



Battle Cry



Vol. 43 No. 6 June 2003 Newsletter of Sacramento Civil War Round Table

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

As I said at the May meeting, often our own members make super presentations. Brad Schall certainly proved me right. John Brown is usually portrayed in a totally one dimensional way. This was the best discussion I ever heard of the whole man.

One of my on going goals is to find out about other Civil War Round Tables around the country. Wouldn't it be great if you could attend a Civil War Round Table while visiting battlefields, etc.? In pursuit of this goal, I talked with Jerry Russell. I asked him if there was a list of round tables. He said that at one time he tried making such a list but that some people viewed it is a great mailing and soliciting list, so it was discontinued. He said if I was traveling just to call him and he would let me know if there were any Civil War Round Tables where I was going. Bob Williams also gave me the web address for Civil War

Round Tables around the country. It's

<http://www.civilwararchive.com/RNDTABLE/webtable.htm>

I have looked at this site. It identifies roundtable by state and is very interesting. I suspect the rangers at battle fields might also be a source of info about local organizations.

In my visit with Jerry, we talked about U, S. Citizenship. Prior to the Civil War and until the 14th Amendment, this concept did not exist. Who could be a citizen of a state and who could vote in a state were "States Rights." Some western states in their constitutions were very specific that blacks, free or slave, could not live in their state.

The other thing I got out of talking to Jerry was the importance of not carrying your 21 Century ideas with you went you go back in time. The people of those times thought differently and lived in a world so different from ours. We know how things came out and what happened next. They didn't.

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2003

Sizzler Restaurant, 2030 Fulton Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95825-1908

ATTENDANCE-31

MEMBERS-30

Dennis Kohlmann, Pres.	Don Hayden	Elvin Roach
Kit Knight, Vice Pres.	Janet Junell	Paul Ruud
George Foxworth, Treas.	Robert Junell	Natalie Schafer
Dudley Albrecht	Arthur Knight	Rudy Schafer
Claudia Andres	Virginia Martin	Brad Schall
Roy Bishop	Leslie Michaels	Ted Swanson
Bernie Buenrostro	Jim Middleton	James Taff
Ardith Cnota	Bev Passerello	Bob Williams
Mitch Cnota	John Passerello	Susan Williams
Ted Hansen	Douglas Reid	John Zasso

GUESTS-1

Edie Keister

1. The meeting was called to order by President Dennis Kohlmann who reviewed this day in Civil War history. New members and guests were introduced and welcomed.
2. President Kohlmann in consultation with Dr. Brian Clague, San Joaquin Civil War Round Table, wants to establish a Speakers' Bureau for the Civil War Round Tables in Northern and Southern California.
3. Program—Brad Schall, SCWRT Member, presented a program "Kansas-Nebraska Act." SCWRT Member Schall presented an excellent exposition on the Missouri Compromise (1821), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the United States Supreme Court Dred Scott Case (1857), the life of John Brown (1800-1859), the election of President Lincoln (1860), the succession of Southern States (starting in 1860), and the Civil War. Per Member Schall, slavery was a State issue until the Dred Scott Case. At that point, he states that it became a National issue for the abolitionists. An active and lively question and answer period followed. Thank you Member Schall for an excellent view of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
4. Committee/Activity Reports
 - a. Minutes of April 2003 approved.
 - b. The next meeting is June 25, 2003. The speaker will be Dr. William Gould and the topic is "Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor."
 - c. SCWRT Members John and Bev Passerello are departing on a 3-month Civil War motorhome tour and will observe the 140th anniversary of Gettysburg at the Battlefield in July.
 - d. Monthly raffle.

4. Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

George W. Foxworth,
Acting Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the meeting of May 28, 2003 was \$1,919.53. Thanks to members and guests, the raffle brought in \$47.

George W. Foxworth,
Treasurer

Speakers for the rest of the year.

25 June. Dr Gould on his great grandfather's journals as a former slave who joined the U.S. Navy.

30 July. Susan Williams on a Civil War photographer.

27 Aug. Helen P. Trimpi on Harvard Grads in the Civil War-North and South.

24 Sept. Tom Gaffey on Santa Rosa and Peteluma during the Civil War.

29 Oct. Paul Wagstaff on the expanded U.S. Constitution as a result of the Civil War.

No meeting in November.

December meeting is still pending.

THE INDIAN GRABBED LITTLE BETTY

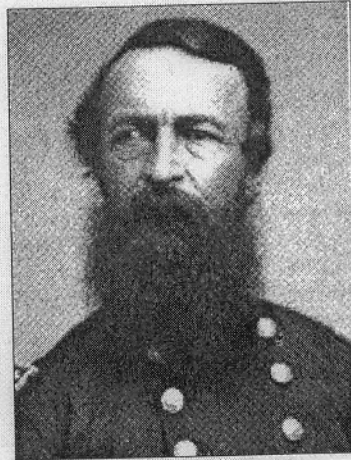
· Seventy-five years ago,
· I was 12 when Pa left
· our frontier home to fight
· for the Confederacy. Families
· in Texas faced a threat
· unimagined
· by other Southern families.
· That morning in 1863,
· Ma sent us to gather punkins
· for dinner, warning us
· Indians had stolen
· a neighbor's horse. We were
· half a mile from the cabin
· and little Betty lagged
· behind, peeking into
· ant hills. We could see Ma
· hanging clothes. I heard
· the war whoops of the Comanches
· before I saw them. So
· did Ma and she screamed,
· "My baby!" as she ran
· back. Three arrows
· brought Ma down
· a foot from the door.
· Rushing, I led the way
· to hide us in the brush
· like Ma--repeatedly--
· showed me. But Betty
· stood still, staring,
· breathing, "Ma, get up!"
· I started to go back, calling,
· reaching, pleading, when
· a howling Indian
· grabbed little Betty
· and slung her across
· his horse. I turned again,
· shepherding
· the five children. But
· Sarah darted past me, running
· to her twin. Sarah was shot
· and turned, wide-eyed.
· I carried her. Two days passed
· and little Sarah never spoke
· or cried; then, she died. No one
· ever saw little Betty again.
· Today, I made a cake and lit
· four candles. They'd be 67.

-- Kit Knight

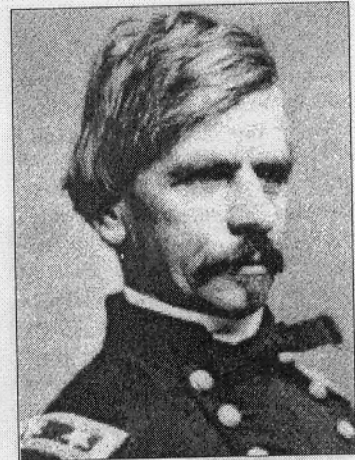
Near Disaster on the Red River



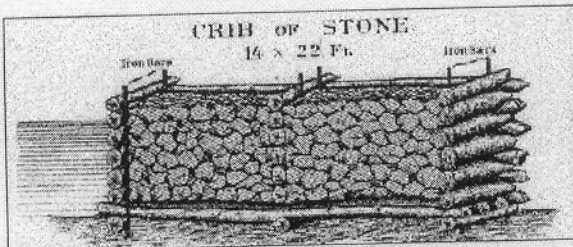
LTC Joseph Bailey



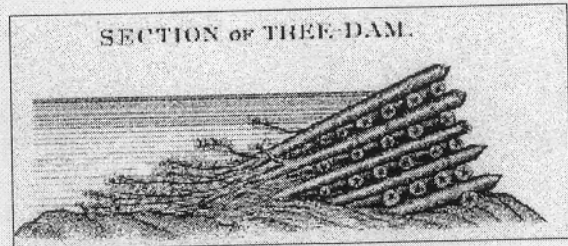
RAdm David D. Porter



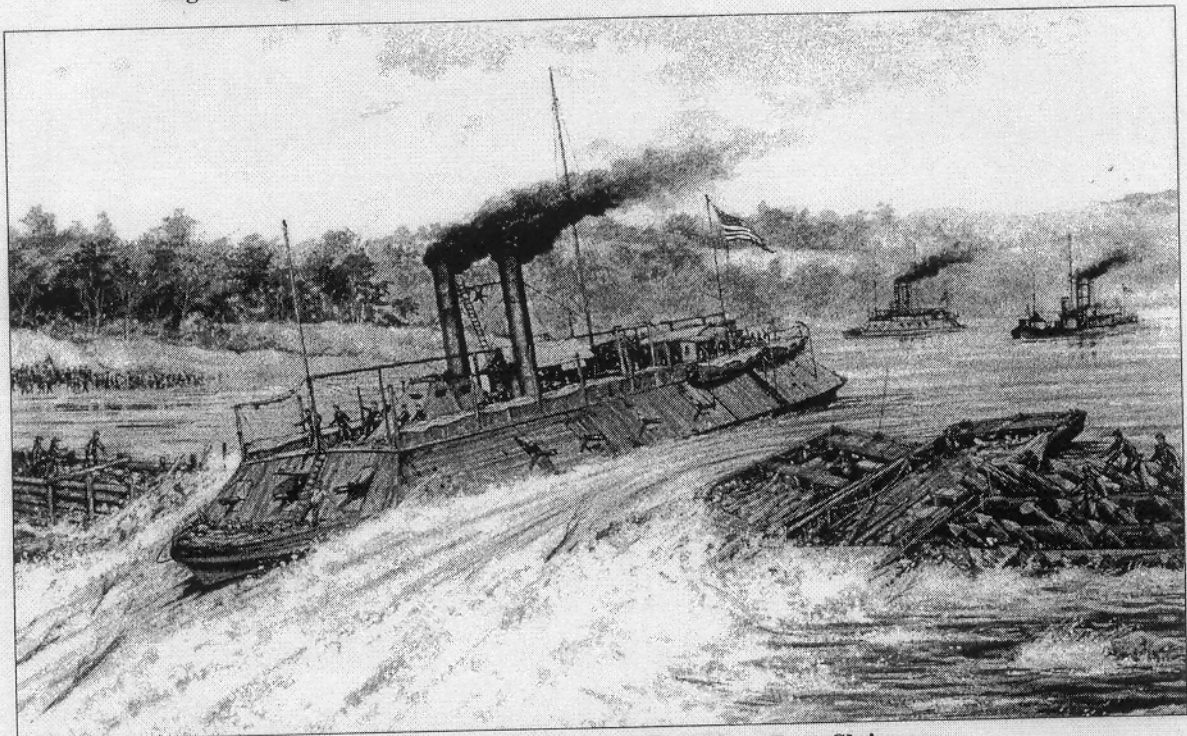
MG Nathaniel P. Banks



Right Wing Dam Section



Left Wing Dam Section



USS Carondelet passing through Red River Dam Sluiceway

Near Disaster on the Red River

An Engineer Rescued 10 Warships Trapped behind Enemy Lines during the Civil War

William T. Sherman characterized the Red River Campaign of 1864 as "One damned blunder after another from start to finish."* This is the story about just one of those "blunders", and of its happy resolution insofar as the Union Inland Navy was concerned.

In mid-March 1864, a Union force of 42,000 troops and 21 warships began ascending Louisiana's Red River with the goal of capturing Shreveport, 212 miles upstream. Under the command of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, the Red River expedition soon ran into difficulties. Banks hoped to transport his supplies and many of his troops by water, but the anticipated spring freshets failed to occur and the water level in the Red River was the lowest in a decade. Moreover, he thought there were few roads in the heavily wooded land adjacent to the river, making the movement of men and materiel difficult, so he headed *away* from the river.*

After a series of sharp engagements, notably the Battles of Mansfield on 8 April and Pleasant Hill the next day, Banks decided that he could not capture Shreveport within the allotted time, and he ordered his troops to withdraw downriver. However, when the general arrived in Alexandria he found that 10^φ warships of Rear Admiral David Porter's Mississippi Squadron, along with 12 transports, were stranded. The river had dropped 6 feet during the previous month, and as a result the ships could not pass over the two sets of rapids above the city. With his ships bottled up deep in Confederate territory, Porter was in danger of losing much of his fleet. Recognizing the navy's plight, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Bailey, the XIX Corps chief engineer, proposed a daring solution—dam the river to raise the water level, while at the same time concentrating the river's flow through a narrow sluiceway, thus creating a torrent of water which the warships could ride over the rapids. A former lumberman, Bailey had used a similar tactic for floating logs downstream during periods of low water.

Although Porter said that Bailey's plan was a "proposition that looked like madness..." the admiral really had no other viable alternative. At Porter's request, on 30 April 1864, General Banks ordered the soldiers to work. Working in water that often came up to their necks, over the next week, 3,000 weary soldiers built the dam. In a later report, Bailey described construction of the dam by the lower rapids: "At the point where the dam was built, the river is 758 feet wide, with from four to six feet of water running at about 10 mph."

Two coal barges, 24 X 170 feet were sunk in the channel, having been filled with stone, brick, and iron taken from foundries, sugar mills and other buildings* in the vicinity. Between them was a chute of 66 feet in breadth. From the barges to the right hand bank, the dam was built of cribs of stone; that to the left bank was constructed of trees with their branches. (*See dam section drawings and USS Carondolet running the chute*)

The increase of water caused by the main dam was 5 feet 4 inches. By 8 May the dam had raised the water level enough to send four of the relatively shallow draft gunboats over the rapids. All four made it down, but two scraped hard on the rocks. From that experience it was clear that the water level had to be increased before the deeper draft vessels could pass over the rapids. Bailey sent the troops to work again, first raising the wings of the original dam, and when that failed to raise the water sufficiently, he ordered the construction of a second dam, a mile upstream, just above the upper rapids. The construction of the second dam was as difficult as the first, but when it was completed it increased the river level by 6.5 feet—enough for all of the warships and transports to navigate the rapids and continue on to the relative safety of the Mississippi River. For Union forces the Red River campaign was a costly failure. The Army suffered 5,200 casualties and the Navy lost three warships and two auxiliary vessels. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War quickly dubbed the campaign the "Red River Disaster."

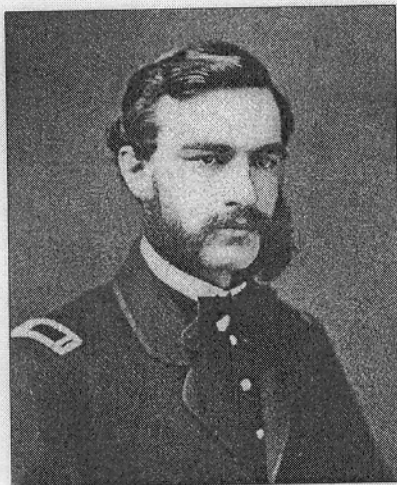
Despite its criticism of the campaign, Congress singled out Engineer Joseph Bailey for special praise. The engineer officer received the Thanks of Congress for his actions, one of only 15 officers so honored during the war. In June 1864, Bailey was given a brevet promotion to brigadier general, and the following April he received another brevet to major general. He was killed in 1867, while serving as a Sheriff in Missouri.

*It is not known whether Sherman's comment was made before or after he learned that the masonry buildings of his beloved Louisiana Military Institute (which he had established just prior to the war) had been torn down to obtain stone and brick to build the dam. (Today, this school is Louisiana State University.)

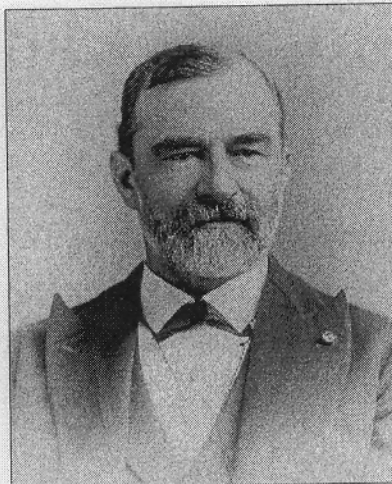
^φ The warships trapped were the USS' Carondolet, Louisville, Mound City, Pittsburg, Neosho, Osage, Ozark, Fort Hindman, Chillicothe, and Lexington.

* This was another of the "blunders" (for possible future discussion). References: *U.S. Corps of Engineers' Historical Vignette No 27; Battles and Leaders v4; OR's, v34; and ORN's, v26*
Bob Williams: 6-4-03

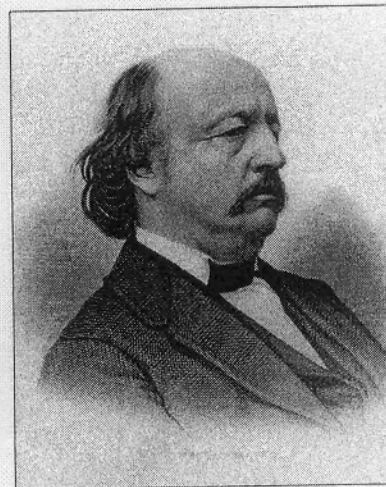
Lieutenant Peter S. Michie and the Dutch Gap Canal



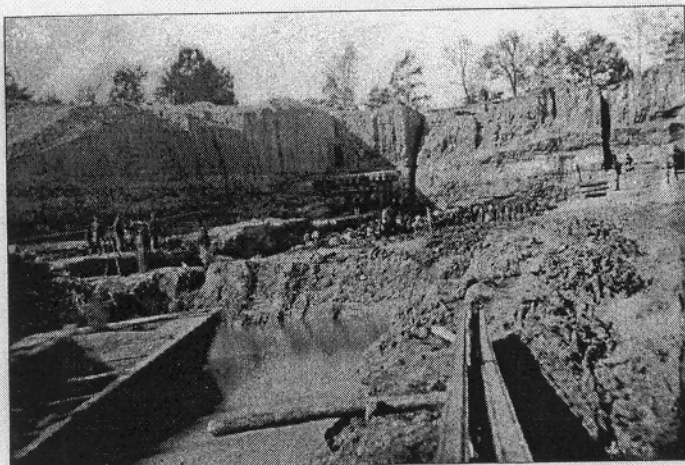
1st LT Peter S. Michie, 1863



BG Peter S. Michie, 1895



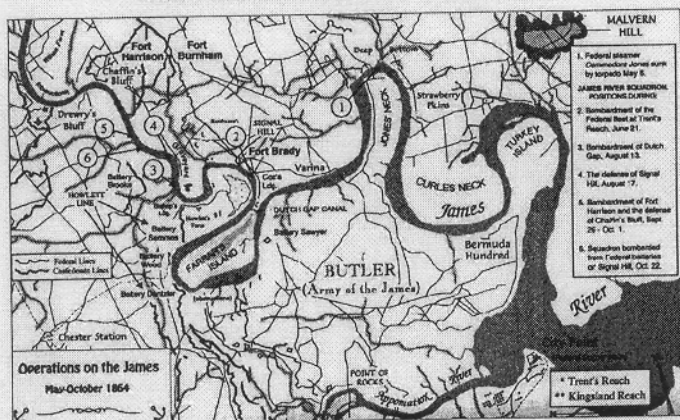
MG Benjamin F. Butler



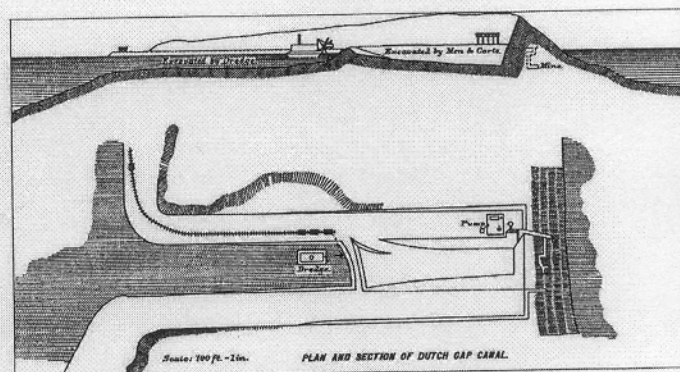
Canal Under Construction, 10-1864



Canal Completed, 4-1865



James River Area Location Map



Plan - Profile Drawing

RAW: 7-8-03

Lieutenant Peter S. Michie and the Dutch Gap Canal

After repulse at Drewry's Bluff on 16 May 64, the Union Army of the James (AoJ), MG Ben Butler commanding, retreated to strong defensive positions at Bermuda Hundred. Problem was that the Confederates occupied equally strong positions with powerful batteries (Dantzler, et. al.) just upstream on the James River. The AoJ was, in effect, bottled up.

Butler, always the idea man and occasionally having a good one, conceived the idea of cutting a canal through Dutch Gap, a narrow neck of land 520 feet across that would permit Ironclads to by-pass nearly 5 river miles (around Farrar's Island) and the powerful rebel forts. He directed 1st Lt. Peter Michie, Chief Engineer of the AoJ to report on a canal's feasibility and, if favorable, to begin work. Ground was broken 10 Aug 64.

Peter Smith Michie (1839-1901) was one of the most outstanding West Point graduates during the Civil War era (another one was Ranald Mackenzie). Graduating 2 of 25 in the Class of 1863, he was assigned to the Corps of Engineers. After initial service as assistant engineer for the Charleston siege works and Florida fortifications, Michie was transferred to the AoJ. He became that army's Chief Engineer in July 64.

In his duties as an engineer officer, Lt. Michie had provided the full range of military engineering services: laying floating bridges, constructing defensive works, planning offensive operations, preparing surveys and topographical maps, constructing roads, and in this instance, canal construction. Michie also assisted Maj. James C. Duane, Chief Engineer for the Army of the Potomac, in planning and location work for the 2,100-foot long James River Bridge built 15 June 64. (That crossing is said to have been the longest continuous pontoon bridge ever used during war.) For services performed while a Lieutenant, Peter Michie received regular army brevets of Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Brigadier General. A very good record for one whom did not enter wartime service until it was half over.

Work on the 500-foot long canal continued without significant construction problems until near the very end. It was designed to be 15 feet deep, 80 feet wide at waterline with 15-foot wide berms on each side, and a bottom width of 40 feet. Cut slopes were 1 to 1. Cuts to waterline were approximately 90 feet at the NW end and 36 feet at the SE end. Total excavation was estimated to have been 67,000 yards³. Equipment consisted of a steam dredge, steam pump and several hundred folks with picks, shovels, carts and wagons.

A major problem was that the troops employed were subjected to severe rifled artillery and mortar fire. Casualties were significant and continuous; on one occasion 12 were killed and 40 wounded. In addition, there were large losses in horses, mules and wagons. The dredge (after being sunk once) and the steam pump were bomb-proofed for protection. Notwithstanding, the soldiers showed tremendous courage and fortitude. Changing priorities for the AoJ, as assigned by Gen. Grant also slowed the work.

On 30 Dec 64 after 144 days work on the canal was complete, except for the removal of a 6,000 yd³ earthen bulkhead that had been left in place to maintain a dry area for that portion of the canal that had been excavated by hand. This was to be done by exploding an underwater mine designed by the Navy and charged with 6 tons of powder (see profile drawing). The explosion did not occur sequentially proper and most of the debris fell back into the newly excavated canal. Although the canal partially opened itself by erosion for use by small boats, it was not completed until April 65, too late for military use. In the 1870's and again in the 1930's the Dutch Gap Canal was enlarged and extended by the US Corps of Engineers (who else?), and is now the main navigational channel of the James River.

Very late in the war and immediately after the Confederate evacuation of Petersburg, Major Michie led a Pontonier Detachment for quick response bridge building along the Appomattox River. After the Surrender, he was assigned to occupational duties on MG Godfrey Weitzel's staff in Richmond with principal responsibility for surveying and mapping the battlefields of the area; and in the supervision of other engineer related activities.

In 1867 Michie was appointed Assistant Professor of Engineering at his Alma Mater; and on 14 Feb 71 he became Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy (now called "Physics"). In a sense Peter Smith Michie had stepped into the big shoes of the legendary West Point Professor Dennis Hart Mahan, whose illustrious teaching career at the military academy spanned the period 1832-71. Professor Michie continued on the academy staff for the next 30 years, until his death 16 Feb 01. His writings included: *The Life and Letters of Emory Upton*(1885), *Elements of Analytical Mechanics*(1886), *Hydrodynamics*(1887), *Elements of Practical Astronomy*(1891), and *General McClelland*(1900). He is buried in the West Point cemetery.

Peter Michie's son Dennis Mahan Michie, West Point Class of 1892, was killed in action on 1 July 98 at San Juan Ridge. Dennis had been captain of his school's first football team. West Point's *Michie Stadium* is his memorial. References: *OR's*, v42 pt1 serial 87: *Battles and Leaders*, v4; *WD&MC*, v13n11 10-77 Bob Williams: 6-8-03

ED Bearss Birthday

On the 26th of this month, the internationally-famous Civil War historian and battlefield guide, Ed Bearss, will celebrate his 80th birthday. During his nearly 50 years in the Park Service, and since, Ed Bearss has done more to preserve and interpret America's Civil War and Indian Wars history and battlefields than anyone in history. He has devoted most of his life studying and sharing his knowledge of America's military history. Won't you join me in sending him a heartfelt, sincere Happy Birthday! wish as he completes his eighth decade in life and starts his ninth full of vim, vigor, and love for the Civil War and the Indian Wars??? His address is 1126 17th St. South, Arlington VA 22202. And you might want to include a "Hi!" to his wonderful wife Margie. (original article sent e-mail from Jerry Russell)

The Sacramento Civil War Round Table meets the last Wednesday of every month except November and December. (A meeting is held either at the end of Nov. or the beginning of Dec.) We meet at the Sizzler 2030 Fulton Ave. Sacramento, CA (Near Fulton and Cottage Way) at 7:00PM. Members and guests gather for food and conversation at 6:00PM. The Board of Directors meets at Carrows, 29th and J St. at 11:30AM to 1:00PM on the Wed. two weeks before the regular meeting for that month.

Battle Cry Editor

The Battle Cry is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Please submit items to the editor for publication no later than the meeting day of the Board of Directors, either at that meeting, (see above) by U.S. mail or by e-mail. BattleCryEditor@aol.com 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 P.O. Box 254702 Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check it for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

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