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# 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

The Civil War was not a simple fight between two stable blocks of like-minded states. Though it was the North-South division that finally rent the country, American factors had never been as clean as a solid South and a unitary North. Southerners were less sure of secession, and the rest of the country less committed to union, than Americans today often suppose. Each side struggled to hold together; each war effort was burdened by the need to suppress internal and lesser civil wars. The War Between the States was a war within them as well.

The firing on Sumter produced the unity that had long eluded the North. "The South's attack made the North a Union." "One intense aspiring sentiment of patriotism has fused all other passions in its fiery heat." The moment the Stars and Stripes came down from the Sumter flagpole, old divisions seemed to melt away. Democrats and Republicans disagreed about what the flag stood for, but for a moment, none of that mattered. Even Lincoln recalled party founder Andrew Jackson's insistence that the Union had to be preserved.

**Dennis Kohlmann, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
Wednesday, July 14, 2021  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 0:**

**MEMBERS – 0:** No meeting and no Members.

**GUESTS – 0:** No meeting and no Guests.

1. No meeting. Meetings are cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19. The Hof Brau is open to decreased inside dining but closes at 6:30 PM.
2. The next Board Meeting is unknown at this time.

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

**Treasurer's Report**

The cash balance on July 14th was \$4,426.16. No meeting and no raffle.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

# Coming Programs for 2021 & 2022

Date	Speaker	Topic
August 11th	"No Speaker"	"No Topic"
September 8th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
October 13th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
November 10th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
December 8th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
January 12th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"

## 2021 Membership

The 2021 membership renewal was due as of January 1, 2021. The dues are \$30.00 and you can renew and send to the Treasurer through the mail. For all checks, make them payable to **Sacramento Civil War Round Table** and send them to:

George W. Foxworth  
9463 Salishan Court  
Sacramento, CA 95826-5233

**NOTE: 2020 memberships are good for 2021 due to COVID-19.**

## NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the first of each month for that month's **Battle Cry**. However, you can submit articles at anytime. Please submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

[gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net)

The **Battle Cry** is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization or the Editor. The official address of this organization is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 254702, Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check the web for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

## **Friends of Civil War Alcatraz**

The Friends of Civil War Alcatraz (FOCWA) is a group of individuals interested in the Civil War history of Alcatraz island. We are made up of teachers, veterans, historians, and others who like to research and read about how Alcatraz became an important Fort for the protection of San Francisco during the Civil War.

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

We also visit schools and organizations to tell that early history of the Island, long before it became the notorious Federal prison. And we conduct living history days twice a year, in conjunction with the American Civil War Association, to give the public an idea of what the Island was like as a Union Fort.

Submitted by Steve Johnson

## Dr. Jacob Mendes Da Costa

“Marranos” were Jews who had converted to Christianity in order to avoid gruesome deaths by torture during the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal. They continued to practice Judaism secretly, always knowing that being caught would consign them to the flames of the auto de fe. The Da Costa family escaped the Inquisition by fleeing to England in the Sixteenth Century. They claimed to be of Spanish heritage, as Portuguese at this time, was a euphemism for “Jew.” From Europe, they traveled to the West Indies, where they earned their wealth as bankers and plantation owners.



Jacob Mendes Da Costa was born on February 7, 1833 to Rahma and Yonatan Mendes Da Costa, in Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The island tradition was to be educated abroad. When Jacob was 4 years old, his family moved to Europe where Jacob, his three brothers- Charles, Albert, and Robert, and sister, Rebecca, were privately tutored. The family soon returned to Saint Thomas but left Jacob and his younger brother, Charles, behind in the care of family friends. The boys attended an elite private gymnasium in Dresden, Germany. Jacob was well versed in the Classics. He spoke German and French fluently and showed great promise for a future in the Foreign Service by already being able to read four other languages. But by age sixteen, he decided to enter the medical profession instead.

Jacob's father had died while he was away at school in Germany. By the time he returned home, his mother shed her Judaism and converted to Christianity. She moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1846, and remarried. Jacob followed her there and enrolled at Jefferson Medical College. After graduating with honors in 1852, he returned to Europe to study under some of the finest medical clinicians of the time. In

1853, he opened his own practice in Philadelphia.

In 1860, Jacob married Sarah Frederica Brinton. To satisfy his bride, Jacob converted and agreed to raise his children as Episcopalians. Sarah and Jacob had two sons, John, who lived a scant two months in 1865, and Charles Frederick, who went on to become a lawyer.

The family seemed to have a tradition of conversion, going back hundreds of years. Da Costa's maternal uncle, Rahma's brother, was Florida Senator David Levy Yulee. He had converted many years before upon his own marriage. He adamantly denied any affiliation with the Jews. Da Costa and Yulee's cousin, Judah Benjamin, another Jew from the Caribbean, never converted but had no connection with any Jewish community. Because Yulee always denied his Jewish heritage, Benjamin was credited as being the first Jewish senator.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Jacob began working as Acting Assistant Surgeon for the U.S. Army at both Saterlee and Turner's Lane Hospitals in Philadelphia. Private Joseph Work had come to see Dr. Da Costa, complaining that moments before the Battle at Gettysburg began, his heart had "given out." Da Costa began to see the same symptoms—chest pains, breathlessness, palpitations, tremors, sudden rises in pulse rates and sweating, and fatigue in the over four hundred young soldiers that he came to examine over the next few years. He came to realize that these symptoms were not a physical disease but signs of a "cardiac neurosis", an anxiety disorder. Da Costa was adamant that the soldiers not be referred to as "cowards" or "crazy."

There was no psychological assessment for soldiers, as we know it today, before, during or immediately after the Civil War. For years, doctors had pooh-poohed men with "mental" complaints, diagnosing them with "nostalgia" or "melancholy," both considered mental illnesses. Dr. Da Costa was one of the first to realize that constant exposure to lack of sleep, bad food or hunger, loneliness, hard marching, and physical illness eventually took its toll on the mind which would then lead to a physical breakdown. When examined, patients showed no physical abnormalities yet persisted in their complaints of a physical nature. Da Costa termed the condition "soldier's heart" or "irritable heart." But it quickly became known as "Da Costa syndrome" (neuro-circulatory asthenia), a type of emotional shock that long-term Army service could wreak on the most hardened veteran. When Civil War soldiers said, "War broke me," they were not talking of their physical beings but of the persons they once had been.

Men suffering from Da Costa syndrome were not always pitied by their doctors. Some soldiers were sent to the Government Hospital for the Insane while others were accused of "malingering" and shirking their duties. Many of these men were sent back into battle. They were considered a source of shame to their families. "Irritable heart" finally became an accepted defense in some Court Martials where men had begun to act erratically. It took over one hundred fifty years for P.T.S.D. to be accepted as a valid illness.

In 1864, Da Costa published *Medical Diagnosis With Special Reference to Practical Medicine*, which was reissued 9 times during his lifetime and published in several foreign languages. It was the first medical diagnosis guide book of its kind. Jacob had become highly respected and was known as the “Physician’s Physician.” In 1871, Da Costa came out with his “...observation on the diseases of the heart noticed among soldiers.”

Da Costa found that soldiers usually tended to recover after rest and removal from the strenuous activities and lifestyles that had caused their conditions in the first place. Dr. Da Costa usually refrained from prescribing any opiates to his patients as he didn’t want them to become “opium eaters.” It was noted that sales of patent medicines “for the nerves” went up dramatically after the War to battle scarred veterans trying to assuage their memories.

After the War, Da Costa took a position teaching clinical medicine at Jefferson Medical College where he would remain for the next 35 years. His classes were wildly popular. It was said that he was “the most able teacher of his time in the Eastern United States.” He was so highly revered that in June of 1884, he was called in by a neighbor who was hosting a visit from Ulysses S. Grant. Grant was suffering excruciating pain in his throat. He believed it had been caused by a scratch from a peach pit. Da Costa discovered a cancerous tumor on the roof of the President’s mouth and referred him for further treatment. Grant’s physician was in Europe so Grant put off his doctor visit for months, allowing the cancer to grow and worsen.

Jacob regularly attended Church services and people said that he was a devout Christian. His wife, Sarah, died after a long illness on December 6, 1889.



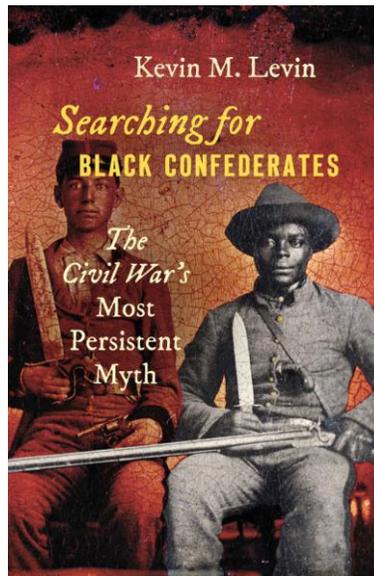
Dr. Jacob Mendes Da Costa died of heart failure on September 11, 1900. He is buried at Woodlands Cemetery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Submitted by Judith Breitstein**

# Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth

by Kevin M. Levin. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2019. Illustrations. 240 pp. \$30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4696-5326-6.

Reviewed by Kelly D. Mezurek (Walsh University), Published on H-CivWar (February, 2020), Commissioned by G. David Schieffler.



Kevin M. Levin skillfully demonstrates how and why contested ideas about race, slavery, and the causes of the American Civil War continue to provide the mythical Black Confederate soldier fertile grounds in which to thrive. In *Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth*, he methodically challenges the widespread claims that up to one hundred thousand Black men served as soldiers in an integrated Confederate army. Levin carefully explains how for over 150 years various groups of Americans have continued to "fight" the Civil War as they tried, and continue to try, to make sense of their own lived experiences. He does so by analyzing how the convergence of collective and historical memory has been complicated by the multiple meanings and consequences of public and popular memories, concepts also explored by Barbara A. Gannon's recent work, *Americans Remember Their Civil War* (2017).

Levin begins by exploring the various roles of African Americans who were present among Confederate officers and soldiers during the War. Although the Black men had little if any say about their participation as camp slaves, they used the opportunity to test their enslavers' control. The author explains the context for why enslaved and free Black people would have been on, or more likely near, the battlefields. He then carefully explains the ill-fated March 1865 attempt by the Confederate Government to enroll Black men into military service. Although the Confederate army's actual use of African Americans provided the foundation for the

creation of the Black soldier myth, Levin deftly concludes, "The very question of whether enslaved people could be made into soldiers serves as a reminder that camp servants, cooks, musicians, or others attached to the army were not recognized as such" (p. 39).

In the chapter "Camp Slaves and the Lost Cause," Levin interrogates how the portrayal of African American men shifted from "loyal slaves" to faithful camp servants in late Nineteenth-Century Confederate commemorations and remembrance. Using their own words, celebrations, and artifacts, he shows how ex-Confederates presented African American service through the lens of the faithful and loyal servant. Levin then provides an excellent lesson on how to interpret and use the Civil War pensions provided by five former Confederate states, although such document titles as "Application of Indigent Servants of Soldier or Sailor of the Late Confederacy" should have stopped at least some of the pervasive misrepresentations of such sources.

The Lost Cause camp became even more defensive of their accounts after historians, influenced by the civil rights movements and the growing interest in "history from the bottom up," increasingly placed slavery and emancipation at the center of scholarship on the causes and consequences of the Civil War. Heritage groups transformed the loyal enslaved Black men into faithful soldiers. Levin persuasively demonstrates how, beginning in the 1970s, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, along with other organizations, such as the Daughters of the Confederacy, developed the myth of the Black Confederate soldier to further justify their Lost Cause narrative. This allowed them to make the false claims that the people and events they commemorated were not grounded in racism and White supremacy. Levin adamantly asserts that the concept of Black Confederates would have been inconceivable to those who lived through the War and its immediate aftermath.

The impact of new scholarship encouraged in part by the nation's commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, 2011 - 15, has reinvigorated heritage groups to further entrench their claims of an honorable Confederate cause. Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, individuals and groups seeking to defend Confederate battle flags and monuments have misinterpreted and continue to misappropriate the role and actions of African Americans during the War. This has contributed to strained race relations in the United States and has led to increased violence, sometimes deadly, leading historian David Blight to refer to the "mythical problem" of the Black Confederate soldier as "a lethal narrative" (book jacket). As Levin carefully explains, defenders of the Lost Cause supported their claims using information gathered from inaccurate textbooks, museum interpretations, and content frequently disseminated across the internet. He warns that this misrepresentation will most likely continue due to poor digital media literacy and the lack of interpretive and analytical skills required to understand historical sources. And because the Lost Cause narrative is often deeply entwined with contemporary political and social agendas, the myth of African American soldiers who fought for the Confederate Army became "part of the standard narrative of the Civil War" (p.

141). This is further complicated by the participation of a few "modern-day Black Confederates," who, according to Levin, demonstrate "that African Americans have long played a role in legitimizing the loyal slave and Black Confederate myth" (pp. 162, 169).

Throughout the book, the perceived, expected, and demanded loyalty of African American men to their enslavers, the Confederacy, and the Lost Cause is an integral part of Levin's analysis. Yet the author does not explicitly articulate how the concept itself changes, or not, over time, especially as applied by White supremacists to enslaved peoples, freedmen, and later African American citizens. It is surprising that Levin chose not to engage the historiography of loyalty precisely because of his skillful and trenchant analysis of the creation and perpetuation of myths about slavery, the role of Black men in the military, and the larger implications of the Civil War.

Overall though, this excellent work deserves the high praise garnered in the few months since its release. The six tightly written chapters in Levin's book, composed with incisive analysis and important context, are based on extensive research that he assessed as he shared his findings and interpretations on his well-known website, Civil War Memory ([cwmemory.com](http://cwmemory.com)). In addition to an introduction and conclusion, the volume includes a bibliography, endnotes, the index, and eighteen images.

This book should be required reading for graduate students and would be valuable in upper division undergraduate courses. But it is with the general population that I see the most potential for impact. Although Civil War remembrance is a difficult subject to engage across audiences that continue to contest it, Levin's social media presence has made significant contributions. His ability to connect his online scholarship, this book, and multiple audiences will surely continue to set a high bar for how historians might seek to engage the larger public.

Levin has made a significant contribution to the scholarship on the American Civil War and with this volume secures his place as one of our most important memory scholars. His methodical evaluation of memory and the Black Confederate myth demonstrates ways we can and should explain how and why fabricated historical narratives emerge and are maintained. More importantly, historians must integrate the varied lived experiences of African Americans so that we can have, as Levin argues for, "an honest national conversation about the history and legacy of slavery" and "deteriorating race relations" that continue to affect the United States today (pp. 11, 9).

**Submitted by Bruce A. Castleman, Ph.D.**

# 2021 WEST COAST CIVIL WAR CONFERENCE

## November 5 - 7, 2021



**WYNDHAM GARDEN HOTEL, 5090 East Clinton Way, FRESNO, CA 93727-1506, (1-559-252-3611 or 1-559-494-4992), \$103.00 per night, or [wydhamguestreservations.com](http://wydhamguestreservations.com), (Fresno Airport).**

### **“Combat Strategy & Tactics; Lee vs Grant in 1864.”**

**HOSTED BY THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CWRT. For more information, see Website: [SJVCWRT2.com](http://SJVCWRT2.com)**

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**Gordon Rhea;  
Eric Wittenburg;  
Chris Mackowski;  
Jim Stanbery, MA.; Professor (Retired) &  
Brian Clague.**

**TOPICS: In Progress.**

**Ron Vaughan, MA.;** (Conference Coordinator: [ronvaughan@prodigy.net](mailto:ronvaughan@prodigy.net)).

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**ATTENDEE REGISTRATION: \$200.00 PER PERSON** for Weekend, including meals. Breakfast on your own. Coffee, water, and pastries provided during the Conference. (Non participants who wish Dinner Friday or Saturday nights: \$30.00 each meal.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Member of which CWRT/ORG \_\_\_\_\_

Address Check to **San Joaquin Valley CWRT.**

Send Check and Registration to: **Ron Vaughan (Conference Coordinator), 730 East Tulare Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274-4336.**