



**Volume 62, No. 8
August, 2022**

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Battle Cry

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



President's Message

No Message until further notice.

Vacant, President

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
Wednesday, July 13, 2022
DENNY'S RESTAURANT, 3520 AUBURN BOULEVARD, SACRAMENTO

ATTENDANCE – 15:

MEMBERS – 15: George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; Mark Carlson, Arnd Gartner, Ron Grove, Wayne & Nina Henley, Christopher & Rebecca Highsmith, Kim Grace Long, Joseph & Michelle Matalone, Bernie Quinn, Program Director; Nicholas Scivoletto, Steve Shiflett, & Peggy Tveden.

GUESTS – 00: There were no guests.

1. Program Director Bernie Quinn led the Pledge. Program Director Quinn recognized new members and guests. He also announced the 2022 West Coast Conference in Fresno, CA in November. The raffle was conducted by Nicholas Scivoletto.
2. Program Director Quinn was the speaker. His topic was "Lee's Sharpshooters" by Major William S. Dunlop.
3. In early 1864, Robert E. Lee began experimenting with tactical innovations for the upcoming spring campaign. To this end, he ordered the organization of sharpshooter battalions from McGowan's Brigade. William S. Dunlop was the Commander of the Sharpshooter Battalion formed from the 1st, 12th, 13th, and 14th South Carolina Regiments, and Orr's Rifles.
4. Three sharpshooters' companies were formed; each company had about 60 men.
5. Robert E. Lee's decision didn't turn the tide of the War, but it did give rise to the specialized soldier whose "intelligence, marksmanship, and unfaltering courage" was remarkable.
6. The Sharpshooters served at the Battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, Hanover Junction, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Hatcher's Run, and more.
7. Major General John Sedgwick was killed on May 9, 1864 by a sharpshooter at Spotsylvania after his staff asked him to take cover. (General Sedgwick refused.) The identity of the marksman who fired the shot remains a mystery, although at least five Confederate soldiers later claimed responsibility. Benjamin Medicus Powell is believed by many to be the man who fired the shot over a half mile distance. Powell said that he shot a person on horseback. However, Lt. Colonel Martin Thomas McMahon, the General's Chief-of-Staff, said that they were on foot when General Sedgwick was shot.
8. After the Battle of Five Forks in April 1865, the Sharpshooters were disbanded.
9. The next Board Meeting is Wednesday, August 10, 2022.

George W. Foxworth for Vacant, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance on July 13th was \$4,596.91. The raffle brought in \$26.00. Many thanks to the members.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Coming Programs for 2022 & 2023

Date	Speaker	Topic
August 10th	"Arnd Gartner"	"Union Intelligence Services"
September 14th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
October 12th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
November 9th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
December 14th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"
January 11th	"To Be Determined"	"To Be Determined"

2022 Membership

The 2022 membership renewal was due as of January 1, 2022. 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

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:

gwoffoxworth@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.

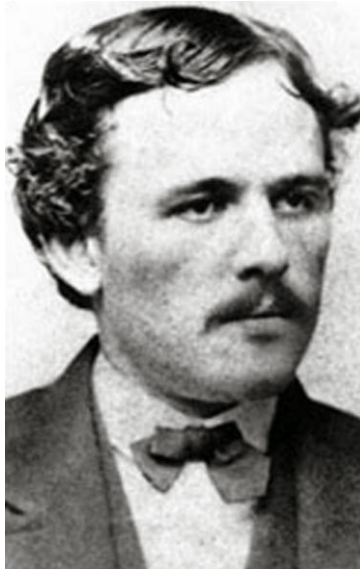
Some of our members are also National Park Service volunteers who assist the rangers in giving public programs, in uniform, about the Union soldiers stationed on the Island and interesting events that occurred there between 1859 and 1865. We publish a newsletter every month, which can be found on our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

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

Louis J. Weichmann

Louis J. Weichmann was born in Baltimore, Maryland on September 29, 1842 to German immigrant parents. The family moved from Baltimore to Washington, DC and then to Philadelphia, where Louis spent most of his youth. Though he had hoped to become a druggist, he followed the wishes of his mother and, in 1859, entered Saint Charles College in Maryland to begin studying for the priesthood. While at school, he befriended another young seminarian, John Harrison Surratt, who had also entered the seminary at his mother's request. Both boys grew disenchanted with the religious life and by July 1862, they had left school and settled in DC. Louis began teaching at Saint Matthew's School for Boys while John filled his recently dead father's shoes by working at the Surratt Tavern and Post Office and as a courier for the Confederacy. In 1864, Louis was offered a more lucrative job in Edwin Stanton's War Department as a Clerk in the Division of Commissary General of Prisoners.



John Surratt was not doing as well. His mother, unable to pay her husband's debts, was forced to rent her tavern and post office for \$500 a year to John Lloyd, an ex-policeman, bricklayer, drunkard, and Confederate sympathizer. The Surratts moved to another property they had purchased in 1853, at 541 "H" Street NW in Washington, and began operating it as a boarding house. In November 1864, John invited his friend, Louis Weichmann, to lodge with his family. Louis was delighted, having felt "desolatingly lonely" in the house where he was currently boarding. He later testified that from the day he moved in, he was "treated like a son" by Mrs. Surratt.

Perhaps that's what made what was to come afterwards so terrible.

Louis shared a room with John, who was frequently away blockade running. He began to meet a strange cast of rough looking men and heavily veiled women, all deemed to be "friends" of the Surratts. One was the wildly popular and handsome young actor,

John Wilkes Booth. Both Mrs. Surratt and her daughter, Annie, seemed smitten with him.

On April 11, 1865, Weichmann accompanied Mrs. Surratt to drop off some packages and collect her mail and rent from John Lloyd. Three days later, on Good Friday, April 14, Louis was given half a day off from work to attend church services. Mrs. Surratt sent him to Howard's Stables to rent a horse and buggy and accompany her once again on the two-hour trip to Surrattsville. This time, Mary Surratt carried binoculars given to her by John Wilkes Booth. She had already delivered rifles and two bottles of whiskey and had requested John Lloyd to hide them until called for.

John Wilkes Booth was at the tavern when the pair arrived. Louis observed a half an hour tête a tête between Mrs. Surratt and the actor. That evening, Booth stopped by the boarding house around 9:00 PM. After he departed, Louis observed that Mary seemed "very nervous, agitated and restless."

Later that night, John Wilkes Booth and his conspirators, tried to topple the United States Government, first by assassinating the President of the United States and then attempting to murder Secretary of State William Seward and Vice President Andrew Johnson.

Early on April 17, the police arrived at Surratt House. Everyone in the House was taken in and held under suspicion of aiding in the murder of President Lincoln. Louis knew that the conspiracy trial would be a death penalty case and he would be suspect as he had met and spent time with all of the conspirators. His freedom, perhaps his life, was in jeopardy. He agreed to testify about the goings on at H Street and was released quickly. Louis had grown close with Mary Surratt, but he believed, as did the rest of the country, that the Government would never execute a woman.

Louis Weichmann and John Lloyd, Mary's tenant, were the Government's Star Witnesses against Mrs. Surratt.

On July 7, 1865, Mary Surratt was hung, alongside David Herold, George Atzerodt, and Lewis Powell, for conspiring to murder President Abraham Lincoln. Months later, many in the country became uncomfortable with the hanging of a woman. A scapegoat needed to be found. Rumors began to spread that Weichmann and Lloyd had lied to save their own necks.

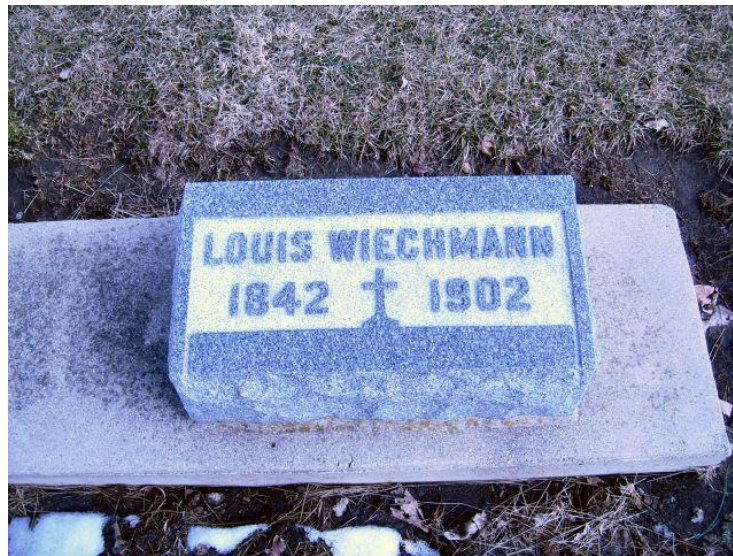
Louis complained that his family had become pariahs. His brother had been dismissed from the Seminary because Louis had testified against his Catholic landlady, Mrs. Surratt. Louis was harangued as he walked the streets of Washington DC. People hissed "snitch" at him. The Government offered Louis a job as Clerk of the Customs House in Philadelphia. He started packing.

Weichmann's life in Philadelphia went well. On October 25, 1870, he married Anna Johnson, a Temperance activist, at Grace Episcopal Church. She was thirty-two years-old, educated, and out-spoken. The marriage didn't take. By 1880, they were living

apart, though they never divorced. Anna took in boarders to support her family.

In 1886, Weichmann followed his family to Anderson, Indiana. He lived with his married sister, Wilamena O’Crawley, and her husband. He began working as a stenographer, eventually opening his own business school. But in the summer of 1894, he closed the school for six months as he was suffering from, “nervous prostration.”

Never able to get over his role in the death of Mrs. Surratt, Louis feared that John Surratt was out to kill him. He never ventured out alone at night. He never stood or sat with his back to a door and always carried a small derringer. On his deathbed, he wrote a long affidavit swearing that his testimony at the conspiracy trial had been the truth.



Louis Weichmann died of “extreme nervousness” on June 5, 1902 at the home of his sister. He is buried in Saint Mary’s Cemetery in Anderson, Indiana.

John Lloyd died after a fall from a scaffold on December 18, 1865. He is buried approximately 150 feet away from the grave of Mary Surratt at Mount Olivet Cemetery.

John Surratt returned to this country in 1867, was tried and set free. He made a living for a while giving lectures on the conspiracy. John always claimed that Weichmann was a “...baseborn perjurer; a murderer of the meanest hue.” He insisted that Louis lied after the government put “a noose ...around his neck, threw the rope over a beam, lifted (him) off the floor and threatened to hang him if he didn’t testify.

On June 17, 1869, Annie Surratt married William Tonry, a well-respected chemist working for the Army Surgeon General. Four days after the wedding, he was fired from his Government job. The couple moved to Baltimore and struggled financially. Annie’s hair turned white while she was still in her thirties. She struggled with her nerves and took to her bed for weeks at a time. She died of kidney disease, age 61, on October 24, 1904. She is buried next to her mother, in an unmarked grave.

Submitted by Judith Breitstein

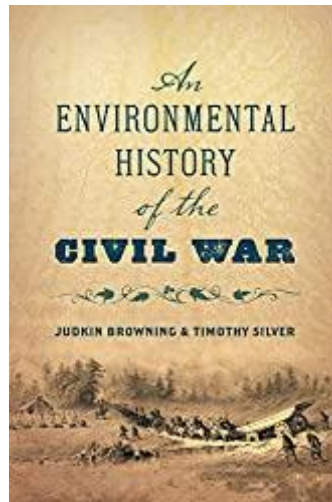


2020-089 9 October 2020

Review by Jonathan Beard, New York City. *An Environmental History of the Civil War*
By Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver

Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. 272. ISBN 978-1-4696-5538-3.
Descriptors: Volume 2020, 19th Century, US Civil War, Environmental.

There are thousands upon thousands of books on the American Civil War, but only a handful mention the Pleistocene epoch (2.4 million–11,700 years ago). *An Environmental History of the Civil War*, by military historian Judkin Browning and environmental historian Timothy Silver (both Appalachian State Univ.) begins shortly after Fort Sumter, but ranges from the geologic past to the War's battlefields as they are preserved today.



Chapter 1, "Sickness: Spring–Winter 1861," concerns the effects of diseases—childhood, tropical, and venereal—that afflicted the armies assembling to fight America's deadliest conflict. Training camps, we learn, became incubators for major outbreaks of measles and mumps, because thousands of young men, many from rural areas, who had not been exposed to these childhood diseases were suddenly training, eating, and sleeping together in tent cities. Two motifs introduced here recur in later chapters: first, the Civil War was reciprocal. Northern commanders and their men feared the malaria and yellow fever spread by Southern mosquitoes, while the Rebels suffered from communicable diseases like smallpox brought by Northern invaders. Second, the North almost invariably enjoyed far greater access to resources. Malaria was the rare disease that could be treated effectively in 1862, and the Union imported and distributed over a million ounces of quinine during the War, while the North's naval blockade of Southern ports and tight control of land routes made it unobtainable in the Confederacy.

In Chapter 2, "Weather: Winter 1861–Fall 1862," the authors begin with floods in California. This surprising choice allows them to include a brief narrative of the little-known conflict in the West, as well as account for the continental, even global, sources of rainstorms and droughts during the War.

Like the California floods, the wet weather that facilitated Grant's success at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, and led to the bloodbath at Shiloh, occurred in the middle of the "Civil War Drought." However, just as in the West everyday conditions often varied considerably from the climatic trend. During a La Niña winter, the polar jet stream—the fast-flowing swath of air that transports weather fronts west to east across North America—typically dips into the Ohio Valley. When that happens, extended periods of heavy rain or snow can fall sporadically across Kentucky and Tennessee even in years of less-than-average annual precipitation. The Appalachian Mountains also intercept systems moving in from the West—just as they did in 1862—and deposit the moisture as rain or snow on the western slopes. The eastern ridges often receive less precipitation, a micro version of the process that creates drier climates east of the Sierras and Rockies (50).

Much of this Chapter is devoted to the story of Major General George McClellan's ill-fated attack on Richmond in 1862, though it refers as well to battles and campaigns across the continent throughout the War.

Chapter 3, "Food: Fall 1862–Summer 1863," explains why the Confederacy was unable to feed either its army or its civilian population, a state of affairs that spurred food riots headed by women in many Southern cities; the April 1863 riot in Richmond is the best known. As usual, the North fared better. Browning and Silver show how Northern agriculture provisioned a well nourished army, while still exporting massive quantities of grain to Europe. This was the first war to feature food cans. As a Southern soldier finding an abandoned Union camp in Virginia remarked, "The whole country around here is bright with tin cans used by the Yanks for vegetables, condensed milk, lobster, oysters, fruit & everything else" (91). This Chapter, though well sourced and argued, is the least novel part of the book. The starving men in gray are familiar from *Gone With the Wind* and many recent books on the Confederate home front and the role of women in the food riots.

Chapter 4, "Animals: Summer 1863–Spring 1864," is the volume's strongest. It focuses on the two crucial creatures of the War: the horses that powered it and the hogs that fed it. The authors begin by tabulating the horses and mules living in the North and South when the War began; we learn here that mares are pregnant for eleven months and that only horses at least four years old are strong enough for military service. This means that, even if Union Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs had begun to set about breeding horses when Fort Sumter fell, not a single mount would have been ready until after Appomattox. Nonetheless, as usual, the North's superior wealth and organization provided sufficient horses for Union cavalry, wagon teams, and artillery caissons throughout the War. By contrast, Rebels walked. Barefoot. The authors note too that, while it may be true that Traveller, Robert E. Lee's trusty steed, survived the

War to be buried near him, "an estimated 75 percent of the South's military horses died every year" (113).

Pigs, of course, were meant to die: the armies marched on bellies full of bacon. The authors always express figures for salt pork in *millions* of pounds. The hogs of the antebellum South were lean and mean, forced to forage in woods and harvested fields. In the Midwest, by contrast, pigs were fattened on grain and became much larger and largely lard. After the War, the devastated South began importing pork from the Midwest. Several times, the book brings its stories right up to 2020. "Strange as it may seem, the Civil War might be partly responsible for the comparatively high rates of obesity, high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease in the South, a trend that began in the Nineteenth Century and persists to the present" (192).

Much of Chapter 5, "Death and Disability: Spring 1864–Fall 1864," concerns the usual horror stories of Civil War soldiers' bullet wounds infected with gangrene or infested with maggots. But Browning and Silver do manage to find some positive notes.

Despite the common perception among soldiers and the public, Civil War hospitals continued to develop more efficient care as the War progressed. In 1861, the nation's pre-War army had only one forty-bed hospital; by War's end, Union and Confederate authorities had established 400 hospitals with a total of over 400,000 beds for patients. Washington had one hospital in 1861 but 50 by 1865. In Richmond, the Confederate Medical Bureau established Chimborazo Hospital—the largest hospital complex in the world—with 150 buildings and 8,000 beds spread over 125 acres. By the end of the War, Chimborazo had treated over 76,000 patients. More than 1 million Union soldiers were treated in a hospital during the War, and fewer than 10 percent of those patients died during the War. After the War, European armies copied the American hospital system and modeled their medical care on the American practices developed during the conflict (155).

The final Chapter, "Terrain: Fall 1864–Spring 1865," explores how the American landscape affected fighting and how combat affected the land. Throughout the book, the authors describe how swamps and mud slowed armies and how even modest hills like Little Round Top (elevation 150 feet) made a critical difference at Gettysburg. But almost all the fighting took place in the South; many areas around Richmond were virtually deforested. That and other damage to the soil affected the former Confederacy for generations.

Although much of the material on food shortages, medical care, and death has been covered in great depth elsewhere, *Environmental History of the Civil War* is a most excellent study of aspects of the War ignored in many accounts of the conflict.

Submitted by Bruce A. Castleman, Ph.D.

2022 WEST COAST CIVIL WAR CONFERENCE

November 4 - 6, 2022



WYNDHAM GARDEN HOTEL, 5090 East Clinton Way, FRESNO, CA 93727-1506, (1-559-252-3611 or 1-866-238-4218), \$103.00 per night, or wydhamguestreservations.com, (Fresno Airport).

“Grant vs Lee: Combat Strategy & Tactics in 1864 Virginia.”

HOSTED BY THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CWRT. For more information, see Website: SJVCWRT2.com

SPEAKERS:

**Gordon Rhea;
Eric Wittenburg;
Chris Mackowski;
Jim Stanbery.**

Friday Night Dinner Begins at 5:30 PM.

Ron Vaughan, MA.; (Conference Coordinator: ronvaughan@prodigy.net).

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.**