



**Volume 50, No. 7**  
**July, 2010**  
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**Wed. of the month 2 weeks**  
**before the regular meeting.**  
**Items can be given the editor**  
**by hand, mail or e-mail.**

# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
Sacramento, CA 95865-4702  
<http://sacramentocwrt.com/>



## President's Message

Rose Browne proved herself a good judge of speaker quality when she asked her Professor Sherri Patton to give us a talk and her teacher certainly came through with flying colors employing her Socratic technique stimulating audience participation. Our members responded demonstrating quite a depth of knowledge in covering a difficult event during Reconstruction, in this case the Memphis riots of 1866 precipitated by the failure to pay the soldiers. The feedback I received indicated the discussion was thoroughly enjoyed. Many thanks to Ms. Patton for enlightening us and perhaps we'll be able to coax her to return at some future date.

Paul Ruud volunteered to issue name tags at the last meeting and I am hopeful that we will continue to wear them so we can all get to know each other. We have been blessed with many new members the past few years and it is our hope that the growth will continue. Our most recent new members are Brent and Jana Ten Pas and we are delighted to have them join us.

Once again the Gettysburg Battlefield is facing the threat of the investors who wish to build a gambling casino within one-half mile of that historic site. I thought this had been abandoned several years ago but recently received word that the proposal is back. Multiple historians including James McPherson, Ed Bearss, Garry Wills, and Jeffry Wert have recently joined the fray. The Civil War Preservation Society has once again publicized this news and asks the public who care to oppose this travesty to speak out in opposition. I intend to email all our members and friends in the Round Table Community how to protest this venture. For those not on that list feel free to contact me at **(916-485-1246)** for further information.

Our next speaker is our own Nancy Samuelson who several of us have known through the Renaissance Society, which encourages continued learning and meets at Sacramento State University. Ms. Samuelson is retired from a distinguished Air Force career, has extensive experience in teaching, writing and research, and I have enjoyed her discussions of the old west and her extensive knowledge of that history. I am certain we are all in for a treat when we are presented with other issues of the Reconstruction Era. Don't miss it and come early to join us for dinner and socializing. The date is July 14<sup>th</sup> at Sam's Hof Brau. See you there.

**Don Hayden—President**

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the June 9, 2010 meeting was \$3,508.76. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$54.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

**MINUTES**

Sacramento Civil War Round Table

June 9, 2010

Hof Brau Restaurant, 2500 Watt Ave, Sacramento

Attendance-33

Members-29

Don Hayden, President  
Silver Williams, Vice President  
George Foxworth, Treasurer  
Edie Keister, Secretary  
Joan Beitzel  
George Beitzel  
Roy Bishop  
Rose Browne  
Ardith Cnota  
Mitch Cnota  
Jerry Cress

Fred Elenbaas  
Bob Hanley  
Scottie Hayden  
Pam Hubbard  
James Juanitas  
Victor Le  
Jim Middleton, Editor  
Bruce Nothmann  
Anne Peasley  
Rick Peasley  
Horst Penning

Mark Penning  
Paul Ruud  
Nancy Samuelson  
Kris Scivoletto  
Nicholas Scivoletto  
Bob Williams  
John Zasso  
Guest-4  
Sean Keister  
Caitin Mee  
Sherri Patton  
Robert Schroeder

1. Meeting started at 7:00. Guest and members welcomed.
2. Box number was corrected for mailing fee for the November conference on our website- Box 903. Hotels are also on our site with rates.
3. Our guest speaker was teacher Sherri Patton introduced by member Rose Browne, a former student. Sherrie spoke on the "Memphis Riots of 1866." She explained the hows and whys of the riots and the aftermath of the investigation by Congress. She welcomed discussion and questions from the audience during her presentation, which really made for an interesting evening.
4. Raffle was held and meeting adjourned at 8:15.

Edie Keister  
Secretary

<b>Coming Programs 2010</b>		
July 14 <sup>th</sup>	Nancy Samuelson	Reconstruction
Aug. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Stanbery	The Cracker Line
Sept. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Lubas	Kansas/Missouri Border Wars
Oct. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Ray Cosyn	Lincoln's Funeral Train

## **A Report on the 142nd Anniversary of Memorial Day** by George W. Foxworth

The Elk Grove Civil War Round Table (EGCWRT) and the Union Veterans Union (UVU) celebrated the 142nd Anniversary of the First Memorial Day Observance on Sunday, May 30, 2010. The celebration took place at the historic Sacramento City Cemetery and various Civil War-related stops were visited on the tour. The tour was excellent and well-received by the attendees.

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day. There is also evidence that organized women's groups in the South were decorating graves before the end of the Civil War. Waterloo, New York was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966; it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings; each of those towns and every planned or spontaneous gathering of people to honor the war dead in the 1860s' tapped into the general human need to honor our dead, each contributed honorably to the growing movement that culminated in General John Logan giving his official proclamation in 1868. It is not important who was the very first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by Major General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his [General Order No. 11](#), and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. The first State to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890, it was recognized by all of the Northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war). It is now celebrated in almost every state on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 to ensure a three-day weekend for Federal holidays). However, several Southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19 in Texas; April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

The following EGCWRT members attended: George and Joan Beitzel, Bob and Jacque Bundy, Chuck Davis, and Joe Fabel. The following SCWRT members attended: George and Joan Beitzel, and George W. Foxworth.

Thank you EGCWRT and UVU for this moving celebration. We look forward to the 143<sup>rd</sup> Celebration.

# The Role of Military Engineers in the U.S. Civil War

## Part One: General Discussion

**Introduction:** Combat and Field Engineering in the Civil War is not a well documented subject, with little in the way of source material. Unlike the infantry, cavalry and artillery arms, there is no readily accessible book dedicated to the tale of each side's exploits in the area. Yet the engineering problems of the Civil War were very real, the more so because so much of the War was conducted in areas of sparsely populated practically uncharted wilderness. In this respect the Civil War was nothing like most of the Napoleonic Wars, in whose history the leaders of the armies were well versed. Where it was like those earlier wars, there appears to have been little ability to learn the lessons. The article can be briefly described as "Digging and Bridging", but in fact there is more to it than this; it will be argued that neglect of engineering foresight was a fatal factor for the South.

**What are Military Engineers?** Today it is said by instinct that military engineers have three interconnected roles: to enable armies: "to live, move and fight". In doing this they are needed throughout the battlefield, from the front to the back. But in 1861 the accepted role of engineers was to help the army to live and fight, but without much emphasis placed on enabling or facilitating movement. At this time there was a US Corps of Engineer officers. All cadets at West Point received a four year education that was heavily biased in engineering. Those who did best went into the Engineer Corps. The not so clever went into the Infantry. But it follows from their education that all West Point educated officers should have been thoroughly sensitized to engineering problems.

**US Military Engineers in 1860:** The engineer effort of the Pre-War US Army was

devoted to building formidable masonry forts to protect the approaches to ports and harbors. This was because the previous war that involved Americans fighting at home had been in 1812, when the eastern seaboard of the USA had been proven to be highly vulnerable to amphibious raiding by the British Royal Navy. Thus it was that the US Chief of Engineers Joseph Totten and other senior US engineering officers had spent many years on fort construction, with a work force of skilled civilian artisans, who worked for years on these guards at the entrances to USA. There were a handful of companies of engineers, with soldier artisans as well as officers; these artisans were skilled in the "biblical" trades of carpentry, masonry and waterworks, but they were the exception. They were brought together early in the War as the Regular Engineer Battalion of Sappers and Miners.

**The Outbreak of War:** Since the main thing the engineers did was construct forts, and since it was going to be a short war, no new ones would be needed. Again, while barracks would have been nice, there was no time, so it was tents for almost everyone. Once the first winter of the war arrived the armies did go into winter quarters, but that was achieved by letting the soldiers construct their own shanties, using the considerable do it yourself skills that existed in the armies. One final area where engineers should have had a role was in water supply, but this was generally neglected, with the result that lack of water was often a problem. Think of the defenders of Vicksburg, without enough wells dug; think of the attackers of Little Round Top who had to detach around 10% of their strength to fill empty water canteens in the midst of battle because they were fainting from thirst.

**Enabling Movement:** There were many ways of enabling movement in 1860. Among them were maps, roads, railways, sawmills, fords, bridges, ferries, ports and harbors. It can be argued that of these, maps are the most

important; because with accurate maps the movement of troops can be accurately planned so that units and formations arrive where they are wanted, when they are wanted. The story of Stonewall Jackson telling Jedediah Hotchkiss to "make him a map of the Valley", so that he knew all the back roads and short cuts, is very well known. However, there are far more examples of battles being fought without the benefit of good maps. Grant said at the start of his moves against Vicksburg that: "Rosecrans, when he left for his new assignment, had taken the best area maps". The history of the American Civil War is littered with moments when the movement of whole Corps was dependent upon the local knowledge of some young lad acting as a guide. In an advance it is expected that demolitions will have been carried out, and roads may need improvement, so a body of troops equipped to improve routes would have greatly speeded things up. But it seldom happened. Again, both sides recognized the value of railways as a means of resupply and of rapid troop movement, and both sides therefore saw the value of cutting the other side's railway. But the ability to repair railways quickly was not universally regarded as necessary. With wood as the most available construction material, sawmills had a strategic value, but there was no recognized need to invent a mobile sawmill so as to be able to cut timber at will. Everywhere that a road crossed a river there was usually a need for a bridge capable of carrying light loads such as marching troops, guns and wagons, or railway bridges capable of bearing the 50-80 tons of a train with 20 loaded boxcars. All of this was vital and all was ignored in the early days of the war.

**Helping an Army to Fight:** As stated above, enabling rapid movement was not seen as a priority at first. Where permanent fortifications existed they were seized and were generally held. In the south the forts were Union toeholds, and offered possible avenues of approach for later Union moves. Once the South had bombarded Fort Sumter

into submission it was used as the centre of the fixed defenses of Charleston, which Beauregard improved considerably, so that Charleston's seaward defenses held out against many attacks. Siege warfare was a factor, and several Union officers had been observers in the Crimean War, and thus had observed the defensive power of permanent defenses as well as how to carry out a formal siege operation. So it was that, in the Peninsular, Magruder was able to convince McClellan that he faced such powerful defenses that a formal siege would be necessary. McClellan settled down to a siege and waited for heavy siege artillery to be brought up, which cost him a month and gave the South time to rush reinforcements to Magruder. Both sides were aware of the power of water; Magruder's position was made more defensible, and his line shortened, by the use of flooding to protect his vulnerable flanks. But McClellan only used the shipping that had transported his army to the Peninsula as a logistic movement asset, and did not use it to bypass the land-based defenses being constructed by the Confederates.

**Infrastructure:** The infrastructure was decidedly unlike that of Europe. While there were railways, they were not a proper interconnected network. There was not a common gauge, which made movement over strategic distances more time-consuming than it might have been. That said, they were certainly essential for logistics, especially in the areas where the rivers flowed the wrong way, which was almost everywhere.

**The Landscape:** The landscape was similarly different to that of Europe. The towns were small and far apart, with seriously big rivers separating them. In the spring the snow melt made the rivers impassable for weeks at a time, and rivers could rise rapidly and without warning, as the Potomac did to the rear of Lee at Falling Waters after Gettysburg. The rivers usually burst their banks in the spring, and the further west you went, the worse it got. The

Mississippi was not bridged in the Vicksburg area until the 1930s; even the tributaries of the Mississippi were formidable in their own right. The Mississippi was also notorious for changing its channel from time to time in the spring. In all this there were few roads that deserved the name and which were capable of supporting the movement of artillery and wagons in the quantities that were needed. In the east the situation was better, with some plank roads and the occasional hard surfaced road, such as the Chambersburg Pike. But they were the exceptions. The space in between was covered by trees except where farmers had cleared the land of trees and rocks so that the land would bear crops. But generally the farms were islands of clear space in a landscape of trees.

**Tree Cover:** Trees are a real impediment to close order drill of the sort that the armies of 1861 learned. Command and control in the pre-radio era was largely by hand and flag signal, or at best by bugle call. This is infinitely easier to accomplish in flat, open ground, so battles tended to occur where there were fewer trees. In the Eastern Theatre there was rarely less than 50% of the terrain covered by trees, while the further west one went, the more infrequent clearings became. In May 1863, G. K. Warren, then the Chief of Topographical Engineers of the Army of the Potomac, reported: "From the slashings in front of the fortifications of Washington to those of Richmond, it is a region whose characteristic is a dense forest of oak or pine, with occasional clearings, rarely extensive enough to prevent the riflemen concealed in one border from shooting across to the other side, a forest which with but few exceptions, required the axmen to precede the artillery." On the Mississippi flood plain the problem was even worse, since the flat areas there were waterlogged, and trees are notoriously adept at growing vigorously when their roots are in water.

**Proportions of Engineers in an Army:** At the start of the War every person with any

previous military experience was given the task of training the volunteers as infantry and artillery. Those volunteers with equestrian skills were generally selected for training as cavalry, but hardly any thought was given to the raising and training of specialist engineer units, using the skills that many civilian tradesmen had. The conventional wisdom was that whenever engineering skills were needed there would always be enough appropriately skilled individuals in any unit to be able to construct any field structure, given time and tools. One of the more sensible things that Hooker did, and he actually did quite a lot of sensible things, was to acquire and keep available entrenching tools, shovels, picks and axes, 20,000 tools all told. This happened in late February 1863. But when engineering was executed by temporarily assigned troops it meant that the unit was tackling each task for the first time, which inevitably meant that they did not care for the tools, they did not task organize, nor did they invent prefabricated solutions. All in all they did not improve with time and experience. The largest dedicated engineer formation that is mentioned in the Official Record is the Union Engineer Brigade. This appears to have been a two regiment strong formation, around 1400 strong. As an Army of the Potomac asset, it was not assigned to any of the corps of the army, but was held centrally, to be deployed by the Army staff. By way of comparison, the artillery was generally allocated to the corps level of command, with a substantial reserve being held at army level. Similarly, the cavalry amounted to around 10% of most armies. Remaining with the theme of specialized units, in the Western Theatre Grant had in his army the "Engineer Regiment of the West". This unit appears to have spent most of the Vicksburg Campaign on the west bank of the Mississippi improving roads and tracks for the logistic trains. Overall, the Union employed something less than 1% of its strength as engineer troops. The Confederacy devoted even fewer resources to dedicated engineer units. The need for a standing, permanently

assigned engineer unit was only agreed to by the South after the near disaster at Falling Waters in the summer of 1863. Even then, the Confederacy never assigned more than 1% of its manpower to employment as engineers in the East, and there is little evidence of any dedicated engineer units in the West. In contrast to this severe lack of engineers was the superfluity of artillery. It is of note that there were very few, if any, occasions when it was possible to bring it all to bear, because either the crowded terrain, or the shoddy command and control, or both, did not allow for it. Artillery was always a large proportion of any army, almost always 10% of the overall strength. It can be argued that had just one artillery unit in ten been reenrolled as engineers, this move would have provided the men, wagons and horses to more than double the available specialist engineers. As it was, the total proportion of engineers never reached even 2% of the total strength of any Civil War Army.

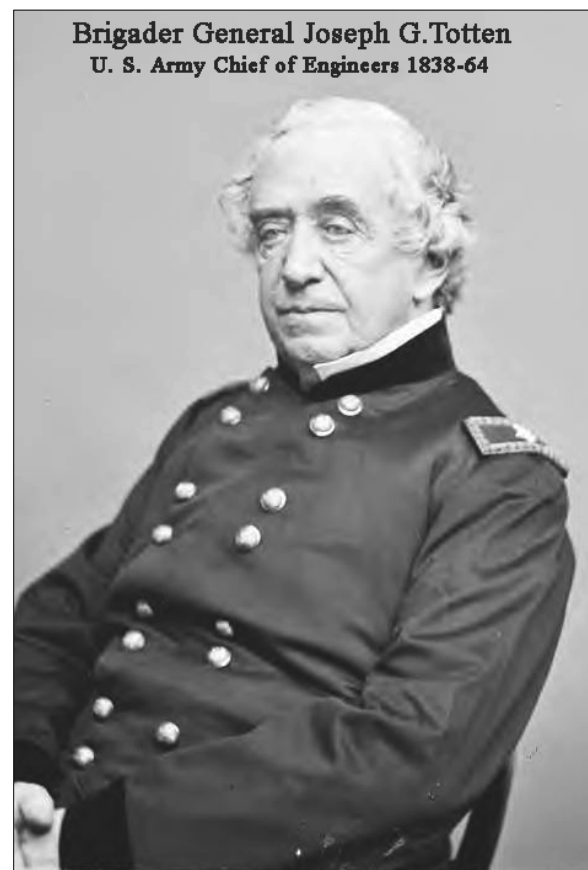
**Early days of the War:** At first both sides raced to raise infantry, artillery and cavalry units. With a short war apparently in prospect there appeared to be no need for engineers. In the days preceding First Bull Run, the retreating Confederates felled trees across the roads, which severely hampered the advancing Union troops. But that aside, the battle was an engineering non-event. Neither side entrenched properly; neither side really knew the ground, and both sides used the topography "as found", without attempting to alter it in any way. A year on, in the Peninsular/Seven Days Campaign, the Union still had no prefabricated engineer resources permanently assigned to the field army to enable them to move quickly to overcome difficult terrain. Thus they had to construct ramshackle bridges such as the "Grapevine Bridge" to cross rivers that they should have known bisected their positions. While the Confederates did buy valuable time by the construction of substantial field defenses, their lack of accurate road maps prevented them from putting together coordinated

attacks. There were several golden opportunities to maneuver on to the exposed flanks of the Union Army, but they all foundered due to the lack of a clear idea of the road network east of Richmond. In short, although the action was within earshot of the bells of the churches of Richmond, the Confederate High Command did not know where roads intersected, if indeed they did intersect. This lack of maps became a battle-losing factor, resulting in uncoordinated frontal attacks when coordinated converging attacks were ordered.

**Note:** This article is adapted from a presentation made by British Major General & Chief Engineer John Drewienkiewicz, retired, to the UKACWRT in London on 2 April 2004.

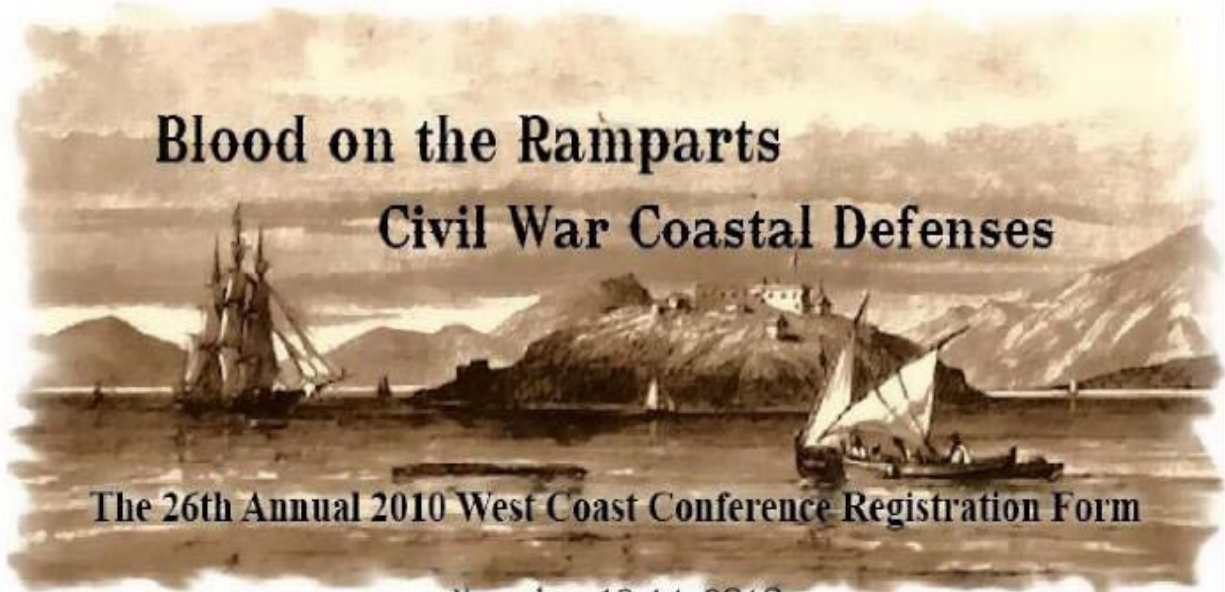
*Part Two* of the material provides brief discussions of Case Histories and Conclusions, and may be included in a later edition of the SCWRT *Battle Cry*.

Submitted by R. A. Williams, 9 June 2010



# Blood on the Ramparts

## Civil War Coastal Defenses



### The 26th Annual 2010 West Coast Conference Registration Form

November 12-14, 2010

War Memorial Building, 401 Van Ness, San Francisco, CA 94102  
Across the street from San Francisco City Hall

The registration fee of \$199 includes dinner and lecture on Friday; lunch, dinner, and a full day of lectures on Saturday; and on Sunday, transportation from Alcatraz to Fort Point, the Presidio and Fort Mason, including a box lunch.

Register early - prior to October 1, 2010 - and get the reduced rate of \$179.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ For confirmation and special announcements

Friday only (includes dinner) - Nov. 12	\$75	Guest meals Friday \$40
Saturday (lunch, dinner and lectures) Nov. 13	\$100	Guest lunch Saturday \$15; dinner \$30
Sunday (activities, bus, box lunch) Nov. 14	\$35	No guest meals on Sunday
Sunday only	\$50	
All three days	\$199	

Check here if you are attending Sunday \_\_\_\_ We need this information for bus reservations.

Make checks for the days you will be attending payable to:

**FOCWA or West Coast Civil War Conference**

Send registration form and check to:  
Brad Schall, Treasurer, FOCWA  
P.O. Box 983, Lincoln, CA 95648