sabin Taft, both attending the Theater that evening, lowered Lincoln to the floor to examine him. Seeing that the wound was mortal, they conferred quickly and decided that it would be scandalous if the President died in a Theater. Four young Union soldiers, Jacob Soules, William Sample, Jake Griffiths, and John Corey, who had been sitting 12 - 15 feet from the Presidential Box, were recruited to carry the President out of the Theater. Two other soldiers joined them to hold up Lincoln's sagging torso. Hearing the commotion, Henry Safford, a boarder at the Petersen house across the street, stepped out onto the small landing at the top of the steps. He waved and called out, "Bring him in here." Safford directed them to carry Lincoln to the bedroom of 23 year old soldier, William Clark, who was out for the evening celebrating the end of the War.

The family and boarding guests were sent to huddle in the basement as dignitaries and government officials came and went. Some of Mrs. Lincoln's friends arrived to console her. Robert Todd Lincoln arrived and was ushered to his father's side.

Anna was out of town making Easter visits. When she returned home the following morning, it was to find that the President of the United States had died in her home.

By the end of the War, there was no longer a demand for made-to-order uniforms. Ford's Theater was closed and tourism to the part of Washington where the Petersens continued to reside dropped off. As early as April 19, 1865, William Clark wrote to his sister, "*Everybody has a great desire to obtain some memento from my room so that whoever comes in has to be closely watched for fear they will steal something.*" Incredibly, Clark was allowed to continue living in the room and sleeping on the bed where Lincoln took his last breath.

The house became a ghoulish tourist attraction. Peterson decided to cash in and give tours charging fifty cents admission. Anna hid in her bedroom while curiosity seekers, now considered paying "guests," tramped through her home. Souvenir hunters came prepared with scissors to snatch anything that might have been associated with the martyred President. The house began to fall into disrepair. Most people shied away from staying in the home where Lincoln had

died.

The Petersens appealed to the Government to recompense them for the losses of their “sheets, pillow-cases and carpets.” Their claim of \$550 was never paid.

William took to going on drinking sprees once or twice a week. On June 18, 1871, he was found insensible on a park bench in front of the Smithsonian Institute on the National Mall with an empty vial of laudanum at his feet. He was carried to the police station where he died later that night. The coroner’s inquest said that he had died of “an overdose of laudanum taken through mistake.” The New York Times was quick to label his death a suicide.



William Petersen was 61 years old when he died. He was buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery in Washington, DC. Only four months later, Anna Petersen, aged 52, died on October 18 and was buried beside her husband. Anna’s death certificate, with cause of death, has never been found.

After William and Anna Petersen’s deaths, their furniture was put up for auction. Much of it was bought by Lincoln collectors.

The Petersen House is now a National Historic Landmark.

**Submitted by Judith Breitstein**

# National Register of Women's Service in the Civil War (NRWSCW):

## Woman of the Month

Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut

Writer and Political Influencer, CSA



Portrait by Samuel Osgood, 1856.  
Born March 31, 1823, at Mount Pleasant Plantation, SC.  
Died November 22, 1886, in Camden, SC.

Mary Boykin's father, Stephen Decatur Miller, served as a US Congressman, Member of the South Carolina Senate, Governor of the State of South Carolina, and US Senator, before retiring from politics to develop plantations in Mississippi, all prior to the Civil War. She was the namesake of her mother, Mary Boykin Miller, who was her father's second wife, and who was left in debt upon her husband's death when their daughter was fifteen. The political life and indebtedness left by Mary Boykin's father was an early influence upon the young woman.

Mary Boykin was first educated at home, and, later, from the age of thirteen to fifteen, she received her formal education as a boarding student at Madame Talvande's French School for Young Ladies in Charleston. Along with other young daughters of the planter class elite, she received a high caliber education. She excelled in studies of literature, history, rhetoric, foreign languages, and the sciences, as well as in the arts. She remained a voracious reader throughout her life.

At seventeen, she married recent Princeton graduate James Chesnut, Jr. Her new husband was eight years older than she, but she had known him since she began as a student in Charleston. Despite her husband's position as the sole surviving son of one

of the South's wealthiest plantation owners, the junior Chesnuts received only a small allowance from his parents, and lived on the income of James Chesnut's law practice. While living in her father-in-law's home, Mary Boykin quietly taught the enslaved persons to read and write, a continuation of a practice which she had begun as a child.

When Mary Boykin was thirty-five, her husband, already a successful attorney and State politician, was elected a US Senator for South Carolina. James Chesnut was considered a moderate in politics, but both he and his wife believed fervently in States' Rights. Two years into his term in the Senate, upon South Carolina's secession from the Union, James resigned and returned home. Mary Boykin and James did not support slavery; however, they believed that states had the right to make their own decisions on the issue. During the War, James served at various times as a high-level member of the Confederate Government, as an aide to President Davis and as a General Officer with field and reserve command responsibilities.

Admired as a woman of sharp intelligence, great wit, grace, poise, and gracious hospitality, Mary Boykin Chesnut played a critical role in her husband's political and military career, as well as in his private legal practice. She excelled at entertaining and political networking, both of which were elemental to her husband's success. She served as his administrative aide, and assisted him in the drafting of speeches and correspondence. While building important relationships in support of her husband, Mary Boykin evolved into an extraordinary political and social influencer in her own right. Serving as a salon for the elite of Washington, DC, and later for the Confederate leadership, her drawing room was a locus for networking and political decision-making. This access afforded her a rare role in informally contributing to political leadership, which was available to extremely few women of the time.

The roles held by James provided her an eyewitness seat at critical junctures prior to, and during, the Civil War. This, coupled with her own acuity of observation and well-honed writing ability, positioned Mary Boykin Chesnut to be an important chronicler of key events during the War. She began a diary of her wartime experience on February 18, 1861, and kept it until June 26, 1865. Conscious of the historic significance of the events to which she was a witness, she prefaced her writing with the statement that "This journal is intended to be entirely objective. My subjective days are over."

Her diary recorded not only the historic events happening around her, but her strong condemnation of the decisions made by Confederate leadership. It recorded her own service as a nurse and in aid society work, her experiences as a refugee, along with personal exposure to battles, and her mourning of lives lost. Her writing also reveals her strong support for women's rights. This diary has come to be a defining description of the War from a perspective of privileged civilian access.

As one critic put it, "she had the sense of the South's living through its time on a world stage, and she captured the growing difficulties of all classes of the Confederacy as the society faced defeat at the end of the War...Chesnut analyzed and portrayed the various classes of the South through the years of the War, providing a detailed view of Southern society and especially of the mixed roles of men and women. She was forthright about the complex and fraught situations related to slavery, particularly the abuses of women's sexuality and the power exercised by White men. For instance, Chesnut discussed the problem of White planters' fathering mixed-race children with

enslaved women within their extended households.

At the conclusion of the War, the Chesnuts returned to Camden, South Carolina, and lived modestly. Partnering with her former maid, Molly, Mary began a small dairy business, with their products sold in Charleston for nearly twenty years. For some time, this was the only source of income. James eventually returned to private legal practice and local politics. To the end of his life, however, he was encumbered by the effort to untangle the post-War debts of his father's estate. The economic challenges and post-War financial status of the Chesnuts mirrored that of their peers in the period.

During the two decades following the War, and with the intention of future publication, Mary edited and polished the content of her War-time diary. Simultaneously she wrote essays and a family history, as well as preparing a translation of French poetry. She also completed two novels which were published in 2002: *The Captain and the Colonel* and *Two Years of My Life*. A third novel, *Manassas*, was still in draft at her death.

In 1886, shortly before she died, Mary Boykin gave her diary to her closest friend, Isabella D. Martin, for publication. With editing by Miss Martin and journalist Myrta Lockett Avary, it was first published in 1905 as *A Diary from Dixie*. In the first edition, the editors exercised considerable license and imposed their own political and social perspectives upon the text. The editors also suppressed much of Mary's personal observations, which they deemed inappropriate for publication while the subjects were still alive. Other editions, with varying degrees of editing and addition of materials followed. C. Vann Woodward's 1981 edition of the diary, titled *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, is considered the most successful, and earned a Pulitzer Prize for history in the next year. This edition was used as a primary source by Ken Burns in his acclaimed television documentary, *The Civil War*, with actress Julie Harris reading excerpts from the diary.

According to assessments by, amongst others, the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and the University of North Carolina's *Documenting the South*, Mary Boykin Chesnut's diary, while "valued as a rich historical source" is also "generally acknowledged today as the finest literary work of the Confederacy." Confirming the assessment of her diary's role in recording history in the making, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* describes Mary Boykin Chesnut as "the most cited chronicler of the American Civil War."

She was also known in her time as an avid collector of photographs and cartes de visite; however, until recently, those photographs had been lost to her family. Recently recovered, her collection of photographs of leading personalities of the Civil War now resides at the University of South Carolina, along with surviving originals of individual manuscripts of the diary. The University has recently published a book of the photographs.

The National Portrait Gallery mounted an exhibition of Civil War-related portraits in the 1980s, and Mary Boykin Chesnut's was the only portrait of a woman included in the show. A further honor came when the US Postal Service chose her, along with Clara Barton and Phoebe Pember, to represent women in its series of stamps commemorating the Civil War.

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

