



# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
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**Battle Cry deadline is**  
**1:00PM Wed. two weeks**  
**before the regular meeting.**  
Items can be given the  
editor by hand, mail or e-  
mail.

## President's Message:

If you were able to attend the October 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, you know that I was again MIA (missing in action) – a new grandson arrived in Oakland about the time you were holding the raffle. My intelligence arm reports that Brad Schall did what Brad does as well as anyone. He comfortably explained what happened at Fair Oaks – who the players were, what they did, and what they didn't do. Thanks Brad – also, a tip of the hat to Dennis for everything from welcoming guests to giving Brad a bottle of wine. I am pleased to hear that the current board of officers has agreed to lead the SCWRT for another year.

When you are reading this newsletter, the Las Vegas Conference will be very close at hand - Nov 9-11<sup>th</sup> at the Riviera Hotel. If you desire more details, contact yours truly or any board member. Remember that next year's conference will be in Fresno – the Shenandoah Valley Campaign will be the theme. Being a forward thinker, you no doubt wonder what, if anything, will happen in 2009? Your board of directors has been and will be kicking around the possibility of the Sacramento CWRT again acting as hosts. If you have an opinion on whether or not that is a good idea, let us know. Also, if there were to be a SCWRT hosted conference, what would be a good theme? Remember our 2006 Conference theme was “the War on the Water!”

A couple of our key players have had or are about to have surgery – Bob Hanley with a hip replacement and Jim Middleton in for back repair. Under a best case scenario, Jim may not totally miss an edition of the Battle Cry, but George Foxworth is geared to provide back-up when and if it is necessary.

I have enjoyed the member provided book reviews that have appeared in the Battle Cry recently. I like to hear of new books to read and getting a recommendation from a friend spices the idea up even more. If you have a book that you could review, just get in touch with Jim Middleton who will give you the parameters for publication.

We are about to trade in our muskets and knapsacks for spinning looms and sewing machines. At least that sounds likely to me when seeing the title of Katrina Worley's presentation, “**Home Spun Uniforms – The Real Story!**” The thought sounds exciting – I'll see you at the Hofbrau on the 14<sup>th</sup> – come early and stay late!

**Paul Ruud, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**OCTOBER 10, 2007**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, WATT AVE, SACRAMENTO**

Attendance-28

Members-24

Dennis Kohlmann, Vice President  
George Foxworth, Treasurer  
Edie Keister, Secretary  
Roy Bishop  
Ardith Cnota  
Mitchell Cnota  
Lydia Donaldson

William Donaldson  
Alan Geiken  
Kyle Glasson  
Pam Hubbard  
Chuck Hubbard  
Victor Le  
Betty Mitchell

Maurice Mitchell  
Horst Penning  
Ron Perisho  
Brad Schall  
Richard Sickert  
Robert Williams  
Silver Williams

Susan Williams  
Maxine Wollen  
John Zasso  
Guest-4  
Christy Donaldson  
Kris Scivoletto  
Nicholas Scivoletto  
Alex Stehl

1. Meeting started at 7:07 PM. Members and guest welcomed by Vice President Dennis Kohlmann, filling in for President Ruud. At the last board meeting, a discussion of the election of new officers was held- anyone wishing to fill a position is welcomed. So far, no offers.
2. The conference in Las Vegas will be held Nov. 10, 11, and 12.- "The How and Why of Civil War Technology." Flyers were passed out. The location is the Riveria Hotel.
3. Member Brad Schall shared his excellent knowledge of the "Battle of Fair Oaks." Brad had an uncle in the Union Army, who died at Fair Oaks. Brad also thanked Ron Perisho and Mitchell Cnota for their fine past presentations. Thanks Brad- your presentation was fine also!
4. Member Edie Keister (moi) told of her visit to San Juan High School (along with member John Nevins) to speak about our club, and also re-enactment. We spoke to an academic club that will be in a decathlon with 20 other schools on the subject of the Civil War.
5. Raffle was held, and meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Edie Keister  
Secretary

The cash balance following the October 10, 2007 meeting was \$1,935.15. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$60.00.  
George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

<b>Coming Programs 2007</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Katrina Worley	Home Spun Uniforms – The Real Story!
Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Maurice Mitchell	“Fire in the Rear”
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	Susan Williams	War Horses
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Sebastian Nelson	Capt Henry Green, Calif. Infantry
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	George Beitzel	The Rubber Room

## **A Report On The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Civil War Reenactment At Kearney Park**

by George W. Foxworth

In conjunction with the Fresno Historical Society, The National Civil War Association (NCWA) ended its 2007 reenactment season on October 26-28 at Historic Kearney Park in Fresno, California. The theme was the “The California Story.” In addition, “The Battle of Cedar Creek” from October 19, 1864 was reenacted.

The NCWA is a private non-profit organization that uses “living history” to help the public to better understand the American Civil War. By portraying the manner in which the soldiers and civilians lived, worked, fought, and died during the Civil War era, the NCWA hopes to keep alive the spirit and sacrifice made by the men, women, and children of that time. On October 26<sup>th</sup> (Friday), the NCWA and Fresno Historical Society hosted hundreds of students from Fresno area schools for a living history demonstration. The reenactment was Saturday and Sunday.

The Battle of Cedar Creek was chosen because the California 100 as Company A in the Second Massachusetts Cavalry fought in the engagement. By October 1864, Union General Philip Sheridan had defeated Confederate General Jubal Early three times in a bid to destroy Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley’s harvest. General Sheridan’s October 19<sup>th</sup> victory completed that destruction.

Most of the Californians who enlisted to fight for the Union served in the West. For example, California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. These soldiers prevented the invasion of the Southwest Territories, kept the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails open, protected the Central and Southern Overland Mail routes, and protected the Western portion of the Trans-Continental Telegraph Lines. Other California volunteers served in regiments under other states. For example, the 32<sup>nd</sup> New York and 17<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania were California volunteers.

Attending were Ken Moats, Dr. David Davenport, Pattie Spencer, and other members of the San Joaquin Valley CWRT. From the Sacramento CWRT, the attendees were John Zasso, John Nevins, Ed Sims, and George W. Foxworth.

The 2007 NCWA end-of-the-season event was a complete success and the NCWA and Fresno Historical Society are commended for their great work. We look ahead to the 2008 season that begins in early Spring and the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Reenactment at Kearney Park.

## **The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History**

Edited by Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan

Book Review by Michel Wolf

16 December 2006

It's been said that history is written by the winners, but the American Civil War was a unique exception. As these nine essays make clear, the former Confederates who established the Southern Historical Society and controlled its publications starting in the late 1860s established the Myth of the Lost Cause and promulgated it relentlessly. Its influence persists today, despite the efforts of modern historians (such as the authors of these essays) to set the record straight.

This enjoyable and informative collection provides a useful introduction to the Lost Cause and fascinating details of its formation. The essays, published in 2000, are by authors well-known to Round Table members, and are a pleasure to read.

To the myth-makers, the war was not about slavery, secession was justified and Constitutional, and the Southern armies were doomed from the start, due to the Northern juggernaut of manpower and materials. Mr. Nolan writes, "In the popular mind, the Lost Cause represents the national memory of the Civil War; it has been substituted for the history of the war." Gary Gallagher describes how Lt. Gen. Jubal Early and others seized the historical initiative in formulating the Lost Cause legend, and cites examples of its existence in today's popular culture.

Charles Holden shows how cavalry general Wade Hampton's post-war conservative, elitist politics were repudiated by populists in South Carolina, but Hampton still became the "sometimes general, sometimes governor, sometimes senator, but always hero" in the public's imagination.

Just what were these Confederate soldiers' reunions like? Keith Bohannon focuses on reunions in Georgia from 1885-95, ranging from logistics to oratory. He notes that Lt. Gen James Longstreet was reviled by Early and his cohorts, but at Georgia reunions, "battle-scarred veterans hovered around Longstreet, hung upon every word the old general uttered, and in their eyes and faces could be seen the deep respect and true love they bore for their old commander."

Peter Carmichael's essay concerns the last generation of Virginia slaveholders, men born in the 1830s. Both before and after the war, they disdained the "moonlight and magnolias" view of the old South, and "understood the potential dangers of trying to recapture a golden age because of its stifling effect on intellectual creativity."

To Jeffrey Wert, "James Longstreet was undoubtedly the greatest victim of Lost Cause interpretation." His superb essay discusses historians' views of Longstreet, beginning with the first full-length biography in 1936, and continuing to today's detractors, Bob Krick and Bud Robertson, two of our present day neo-confederate writers and talkers. He reviews Longstreet's actions at Gettysburg, the main focus of the unfair attacks on him.

Brooks Simpson assesses the many attempts to demean Grant's military achievements. "What was most troubling to (Lost Cause advocates) about Grant was that he had prevailed over Robert E. Lee. If one could no longer defeat Grant, at least one might take solace in denigrating him."

Lesley Gordon reviews the voluminous literary output of Maj. Gen. George Pickett's widow, LaSalle, who survived him by more than fifty years. Beginning in the 1880s, she began her life's work of portraying an idyllic South that never existed, and the public, both North and South, lapped it up. Professor Lloyd Hunter ends with a look at the transformation of the Lost Cause into a secular religion. He cites the over-the-top oratory and verse that "marked a period of Southern flight from reality."

(See also "Battle Cry" article of February 04 on "Lost Cause" Mythology)

Submitted by Bob Williams: 10-20-07

## **Ante-bellum West Point Military Academy Or Engineering School?**

The answer to the subtitle question is that West Point was both a military academy and an engineering school, but a controversy was extant for nearly half a century concerning the balance between these dual functions.

The institution's founding fathers were George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Washington's priority was the training for combat oriented officers to fight the new nation's future wars, including artillerists and engineers. Jefferson was more interested in the education of future scientists and engineers for the exploration and building of the new nation. Washington died in 1799. Jefferson founded the new academy in 1802, a year before he made the Louisiana Purchase. Virtually the entire history of the U. S. Military Academy (USMA) can be seen in these two strands of activities. Even today, the Army Corps of Engineers continues to function in both civil and military work endeavors.

West Point's influence on the making of America, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, was so pervasive that telling its story is tantamount to telling America's story during a truly formative period. And it's not just a collection of war stories. Because West Point's graduates were for many years the only engineers we had, this amazing exhibition tells how they explored, surveyed and mapped vast areas of the West, built roads, canals, railroads and government buildings, surveyed and improved rivers and harbors, and introduced new systems of manufacturing.

From 1802 to 1817 this new educational institution languished through a period of severe growing pains, almost to the decision for abandoning; and it was not until Sylvanus Thayer was appointed superintendent that it was established on a firm academic

footing. Thayer (1785-1872) had graduated from Dartmouth College before attending West Point, class of 1808. Commissioned in the Corps of Engineers, he worked on coastal fortifications and served as a staff officer in the War of 1812. After the war, Thayer embarked on a two-year inspection tour of European military schools and installations, and also attended the French L'École Polytechnique, returning in 1817 to become superintendent at West Point. The educational and administrative reforms he initiated during his sixteen-year tenure created a preeminent school of engineering. Thayer resigned as superintendent in 1833, but remained an army engineer, working on harbor improvements. He retired in 1863 as brigadier general; and in 1867, he endowed the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth, designing the new school's curriculum. Under his stewardship, the USMA became the nation's first college of engineering.

Innovations and reforms which Thayer implemented during his tenure became known as the "Thayer System". They included: inspections by Boards of Visitors, a four year curriculum, a daily recitation teaching mode in small academically homogeneous class sections by ability, daily grades, semi-annual examinations, formation of an Academic Board, use of outstanding senior cadets as student instructors and even assistant professors, plus added emphasis on math, science and engineering in one single curriculum purportedly designed to educate officers for all branches of the army. The latter was a departure from the European military school arrangement wherein the Infantry, Dragoons and Cavalry cadets followed academic programs which differed radically from those pursued by candidates for the so-called "Scientific Branches", i.e. the Corps of Engineers, the Topographic Engineers, the Ordinance Corps and the Artillery (to some degree).

For the Academic Board, to be composed of the school's full professors,

Thayer named four outstanding scholars who had been former students of his; each of whom provided long service, tending to perpetuate his views for many years to come. These teachers, each their respective department heads, were: Dennis Hart Mahan, professor of civil and military engineering for 41 years; W.H.C. Bartlett, professor of physics for 37 years; A.E. Church, professor of mathematics for 41 years; and, J.W. Bailey, professor of chemistry, geology and mineralogy for 19 years. Also, C. Berard, professor of French for 33 year had been a close associate of Thayer. (French was included as a core subject, since it was the predominate technical language of that era). Other key members of the Academic Board were: R.W. Weir, Prof. of Drawing; J.W. French, Prof. of English; and, H.L. Kendrick, Prof. of Chemistry, etc. after Bailey's death. Additionally, three subsequent West Point Superintendents had also been close Thayer associates. They were: R. DeRussy, R. Delafield, and J. Barnard; plus the long term Chief of Engineers from 1838-64, Joseph Totten. Capstone to the academic program was Professor Dennis Hart Mahan's Civil and Military Engineering, and the Science of War.

Sylvanus Thayer was convinced that he had created a perfect system; and from an engineering school only viewpoint it might have been successfully argued that he had indeed done so. But as an overall military academy to prepare students for all branches of service with a balanced curriculum, it had serious deficiencies. One argument of that time for the "one size fits all" approach was that the U. S. could not afford such specialization. Certainly, in light of hindsight, this was an exceedingly weak argument. Considering that ante-bellum West Point represented not only the beginning, but also the termination of formal military education for most graduates, it certainly seems that some arrangement for specialized training by branches should have then been established.

The primacy of engineering and its ancillaries, math and physics (then called

natural philosophy) was reflected in several ways in the pre-Civil War USMA. Firstly, 71 percent of the total number of classroom hours in the four year program was devoted to these three subjects, leaving 29 percent for all others, including military theory and tactics. Moreover, these three subjects were the most significant in determining a cadet's order of merit ranking, or class standing, which later fixed his branch of service and place on the promotion list; and, one or more of them were the cause for 90 percent of the failures. In determining order of merit 55 percent of the total score was dependant on performance in math, science and engineering; 17 percent on French, rhetoric, political science, ethics and drawing; 14 percent on tactics, and 14 percent on conduct. But really, how much integral calculus did a cadet actually need to know to become an excellent infantry or cavalry officer. (How many differential equations do you suppose Bedford Forrest knew?) Would not additional instruction in infantry and/or cavalry tactics or military theory have been much more beneficial to those cadets *and* to the army as a whole than a second semester of, say, experimental philosophy?

Ante-bellum West Point was the product of the Corps of Engineers; invariably the superintendent and most of the academic staff were members of that branch, and the Chief of Engineers in Washington exercised staff supervision over the institution. Yet only approximately five percent of the graduating classes were assigned to one of the scientific corps each year. Total size of the two engineer corps, i.e. military and topogs, during the ante-bellum years seldom exceeded 50 officers.

On numerous occasions during the 1830's through 1850's army officers from other branches and members of the Boards of Visitors criticized what they considered to be excessive stress on math, science and engineering to the detriment of other academic subjects and purely military training. In an effort to correct these "deficiencies", the Secretary of War ordered the adoption of a five

year curriculum in 1854. New courses in history, geography, law, Spanish, rhetoric and military practice were added, nothing was dropped or deemphasized. This experiment did not resonate well with either the professors or the cadets, and after several fitful starts was abruptly abandoned in 1861 after only two years of full use. Curriculum status quo continued through the war period, but changes became incipient in 1866 when the Chief of Engineers was removed from the command structure, and the USMA superintendents were no longer required to be engineering officers. This was then followed in the 1870's by the retirements and/or death of the long term and very influential members of the Academy's Academic Board. Significant changes were subsequently made.

The more astute present day historians have recognized that it is a hazardous business to try to evaluate the impact of ante-bellum West Point on its students in light of their roles in the Civil War; but here are some broad generalities: The extreme emphasis on math, science and engineering had serious consequences in that the top members of every class, with few exceptions, were assigned to the engineers, topogs or ordinance corps; while those who stood lower were consigned to the combat arms, the so-called "line", comprising mainly the infantry and cavalry. While technical skill needs in the "scientific" corps might very well have justified this practice, the wisdom of allocating a disproportionate share of the available intellectual talent to branches which plainly would not play the most critical roles in the War is questionable.

Moreover, and somewhat antithetical, it may also be noted that a relatively few of the cadets who stood highest in their classes, including those who left the "scientific" corps and served in the infantry and cavalry ever achieved high distinction as combat commanders. Unquestionably, there were many reasons for this and they varied from person to person; but one of them,

regrettably, may have been an intellectual arrogance which seriously impeded their ability to handle men. In 1873, William Sherman, one of the greatest leaders of the War summed it up as follows: "They (engineer and ordinance officers) are taken from the heads of their classes at West Point. They are good scholars, but the difficulty is they are put in these favored corps and begin directly to look down on the rest of the army. They themselves fail to acquire that practical experience with soldiers which every officer ought to have".

In conclusion, and on a more positive side, it must be said that what ever its sins of omission and commission, the ante-bellum USMA produced splendid engineers, topographers and explorers in a period when the country most needed them. Also, the curriculum, even though it may have been canted and narrow, was distinguished by unrivalled excellence in mathematics, science and engineering; so much so that West Point set the pace for the civilian education institutions in these fields to follow. And finally, the valor and integrity of most of the West Pointers who fought on both sides of the Civil War cannot be doubted. A few gained heroic stature, and almost all displayed courage and devotion, without reference to the merits of their respective causes. If the institution that educated them must bear a portion of the blame for their weaknesses; it surely must also share in the credit due for their strengths.

Was the pre-war West Point a good engineering school? YES. Was it also a good military academy? Well---yes.

#### References:

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**Bob Williams: 10-25-07**

## Ante-bellum West Point Article Graphics Page

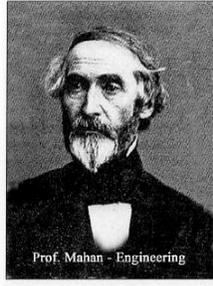
### Chief of Engineers, Superintendent and Academic Board Members



Joseph Totten, C. E.



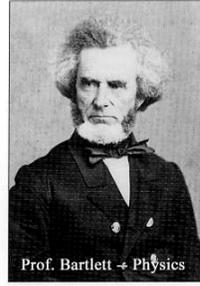
Sylvanus Thayer  
Superintendent 1817-1833



Prof. Mahan - Engineering



Prof. Church - Mathematics



Prof. Bartlett - Physics



Prof. Kendrick - Chemistry



Richard Delafield, C. E.



Prof. Weir - Drawing



Prof. French - English



Prof. Agnel - French



S. N. Benjamin, Instructor



P. S. Michie, Instructor



R. S. MacKenzie, Instructor



West Point Members of the Class of 1863

RAW: 10-25-07