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July, 2009
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Battle Cry

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Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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President's Message:

As always something new and shocking comes up at one of our presentations. This time it was learning that R. E. Lee was, along with Jefferson Davis, deprived of his U. S. citizenship because he violated his oath as a military officer when he resigned and joined the rebellion. So why was he unique? Ray Bisio's explanation raised quite a ruckus among our group providing a bit of excitement. I hope that those who disagree will come forth with the facts regarding the others, particularly regarding their decisions relating to the dates of secession. I thought it was interesting and enjoyed the controversy. I think Ray holds the record for number of talks from a non-member and I thank him for stepping up to the plate when our scheduled presenter had to postpone. Thank you, Ray, for keeping us informed and entertained these past years.

The Bee's Explorer section Sunday, 21 June, devoted two pages to the various Lincoln exhibits here in town. It seems Sacramento is receiving an almost unique opportunity to view the Library of Congress exhibit since we are the second graced with it prior to moving on to Chicago and Indiana Aug. 22nd, Calif. Museum, 1020 O St., \$8.50, 7 Seniors and students. There are also two other local exhibits; one at the Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento and the other at the State Capitol Museum, 10th & L, free. The latter two will extend into early 2010. And let's not forget the annual west coast conference in Clovis in October which promises to cover Chickamauga and Chattanooga in depth. Information is available on the internet at www.chattanooga.com.

Barring unforeseen circumstances Larry Tagg will discuss The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln at our July 8th meeting. Larry teaches high school locally and is the author of The Generals of Gettysburg as well as this new book which he will bring copies to sign. Please welcome him and come early for dinner and social hour. See you there. Have a Happy Fourth of July.

Don Hayden, President

For information on the Lincoln exhibit:

<http://www.californiamuseum.org/exhibits/abraham-lincoln-bicentennial-exhibit>

The exhibit runs from June 24th to August 22nd. The phone number is 916-653-7524.

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the June 10, 2009 meeting was \$2,786.61. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$66.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

MINUTES

Sacramento Civil War Round Table
Wednesday, June 10, 2009
Hof Brau Restaurant, Watt Avenue, Sacramento

Attendance-37

Members-27

Don Hayden, President
George Foxworth, Treasurer
Edie Keister, Secretary
Joan Beitzel
George Beitzel
Roy Bishop
Walt Bittle
Rose Brown
Ardith Cnota
Mitchell Cnota
Alan Geiken
Kyle Glasson

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Dennis Kohlmann
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Betty Mitchell
Maurice Mitchell
John Nevins
Horst Penning
Mark Penning
Paul Ruud, IPP
Richard Sickert, MAL
Taff James

Robert Williams
Susan Williams
John Zasso
Guest-10
Ray Bisio
Rachel Cortes
Emily Cortes
Jose Cortes
Cathy Gilmore
Bob Gilmore
Larry Kinkob
Jim Lane
John Moyle
Bruce Norhmann

1. Meeting started at 7:00. Photos from Gibson Ranch re-enactment handed out, thank you Bob Williams. Member Richard Sickert shared info on "Lincoln's Legacy" a one day work shop, at the California History Museum on June 30, \$70 fee.
2. Guest were welcomed and introduced.
3. Acting secretary George Foxworth corrected the date of our meeting in the April 18th minutes.
4. Member George Beitzel shared his experience with the Memorial Day tours of the City Cemetery and trees at the Capital. The July 19th re-enactment at Duncan Mills was discussed.
5. Our scheduled speaker, Larry Tagg was unable to attend, so Ray Bisio stepped up his turn to present "Lee, the Trader." A discussion and comments followed, Thank you Ray.
6. Raffle was held and meeting adjourned at 8:35.
7. We say farewell to Walt Bittle for another year and welcome new member Rose Brown.

Edie Keister Secretary

Coming Programs 2009		
July 8 th	Larry Tagg	The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln
Aug. 12 th	Jim Stanberry	The Shenandoah Valley
Sept. 9 th	Tim Karlberg	"The South was Right"
Oct. 14 th	Fred Bohmfalk	William Hardee
Nov. 11 th	Dennis Kohlmann	U. S. Grant
Dec. 9 th	Brad Schall	TBA

"Lincoln and His Admirals" by Craig L. Symonds

In his latest book, Craig Symonds, Professor Emeritus at the U.S. Naval Academy, has woven the familiar and the new into an informative, absorbing narrative of 366 pages, carefully researched, with abundant and helpful references.

His theme is Lincoln's growth as a military strategist, encouraging combined operations of the navy and army, knowing when to intervene and lead, and when to leave good commanders alone. Gideon Welles, the capable Secretary of the Navy, appears on almost every page. Welles "had legitimate expertise in naval matters, including a term as chief of the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing under President Polk." This was hardly an impressive resume, but Welles emerged as a superb manager, as necessary to the Union victory as his counterpart Edwin Stanton, much better known to future generations.

Lincoln's "team of rivals" was frequently fractious at the outset, and both president and cabinet bumbled and worked at cross-purposes, lacking clear goals and coordination in the Fort Sumter crisis of early 1861. The president became a skilled arbiter of petty disputes, especially between Seward and Welles, who were both devoted to Lincoln, but didn't care much for each other. In 1861, Gustavus Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, called Seward a "traitor" in a letter to his wife, but erased the inflammatory word before sending it. A note tells us that Professor Symonds detected the incomplete erasure in a Fox letter at the New-York Historical Society. Does it get any better than this for a historian? I doubt it.

The familiar names in this book—Farragut, Porter, Dahlgren—are discussed at length, but Professor Symonds has also drawn incisive portraits of less renowned officers. Samuel Francis DuPont, Louis M. Goldsborough, and Samuel Phillips Lee were admirals who had important roles in the war, but performed with varying results.

One advantage the president had was that "there was no maritime counterpart to the contingent of so-called political generals that caused Lincoln so many difficulties during the war." However, career naval officers were often frustrated by the inept political generals that these crusty old salts had to put up with, such as McClernand in

the Vicksburg campaign, Banks on the Red River, and Ben Butler at Bermuda Hundred and Fort Fisher.

I learned a lot about blockades, including legal, diplomatic, and tactical aspects. I knew that privateers with their letters of marque divided prize money, but not that U.S. Navy officers could profit handsomely. During the Red River campaign, there was "a mad scramble for cotton. Porter was aware of the fortunes that could be made seizing contraband cotton. That first shipment of two thousand bales he forwarded to the prize court in Cairo had a potential market value of \$2 million, and according to the prize law, Porter's personal share of that would be \$60,000." Admiral Lee "even hired an attorney to represent his interests at the prize court, paying him 2.5% 'of whatever proceeds may fall to me,' to ensure that he received his fair share."

The Trent affair is described concisely and clearly, but Capt. Charles Wilkes' (who removed the Confederate agents Mason and Slidell from the British ship) other impetuous shenanigans were new to me. Gideon Welles had ordered Wilkes to patrol the coast of Brazil, as he expected the Confederate raider Alabama to appear. The flagrantly insubordinate Wilkes commandeered a sister ship (the faster and more powerful Vanderbilt) from a junior officer, and steamed off to the Caribbean. Sure enough, the Alabama showed up, and no one was there to intercept it. Welles blamed Wilkes for this failure. Raphael Semmes, commander of the "Alabama," wrote in his 1869 memoir that "If Mr. Welles had stationed a heavier and faster ship...he must have driven me off, or greatly crippled my movements." Wilkes was eventually court-martialed and suspended from the navy.

Lincoln spent the last afternoon of his life at the Washington Navy Yard. He and Mrs. Lincoln boarded the Montauk, which was tied up at the wharf, and had "a complete tour of the vessel, with the gaggle of officers trailing behind them...One of the officers present recalled that the president 'seemed very happy'....Lincoln invited 'as many of the officers and crew as could be spared' from their duties to join him as his guests at Ford's Theater that evening, and many of them accepted at once." In one of life's ironies, the autopsy of John Wilkes Booth was conducted aboard the Montauk two weeks later.

Round Table readers will enjoy and appreciate the author's descriptions of the failed attack on Charleston, the Red River campaign, and the "Peterhoff" seizure, another Anglo-American crisis provoked by that rogue, Capt. Charles Wilkes. They will surely, as I did, reinforce their evaluation of Lincoln as an initially flawed, but eventually magnificent, commander-in-chief.

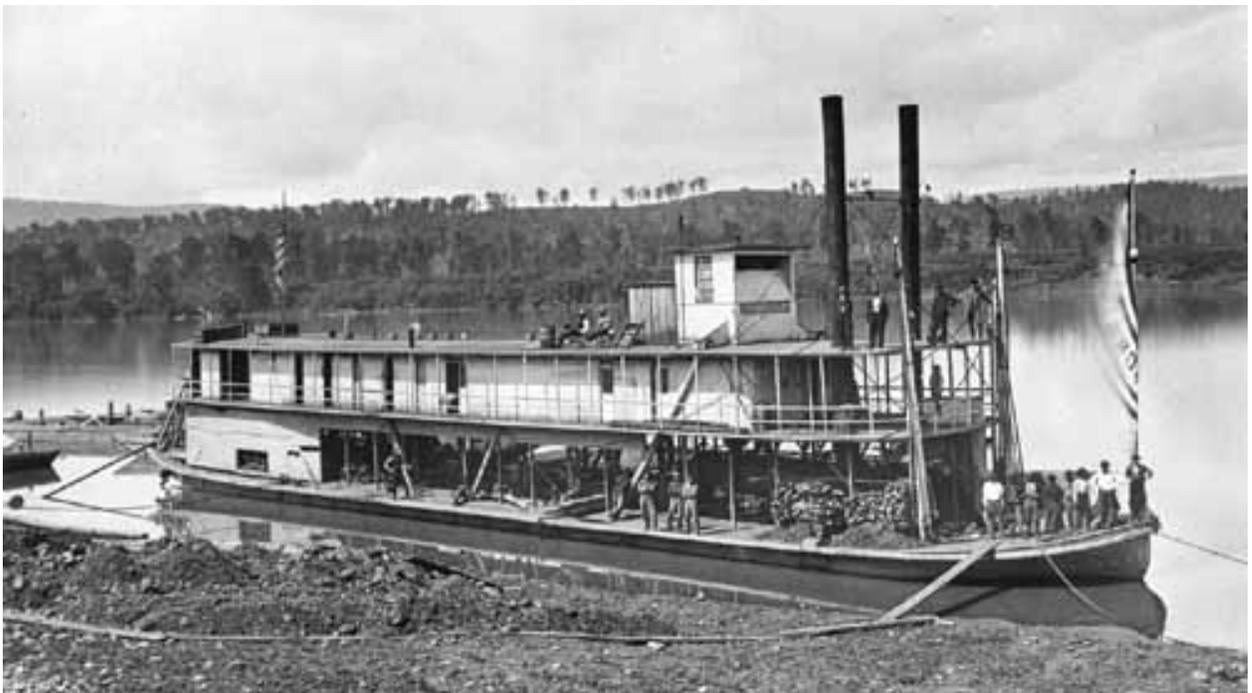
Book Review by M. Wolf

This primary source article from *Battles and Leaders* may be of particular interest to those members planning to attend the West Coast Civil War Conference on Chickamauga-Chattanooga in Fresno/Clovis on October, 23-25, 2009

The Little Steamboat that Opened the "Cracker Line."

The Story of the USS Chattanooga, a "home-made" steamboat built by the Quartermaster Department in October 1863 to carry supplies to General Grant's starving army at Chattanooga, Tennessee. As told by Assistant Quartermaster William Le Duc, who "commanded" the Chattanooga.

By William G. Le Duc, Brevet Brigadier-General and Assistant Quartermaster, U.S.V.



In answer to the urgent demand of Rosecrans for reinforcements, the Eleventh Corps (Howard's) and the Twelfth Corps (Slocum's) were sent from the east to his assistance under command of General Hooker. Marching orders were received on the 22d of September, and the movement was commenced from the east side of the Rappahannock on the 24th; at Alexandria the troops and artillery and officers' horses were put on cars, and on the 27th started for Nashville. On the 24 of October the advance reached Bridgeport, and on the 3d Hooker established headquarters at Stevenson, and Howard the headquarters of the Eleventh Corps at Bridgeport, then the limit of railroad travel, eight miles east of Stevenson.

The short reach of 26 miles of railroad, or 28 miles of road that ran nearly alongside the railroad, was now all that was necessary for the security of the important position at Chattanooga. But Rosecrans must first secure possession of the route, and then rebuild the long truss-bridge across the Tennessee River, and the trestle, one-quarter of a mile long and 113 feet high, at Whiteside, or Running Water, which would take longer than his stock of provisions and forage would last.

To supply an army of 40,000 or 50,000 men, having several thousand animals, in Chattanooga, by wagons, over country roads 28 miles long, in winter, would be a most difficult, but not an impossible task. Rosecrans determined to build some small, flat bottomed steamers, that could navigate the river from Bridgeport, and transport supplies to Kelley's Ferry or William's Island (either within easy reach from Chattanooga), which would enable him to supply his army with comfort until the railroad could be repaired. The enemy held Lookout Mountain, commanding both river and railroad above William's Island. This position was then deemed impregnable. The Confederates also had an outpost on Raccoon Mountain, commanding the river completely and also overlooking a road that skirted the river-bank on the north side for a short distance, thus making the long detour over Waldron's Ridge necessary to communication between Stevenson, Bridgeport, and Chattanooga. The river, where it passes through the Raccoon Range, is very rapid and narrow; the place is known as the Suck, and in navigating up stream the aid of windlass and shore-lines is necessary. Kelley's Landing, below the Suck, is the debouchment of a low pass through Raccoon Mountain, from Lookout Valley, and is within eight or ten miles of Chattanooga.

At Bridgeport I found Captain Edwards, Assistant Quartermaster, from Detroit, preparing to build a steamboat to navigate the river, by mounting an engine, boiler, and stern-wheel on a flat bottomed scow, to be used in carrying and towing up supplies until the completion of the railroad. I quote from my Diary:

Oct. 5, 1863.-General Hooker was over yesterday . . . and examined the little scow. He appreciated the probable importance of the boat, and ordered me to take it in hand personally and see that work was crowded on it as fast as possible. . . . We also looked over the grade of the Jasper Branch Railroad, which is above high-water mark, and must be used if supplies are sent on the north side of the river. He directed me to send him a report in writing, and a copy for General Rosecrans, of my observations and suggestions, and to go ahead and do what I could without waiting for written orders. I turned my attention to the boat. Captain Edwards has employed a shipbuilder from Lake Erie-Turner, an excellent mechanic, who has built lake vessels and steamers, but who is not so familiar with the construction of flat bottomed, light-draught river steamers. He has a number of ship and other carpenters engaged, with some detailed men from our own troops, making an efficient force. Men who can be serviceable as rough carpenters are abundant; not so with calkers, who will soon be needed, I hope. The frame of the boat is set on blocks, and is only five or six feet above the present water of the river. This mountain stream must be subject to sudden floods, which may make trouble with the boat.

Oct. 16.- . . . I found Turner, the master mechanic, in trouble with the hull of the little boat. The planking was nearly all on, and he was getting ready to calk and pitch her bottom when I went to Stevenson. The water had risen so rapidly that it was within sixteen or eighteen inches of her bottom planks when I returned, and Turner was loading her decks with pig-iron that the rebels had left near the bridge-head. He thought he would thus keep the hull down on the blocking, and after the waters went down would then go on and finish.

"But," I said, "Turner, if the planking gets wet, you cannot calk and pitch until it dries." "That's true; and it would take two weeks, and may be four, to dry her after she was submerged, and who knows how high it may rise and when it will abate!" "Then, Turner, what's the use of weighing it down with pig-iron. Rosecrans's army depends on this little boat: he must have supplies before two weeks, or quit Chattanooga. Can't you cross-timber your blocks, and raise the hull faster than the water rises?" "No; I've thought of that, and believe it would be useless to try it. Captain Edwards and I concluded the only thing we could do was to weigh it down with

pig-iron, and try to hold it, but if the water rises very high it will be swept away, pig-iron and all..... I went rapidly over to Edwards's tent . . . and found him in his bunk, overcome by constant work, anxiety, and despair. . . In answer to my question if nothing better could be done than weigh the hull down with pig-iron he said, "No; I've done all I can. I don't know what the water wants to rise for here. It never rose this way where I was brought up, and they're expecting this boat to be done inside of two weeks, or they will have to fall back!" I turned from his tent, and stood perplexed, staring vacantly toward the pontoon-bridge. I saw a number of extra pontoons tied to the shore - flat bottomed boats, 10 to 12 feet wide and 30 feet long, the sides 18 inches high. I counted them, and then started double-quick for the boatyard, halloing to Turner, "Throw off that iron, quick! Detail me three carpenters: one to bore with a two-and-half or three-inch anger, and two to make plugs to fill the holes. Send some laborers into all the camps to bring every bucket, and find some careful men who are not afraid to go under the boat and knock out blocks as fast as I bring them down a pontoon."

Turner, who had been standing silent and amazed at my excitement and rapid orders, exclaimed, with a sudden burst of conviction, "That's it! That's it! That'll do! Hurrah! We'll save her yet. Come here with me under the boat, and help knock out a row of blocks." And he jumped into the water up to his arm-pits, leaving me to execute my own orders. The pontoons were dropped down the river, the holes were bored in the end allowing them partly to fill, and they were then pulled under the boat as fast as the blocks were out. The holes were then plugged. and the water was dipped until they began to lift up on the bottom of the hull, and when all were under that were necessary, then rapid work was resumed with the buckets, till by 2 o'clock in the morning she was safely riding on the top of the rising waters. They are now calking and pitching her as rapidly as possible, and fixing beams for wheel and engines; as many men are at work as can get around on her to do anything.

Afternoon 16th.- General Howard rode out with me to examine the bridge work on Jasper road, let out to some citizens living inside our lines. They are dull to comprehend, slow to execute, and need constant direction and supervision. Showed General Howard the unfinished railroad grade to Jasper, and my estimate of the time in which it can be made passable for (*rail*) cars if we can get the iron (*rails*), and if not, of the time in which we can use it for wagons.

On October 19th, under General Rosecrans's orders to General Hooker, I was charged with the work on this road. 20th.- Commenced work on the Jasper branch. 22d.- General Grant and Quartermaster General Meigs arrived on their way to the front with Hooker and staff. I accompanied them as far as Jasper. During the ride I gave Grant what information I had of the country, the streams, roads, the work being done and required to be done on the Jasper branch, also on the steamboat. He saw the impossibility of supplying by the dirt road, and approved the building of the Jasper branch, and extending it if practicable to Kelley's; also appreciated the importance of the little steamboat, which will be ready for launching tomorrow or Saturday. General Meigs . . . approved of the Jasper branch scheme and gave me a message ordering the iron forwarded at once. 23d.- Steamboat ready to launch tomorrow. Railroad work progressing. 24th.- Steamer launched safely. 26th.-Work on boat progressing favorably; as many men are at work on her as can be employed.

Extract from a letter dated Nov. 1st, 1863:

I had urged forward the construction of the little steamer day and night, and started her with only a skeleton of a pilot house, without waiting for a boiler-deck, which was put on afterward as she was being loaded. Her cabin is now being covered with canvas. On the 29th she made her first trip, with two barges, 34,000 rations, to Rankin's Ferry, and returned. I loaded two

more barges during the night, and started at 4 o'clock A. M. on the 30th for Kelley's Ferry, forty-five miles distant by river. The day was very stormy, with unfavorable head-winds. We made slow progress against the wind and the rapid current of this tortuous mountain stream. A hog-chain broke, and we floated down the stream while repairing it with help of block and tackle. I ordered the engineer to give only steam enough to overcome the current and keep crawling up, fearful of breaking some steam-pipe connection, or of starting a leak in the limber half-braced boat. Had another break, and again floated helplessly down while repairing; straightened up once more, and moved on again--barely moved up in some places where the current was unusually strong; and so we kept on, trembling and hoping, under the responsibility of landing safely this important cargo of rations. Night fell upon us--the darkest night possible--with a driving rain, in which, like a blind person, the little boat was feeling her way up an unknown river.

Captain Edwards brought, as captain, a man named Davis, from Detroit, who used to be a mate on a Lake Erie vessel; but, as he was ignorant of river boats or navigation, could not steer, and knew nothing of wheel-house bells or signals, I could not trust him on this important first trip. The only soldier I could find who claimed any knowledge of the business of a river pilot was a man named Williams, who had steered on a steam-ferry running between Cincinnati and Covington. Him I put into the wheel-house, and as I had once owned a fourth interest in a steamboat, and fooled away considerable money and time with her, I had learned enough of the wheel to know which way to turn it, and of the bell-pulls to signal Stop, Back, and Go ahead. I went with Williams into the wheel-house, and put Davis on the bows, to keep a lookout. As the night grew dark, and finally black, Davis declared he could see nothing, and came back wringing his hands and saying we would "surely be wrecked if we did not land and tie up."

"There's a light ahead now, Davis, on the north shore." "Yes, and another on the south, I think." "One or both must be rebels' campfires." We tried to keep the middle of the river, which is less than musket shot across in any part. After a long struggle against wind and tide we got abreast of the first campfire, and saw the sentry pacing back and forward before it, and hailed: "Halloo! there. What troops are those!", Back came the answer in unmistakable Southern patois: "Ninth Tennessee. Run your old tea kittle ashore here, and give us some hot whisky."

The answer was not comforting. I knew of no Tennessee regiment in the Union service except one, or part of one, commanded by Colonel Stokes, and where that was I did not know. So we put the boat over to the other shore as fast as possible, and to gain time I called out: "Who's in command?" "Old Stokes, you bet." "Never mind, Williams, keep her in the middle. We're all right.- How far to Kelley's Ferry?" "Rite over thar whar you see that fire. They 're sittin' up for ye, I reckon." "Steady, Williams. Keep around the bend and steer for the light."

And in due time we tied the steamboat and barges safely to shore, with 40,000 rations and 39,000 pounds of forage, within five miles of General Hooker's men, who had half a breakfast ration left in haversacks; and within eight or ten miles of Chattanooga, where four cakes of hard bread and a quarter pound of pork made a three days' ration. In Chattanooga there were but four boxes of hard bread left in the commissary warehouses on the morning of the 30th [October]. About midnight I started an orderly to report to General Hooker the safe arrival of the rations. The orderly returned about sunrise, and reported that the news went through the camps faster than his horse, and the soldiers were jubilant, and cheering "The Cracker line open. Full rations, boys! Three cheers for the Cracker line," as if we had won another victory; and we had.

Source: "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War", Vol. III, 1884 Submitted by Bob Williams