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**Battle Cry deadline is  
1:00PM Wed. two  
weeks before the regu-  
lar 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  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I enjoyed Ted Stahr's presentation on "Myths and Misconceptions about the Civil War." It is so hard to know what is truth and what is fiction. At this meeting I was loaned a book by Bob Williams called *These Honored Dead, How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* by Thomas A. Desjardin. It's not a book about the Battle of Gettysburg but a book about how the story of the Battle Gettysburg developed. Ray Bisio and others tell of getting to Gettysburg thinking they know a lot about the battle and soon realizing they know very little. This book is about why this so. Dr. Desjardin says this is because, "History has a way of coming out the way we hoped it would rather than the way things really happened."

People like Dan Sickles, Abner Doubleday and Dan Butterfield were out to save their reputations. Jubal Early invented the Lost Cause to show how Robert E. Lee was not "at fault." John Badger Bechelder wanted to paint the great American historical painting to rival the painting of Washington Crossing the Delaware. All these men played major roles in the story of Gettysburg that we know today. Another key distorter was Ted Turner. After his presentation of his movie Gettysburg, he makes the statement that "more Americans were killed at Gettysburg than were killed in the Viet Nam War." This is off by a factor of at least 6 but it was heard by 40 million Americans on TV.

This month's presentation should be something special. Stephen Beck from Sutter's Fort will speak about D. W. Thompson.<sup>1</sup> So far only one member seems to know anything about him.

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<sup>1</sup> This is listed in the June 2004 Battle Cry as C.W. Thompson. We now know that it should be D.W. Thompson.

**MINUTES**  
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30,2004  
Sizzler Restaurant, 2030 Fulton Avenue, Sacramento

Attendance – 41

Members-35

Dennis Kohlmann, President	Fred Bohmfalk	Ken Lentz	Brad Schall
Kit Knight, Vice President	Bernie Buenrostro	Mary Lenz	James Taff
George Foxworth, Treasurer	Lynn Buenrostro	Donald Long	Bob Williams
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Dudley Albrecht	Ardith Cnota	Jim Middleton	John Zasso
James Armstrong	Alan Geiken	Maurice Mitchell	
George Beitzel	Don Hayden	Betty Mitchell	<u>Guests-5</u>
Joan Beitzel	Robert Junell	Paul Rudd	Kyle Glasson
Roy Bishop	Janet Junell	Rudy Schafer	Chynna Glasson
Walt Bittle	Ken Kitchen	Natalie Schafer	Michael Cohes
			Dennis Donovan
			Devon Well

1. Meeting was started at 7:05. President Kohlmann greeted new members and guest. This Day in Civil War History was read. Subscriptions for North & South Magazine were offered at a special price.
2. Our outgoing (in more ways than one) secretary, Walt Bittle, was presented with a beautiful engraved wall clock for his years of active participation. He will be joining the CWRT in his new home in St. Louis. Thanks Walt, for everything. We'll miss you!!
3. Steve Beck will be guest speaker on July 28<sup>th</sup> – C.W. Thompson & the Civil War.
4. Ted Starr, a Civil War reenactor, was presented to speak on Myths & Misconceptions of the Civil War. Myths—North and South, were discussed with many interesting facts. Generals, battles, and heroics were put in perspective- from facts and personal observation. Questions were welcomed and answered with more facts. Thank you Ted!
5. Fred Bohmfalk and Brad Schall discussed a program concerning the Civil War Fort located beneath Alcatraz. A meeting will be held there October 17th, with a tour included. People are needed to be trained as docents. See your next copy of Battle Cry for further details.
6. Edie Keister (yours truly), served her first night as secretary, and very well I might add.....
7. The raffle was held, and the meeting adjourned at 8:37.

Edie Keister  
Secretary

Treasurer's Report: The cash balance following the meeting of June 30, 2004 was \$1,799.24. Thanks to members and guests, the raffle brought in \$56.  
George Foxworth

<b>Upcoming Programs</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>28 July</b>	<b>Stephen Beck</b>	<b>D.W. Thompson &amp; the Civil War</b>
<b>25 Aug</b>	<b>George Martin</b>	<b>43<sup>rd</sup> Tenn. Regiment (CSA)</b>
<b>29 Sep</b>	<b>Paul Wagstaffe</b>	<b>Recon-struction</b>
<b>27 Oct</b>	<b>Dennis Kohlmann</b>	<b>Election of 1864</b>
<b>1 Dec</b>	<b>Bill Webb</b>	<b>Mark Twain's Civil War</b>

Look at the magnitude of this subject!  
 One sixth of our population, in round numbers--not quite one sixth, and yet more than a seventh,--about one sixth of the whole population of the United States are slaves! The owners of these slaves consider them property. The effect upon the minds of the owners is that of property, and nothing else--it induces them to insist upon all that will favorably affect its value as property, to demand laws and institutions and a public policy that shall increase and secure its value, and make it durable, lasting and universal. The effect on the minds of the owners is to persuade them that there is no wrong in it. The slaveholder does not like to be considered a mean fellow, for holding that species of property, and hence he has to struggle within himself and sets about arguing himself into the belief that Slavery is right. The property influences his mind. The dissenting minister, who argued some theological point with one of the established church, was always met by the reply, "I can't see it so." He opened the Bible, and pointed him to a passage, but the orthodox minister replied, "I can't see it so." Then he showed him a single word--"Can you see that?" "Yes, I see it," was the reply. The dissenter laid a guinea over the word and asked, "Do you see it now?" [Great laughter.] So here. Whether the owners of this species of property do really see it as it is, it is not for me to say, but if they do, they see it as it is through 2,000,000,000 of dollars, and that is a pretty thick coating. [Laughter.] Certain it is, that they do not see it as

we see it. Certain it is, that this two thousand million of dollars, invested in this species of property, all so concentrated that the mind can grasp it at once--this immense pecuniary interest, has its influence upon their minds.  
 Abe Lincoln March 6, 1860 New Haven, CT

EMERALD BROWN: 1963

When JFK died, Jackie asked the staff to research Lincoln's funeral. Both Presidents were assassinated while in office. My great grandfather was a reverend and a personal friend of the Lincolns'. He led Abe's favorite horse --and it happened that Old Bob was a black horse-- behind the casket and 40,000 mourners followed great granddaddy up Pennsylvania Avenue. Almost a century later, I bow my head on Pennsylvania Avenue and watch Kennedy's casket followed by a riderless black horse. All of America--indeed, all the world--commented on the grace and nobility of that animal, that symbol. But no one knows it was a black man who created that symbol; I have pictures of great granddaddy Henry Brown with Old Bob. The reverend wore a top hat. The cook in the Lincoln White House was a black woman, Mariah Vance. Everybody in the white family called her Aunt Mariah. Robert Lincoln continued sending her checks till the day she died. White folks don't think we have any history, but it's just that our little bits of history never get in the books.

-- Kit Knight

## Civil War Alcatraz

Several months ago we were approached by the National Park Service to help develop an interpretive program for the Civil War Fort at Alcatraz. Alcatraz has been under going restoration for the past two years to make the prison earthquake safe. The majority of the work has been completed and now additional parts of the island can be opened to the public. The good news is that now the Civil War experience at Alcatraz can be interpreted. Between now and the first of the year a speaker's program will be available to all Civil War roundtables, SUVCW camps, SCV camps, service clubs and veterans organizations in California to promote the Civil War Alcatraz.

A working committee has been set up to assist with this process. The committee consists of Fred Bohmfalk, Phil Avila and Brad Schall with John Martini acting as historical consultant. John Martini has a revised edition to his book on the military at Alcatraz to be released in November. John is also available to speak to groups in northern California. The committee will soon expand to six members and then ten by the first of the year. We will announce at our October event at Alcatraz the expansion of this committee and new committee assignments. Planning has already started and dialog between the committee and park rangers to develop a plan consistent with their goals and objective.

Our immediate goals and plans are outlined below and we hope that you might want to participate.

First is to concentrate on visual interpretation needs. We have committed to raising \$650.00 for the National Park Service to purchase some artillery equipment. You can let me know if you would like to donate and when we get the financial structure set up so funds will be dedicated to interpretive program. We will let you know whom to make out checks. You can contact anyone on the committee.

Uniform artillery people are needed to help interpret the programs. We will start with one day a month and then expand as personnel are trained. The National Park Services requires some training and schooling and we are working with them on scheduling these schools. Anyone interested in this program should contact any member of the committee.

The National Park service will take up to sixty people on a special tour of the Civil War Fort. This has not been open to the public. I have had the opportunity to of a couple tours of the citadel and I can tell you it is great. The date picked is Sunday October 17, 2004. Each organization contact will be allocated 8 people for this tour with a cutoff date of August 1<sup>st</sup> to reply to a committee member. After August 1 we will open up each group for additional tickets if some are available. We will offer this tour again after the first of the year.

You must make your own arrangements to get to Alcatraz. We will set up a time for the tours (probably about 11:00AM, but this is subject to change), you may want to come earlier or stay later to see the rest of the island. In addition, the committee is asking for a voluntary donation of least five dollars to support additional interpretive programs on Civil War Alcatraz.

We are setting up research groups and study groups to interpret the Civil War period in Northern California. Fred Bohmfalk is outlining what these activities will encompass. We want to assist the interpretation of Civil War Alcatraz with human-interest stories and local events. More about these plans in October. If you're interested, please contact one of the committee members.

Alcatraz is the crown jewel in the Bay Area and we are afforded a real opportunity to tell the Civil War story at Alcatraz, not just the movie version of bad guys and prisons.

Contact Fred Bohmfalk @ 916 965-4776 or Brad Schall @ 916 408-4482 if you want to visit Civil War Alcatraz.

## **In Partial Defense of General William B. Franklin**

During the early and mid Nineteenth Century U.S. Military Academy cadets who graduated in the upper 5-10±% of their respective classes were normally posted to either the Corps of Engineers (CE's) or the Corps of Topographical Engineers (TE's or topogs). With rare exception these very bright students of West Point Professor Dennis Hart Mahan became outstanding staff engineering officers during the Mexican and/or early days of the Civil War.

Their duties were to design and oversee construction of military and civil engineering works such as forts, field fortifications, buildings, roads, railroads, water supply and drainage facilities. Also included were the preparation of topographic maps and the survey of waterways, plus explorations and "pathfinding" through the then vast wilderness areas of the country. Membership of the two engineer corps at the beginning of the Civil War was a small "elite" group totaling 79 officers (44 had served during the Mexican War), increasing to 105 a year later. Their duties required them to be cautious, methodical and exact.

Some 70 of this group continued as engineers or served in other staff capacities during the Civil War. Eleven became general officers in staff assignments; the best known of whom was perhaps Montgomery Meigs, the union quartermaster general. The others were Generals Totten, Delafield, Barnard, Benham, Cullum, Duane, Gilmer, Haupt, Poe, and Michler. The performance of these engineers in their staff capacities was generally exemplary in all respects. They remained true to their academic standings of "the best and the brightest".

Of the other 35 of the group (although several remained in engineering staff assignments serving well early on) all accepted general officer commissions later and became Division, Corps and/or Army-level line combat commanders. Many served with great distinction. Notably among these were Lee and Meade, of course. But for others, approximately half, their "best and brightest" status began to falter, as was the case with Halleck and Beauregard. The status of a few others in the group in effect reached the point of near complete failure. Notable among the later was McClelland and Franklin.

Although the problems of these flawed, near failed or failed commanders may have been in part due to other reasons (political, philosophical, whatever?) some believe that the core problem was their inability to break through what has been called the engineer's mind-set of accuracy, methodology and exactness. You can not approach a battlefield situation like you are preparing a construction drawing. Windows of opportunity can be very short and must be acted upon rapidly. Time does not permit continued study and procrastination in the interest of accuracy and eloquence of solution. William B. Franklin who graduated 1<sup>st</sup> in his class of 1843 never learned this, but U.S. Grant who graduated 21<sup>st</sup> in that class did. Similarly, James B. McPherson 1<sup>st</sup> in the 1853 class had trouble grasping the thought, but his classmate P. H. Sheridan, 34<sup>th</sup> in class standing, certainly did not. Was Professor Mahan perhaps doing something wrong?

William Buel Franklin was born in York, PA in 1823. He graduated from West Point (1-39) twenty years later and was assigned to the Topographical Engineers. He participated in western mapping expeditions, served in the Mexican War, receiving two brevets, returned to West Point on a teaching tour as Assist. Prof. of Natural Philosophy (i.e. physics). He supervised hydrographic surveys and harbor improvement projects on the Great Lakes; was involved in Mississippi River Bridge construction at the Rock Island Arsenal, was appointed the CE member of the U.S. Lighthouse Board; and received a particularly interesting and responsible assignment as resident engineer on public works projects in Washington, D.C. The latter work included construction of the Capitol Dome. (In this assignment, he replaced Montgomery Meigs, who had been sent to the Fort Jefferson Project, Dry Tortugas, Florida, after a dispute with Secretary of War John Floyd-- but that is another story.) As a Captain of Engineers in early 1861 Bill Franklin was at the zenith of his military career. He had spent nearly eighteen years on surveys, construction projects, as a teacher, and sitting on boards. He was honorable, ethical (at a time and place where corruption was rampant), a superb engineer and a conscientious public servant: but he had never commanded troops.

With the administration change and the very corrupt John B. Floyd's departure, Meigs was returned to Washington to his previous assignments and later as QMG. Franklin was appointed by President Lincoln to an advisory board to prepare recommendations for expanding the regular army. Other members were AG Colonel Lorenzo Thomas and Major Irvin McDowell. The board's work was approved 14 May 1861, and Franklin was commissioned Colonel of Infantry in the RA, declining an appointment of Major General in the Pennsylvania militia. He commanded the 12<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment. As he was just learning his new regimental command duties, a decision was made to brigade militia infantry regiments under regular army colonels. Franklin thus became an instantaneous and very inexperienced brigade commander. Notwithstanding, his unit fared no worse than other brigades at Bull Run losing *only* 384 men before the entire mob headed post haste back to Washington D.C.

Franklin was delighted upon George McClelland's assignment as CG, and they became close friends and confidants. In fact, it is said that he knew of Little Mac's peninsula plans before Lincoln did. In August 1861, he took command of a new division with brigades led by Phil Kearney, Henry Slocum and John Newton, a close former CE friend. In May 1862, he was named corps commander of the new VI Corps, which was to include his old division (to be under Slocum), and one commanded by W. F. "Baldy" Smith, another former CE colleague and close friend. The VI Corps provided good albeit not distinguished service for the remainder of the campaign, the Seven Days, Harrison's Landing and back to Second Manassas. Franklin was breveted BG in the regular army and promoted to MG of volunteers.

William Franklin was appalled at Little Mac's removal and John Pope's appointment as CG of the Army of the Potomac (AOP). (He had likewise been considerably annoyed upon Henry Halleck's earlier assignment as the Army's CG replacing McClelland.) Franklin frankly had trouble keeping his mouth shut about his dislikes, and he exhibited only minimum loyalties to Pope. Although he escaped the severe problems, which befell Fitz-John Porter (V Corps), this may have been only barely so.

At Second Manassas, Pope accused Franklin of tardiness, and probably rightly so. Lightning fast movements were not a part of Bill Franklin's repertoire. He had turned out to be a stubborn methodical, mechanical commander who could eventually accomplish a mission, but not until everything was in place. Engineer mentality? Perhaps that is the reason why he got along so well with McClelland—because they were so similar? Needless to say, Franklin was delighted when he learned of Little Mac's reinstatement at the outset of R. E. Lee's Maryland Campaign.

Upon discovering that Lee had split his forces with Longstreet south of Hagerstown along Antietam Creek and Jackson about to attack at Harper's Ferry, McClelland decided to cross South Mountain via Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton's Gaps. This was to be done by Hooker's I Corps, Reno's IX Corps, and Franklin's VI Corps, respectively to interpose between the rebel forces and engage them in detail. Franklin's orders of 13 Sept '62 were to move from Burkittsville through Crampton's Gap into Pleasant Valley and hence south 8 miles to relieve the garrison at Harper's Ferry. He was slow in starting with his 12,800 soldiers in two divisions. He carried the mountain handily on the 14<sup>th</sup>, but was slow getting started again on the 15<sup>th</sup> and moved with unwarranted caution. He considered that he had a 2-to-1 disadvantage, where actually he had a 3-to-1 advantage. His poor performance on 15 Sept made possible the surrender of Harper's Ferry and its substantial garrison. He was "half-a-day too late".

Had Franklin been more aggressive and exhibited even nominal skill as a combat commander the entire Maryland Campaign may have turned out much more favorably for the Union. But William Franklin, the engineer, was not a risk taker especially with Stonewall Jackson looming just over the hill. He was indeed a mirror of his commander's own characteristics. VI Corps was subsequently held in reserve taking no active part in the 17 Sept. Battle of Antietam. Franklin was critical of Little Mac for not giving him more credit for the "brilliant" victory at Crampton Gap; but he was more critical of Lincoln for the removal of McClelland, and the assigning of Ambrose Burnside to command the Army of the Potomac. This was the case even though Franklin and Burnside were friends at this point in time.

The next episode in William Franklin's misadventures and misdeeds as a combat commander occurred during the Battle of Fredericksburg, 13-14 Dec. 1862. Burnside had rearranged the army into three "Grand Divisions" of two corps each; commanded by Sumner (II & XII), Hooker (III & V), and Franklin (I & VI). I Corps was commanded by Reynolds, and included Meade's

Division. Baldy Smith was in command of VI. The plan was to capture Fredericksburg on the south bank of the Rappahannock River, as a base for further offensive action against Richmond. Five pontoon bridges were to be built, three opposite town and two downstream. The bridge trains arrived several days late, however, and the element of surprise was lost. Lee's Army had moved into the area in force.

Upon crossing the upstream bridges Sumner's forces moved through town but then were overwhelmed in several attempted frontal attacks on the well defended Marye's Heights just beyond. Concurrently, Franklin on the left was ordered to cross on the two downstream bridges to turn Lee's right flank, but he sent an insufficient force, Meade's Division alone. Meade was partially successful, but the effort failed due to lack of support from other units that Franklin had available, but did not deploy. Had he done so Lee's flank would have been turned and the outcome of this disastrous battle might have been quite different.

In Franklin's defense, it is true that his orders were ambiguous and, in fact, contradictory. But one might expect that he would have requested clarification early on. But it was Burnside who bore ultimate responsibility for the union tragedy for he was the one who ordered the repeated suicidal attacks against the strong natural confederate positions. Union and Rebel losses were 12,500 and 4,700, respectively.

The next six-weeks were a period of blaming, bickering and backbiting by the top leaders of the AOP. Franklin further erred when he and Smith sent a letter directly to the President critical of Burnside's strategies. That was certainly unprofessional and possibly insubordinate. After considerable agonizing Lincoln removed Burnside and replaced him with Hooker. Franklin, Sumner, Smith and Nelson were also relieved of command on 25 Jan. 63. Franklin traveled to York, PA to "await orders".

Hearings were held by the Congressional Joint Committee for Conduct of the War (JCCW) in which Franklin was found to have been negligent. He did a good job in rebuttal, pointing out biases and irregularities in the committee's deliberations, but the tarnish was still extant. Had William Franklin, the old engineer, screwed up again? If it were "three strikes and you are out" he would have been permanently on the "bench". However, Franklin retained many friends in the Army. Included were Meade, Reynolds, Sedgewick, Slocum, and Couch; but, most importantly, Halleck and his classmate Grant. Accordingly, he was granted another chance. On 25 June 63, he received orders from Chief of Staff Henry Halleck to report to General Nathaniel B. Banks in New Orleans. The Red River Campaign was about to commence. Banks, a political general had proven to be a competent administrator, but an incompetent field commander.

Halleck's intent was for Franklin to be second in command and, in addition to serving as the XIX Corps commander, provide Banks with professional advice and counsel, i. e. someone to lean on. It did not work quite as planned, however, Banks did not solicit much advice from Franklin, and the latter did not proffer on several occasions when he should have. In fact Franklin made a few mistakes of his own, particularly his order of march prior to the Battle of Sabine Cross Roads, 8 April 64, where he received a leg wound. Franklin did, however strongly recommend and support his engineer officer's (LTC Joseph Bailey) proposal to build dams to float Adm. Porter's gunboats past the Alexandria Rapids. This action saved the most valued gunboats and monitors of the Mississippi Fleet from capture and/or destruction. Franklin's wound was not healing well, and on 2 May he was granted convalescent leave to New Orleans. The Red River Campaign had been a catastrophe, and Franklin's service must probably be judged no better than mediocre. He did earn himself another "invitation" to testify before the JCCW, but he was not faulted for the Red River disaster. On 20 June, Franklin again returned home to await orders.

William Franklin's performance in Louisiana had not further damaged his career, but it had not enhanced it either. In July, he went to City Point to see Grant and his old friend Baldy Smith. He was hoping for an assignment in the Army of the Potomac again. Grant was amenable, but soon received word from Halleck that Stanton and Lincoln were not. In route back to York, Franklin was captured on a B&O RR train, but escaped the next day. In mid-August, Franklin met with another old friend, George McClelland to support him in the forthcoming election. McClelland's defeat was a reaffirmation that Franklin would not be returning to active military campaigning. He saw no further duty in the field, serving on boards and courts, and awaiting orders. He was in his words, "a member of

the noble army of the shelved". In November 1865, he resigned his commissions (RA Colonel and USV MG) to take a civilian job as Vice President for Production of Colt's Fire Arms Company in Hartford, Conn.

Franklin effectively served the Company for the next 22 years as General Manager and Chief Engineer, retiring in 1888. He had rebuilt the physical plant, signed large contracts for new sales in Europe and Russia, developed new products including perfection of the Gatland gun, rifles, pistols, and improved center-fired metallic cartridges. He and his wife Anna were active in the civic and cultural affairs of the city and he became a close friend of Samuel Clemens. He was a staunch member of the G.A.R, and served on numerous boards and commissions. They included: the West Point Board of Visitors, Connecticut State Capitol Commission, Board of Water Commissioners, and as President of the National Soldier's Home Board. (This latter organization eventually became the Veterans Administration.)

William Franklin died 8 March 1903 at 80 years. He had outlived the majority of his contemporaries. One of his eulogists stated that in measuring his life it is important to view the entire span of his eighty years, not just the four years of the Civil War. Yes, that is indeed necessary, if one wishes to recite his positive aspects. But William B. Franklin will still be remembered as a civil war general that exemplifies the fact that high scholastic obtainment did not necessarily correlate with distinguished military achievement. Franklin did not fail to succeed, he succeeded to fail. Had he remained in staff engineering assignments, it would have been an entirely different story.

Bob Williams: 6-30-04

Reference: "From First to Last, The Life of Major General W. B. Franklin", by Mark A. Snell 2002

