The Washington Volunteer

The Newsletter of the
Puget Sound Civil War Round Table

Volume 39, Number 4  December 2020

Our Next Meeting

December 10, 2020: Robert May will discuss his latest book, *Yuletide in Dixie: Slavery, Christmas, and Southern Memory*. Retired from teaching history at Purdue University, he is the author or editor of several books about the South, the causes of the Civil War, Civil War diplomacy, and US territorial expansion, and he now lives in Olympia. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1969 and is a specialist in 19th century United States history; his teaching and research focus is the causation of the Civil War. He was also program chair at the Camp Tippecanoe Civil War Round Table. Welcome, Professor May, now one of us! The meeting will be via ZOOM and the link will be sent to all members.

**FROM BOB MAY, OUR DECEMBER 2020 SPEAKER**

To the members and friends of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table:

As you may already know from our newsletter, I will be our speaker at the December virtual meeting, giving a talk based on my new book *Yuletide in Dixie: Slavery, Christmas, and Southern Memory*.

If anyone would like to purchase an autographed copy of the book either before or immediately after the talk, I can accommodate you. I will sell you a new, autographed copy of the book at Amazon's price as of November 1 ($31.93 hardbound or $27.95 paper). And I'll pick up the mailing cost. I also can sell you an autographed copy of the new, revised paper edition of my edited book on Civil War diplomacy, *The Union, the Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim* (which includes a James McPherson essay) at its Amazon price of $18.24.
Because I only have about 13 copies all together of these books, this is the way it would work: (1) you send an email to me at mayr@purdue.edu reserving one of the books (remember to specify paper or hardbound); (2) if I still have a copy available, I'll send you a return email with my home address; (3) you would then send a check made out to Robert May; (4) I'd mail out the book. If I no longer have copies, I'll let you know.

Bob May

Our Last Meeting
by Dick Miller

Professor Carl Guarneri gave an informative talk about Charles A Dana, followed by a lively question and answer period, at the November 12 meeting of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table. Based on his book, *Lincoln’s Informer: Charles A. Dana and the Inside Story of the Union War*, Professor Guarneri’s presentation traced Dana’s career reporting first to President Abraham Lincoln and eventually to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. His talk revealed numerous ways in which Dana critically influenced the Union war effort from protecting Grant’s reputation during the Vicksburg campaign to orchestrating Rosecrans’s dismissal after the disastrous battle of Chickamauga to lobbying for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Professor Guarneri’s lucid presentation, accompanied by helpful images and maps, thoroughly entertained the roundtable members who attended the meeting via ZOOM.


President’s Message

Jeff Davis Faced With A Hard Choice To Replace Bragg
by Rick Solomon

After his disastrous defeat at the Battle of Chattanooga Braxton Bragg sent his letter of resignation from the command of the Army of Tennessee to Jefferson Davis on November 28, 1863. Two days later Davis accepted Bragg's resignation with embarrassing swiftness
directing Bragg to turn over temporary command of the Army of Tennessee to the officer next in rank and present for duty, General William Hardee. Davis approached Hardee about taking command of the Army, but Hardee turned him down. Hardee, a 48 year old widower, seemed to be more interested in getting married to the 25 year old Mary Foreman Lewis at her home in Mobile as soon as possible.

The next question for Davis to answer was who to appoint to the permanent command of the Army of Tennessee. At this point in the Civil War only six men held the rank of Full General in the Confederacy. Bragg had just resigned. Albert Sidney Johnston was dead from his wounds at Shiloh. General Samuel Cooper was Adjutant General of the Confederate Armies and was never considered for a field command. General PGT Beauregard was commanding the backwater coasts of South Carolina and Georgia and was deep in Davis's Doghouse for leaving the Army of Tennessee without permission in June 1862. Another disfavored full general of Jeff Davis was Joseph E. Johnston who Davis wished to avoid appointing to the command of the Army of Tennessee.

So Davis turned to the sixth full general, Robert E Lee, asking "Marse Robert" if he would be willing to take command of the Confederacy's main army in the Western Theater. Lee responded that he feared he would not receive "cordial co-operation" at that army and was afraid also that a suitable replacement could not be found for him. Lee had lost a lot of confidence in the two corps commanders still with the Army of Northern Virginia, Richard Ewell and A.P. Hill. After a brilliant march into Pennsylvania Ewell had fought indecisively at Gettysburg. Hill was mediocre at Gettysburg and had made a disastrous unreconnoitered attack at Bristoe Station. His third corps commander, James Longstreet, was in Knoxville and had fallen out of favor with Davis for his part in the cabal against Bragg after the Battle of Chickamauga. None of these three corps commanders would be able to command the Army of Northern Virginia, so Lee would stay put in Virginia.

A look at other Lieutenant Generals produced no one ready to take command of one of the two main armies of the Confederacy. Leonidas Polk was a terrible corps commander and the Confederacy benefitted from his death at Pine Mountain which allowed the promotion of Alexander Stewart in Polk's place. Kirby Smith had recently taken command of the Trans-Mississippi Department after the resignation of the senile Theophilus Holmes. The final current Lieutenant General, John C Pemberton, was "on the shelf" in disgrace after the surrender at Vicksburg. Therefore, Davis's only real options at this time were either Beauregard or Johnston, two men that Davis despised. Against his better judgment Davis appointed Johnston to the command.

I really think other than Beauregard, Davis had no other choice. What do you think?

Greetings

I want to wish all members and their families of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table: Happy holidays. I know that this year will be an unusual and, hopefully, a one-time experience of the holidays. Be smart, stay safe and enjoy your loved ones whether in person or virtually. It is my fervent hope that the vaccines will be delivered expeditiously and that
they will be highly effective. If so I hope we will have an in person meeting of our Round Table sometime this spring. In the meantime we shall continue to send out a monthly newsletter and have meetings via ZOOM. May God bless all of you.

Rick Solomon, President

Book Notes

Additional Reading - My List Of The Best Civil War Books Of 2020 by Jeff Rombauer

Since I have not had a chance to read the December speaker’s work Dixie: Slavery, Christmas and Southern Memory I have chosen instead, in the tradition of year-end best lists, to recommend the following works as some of the best published in 2020.


Barney’s work focus is on the year 1860 to 1861 and his examination of each of the 15 slave states, and why or why not they rushed to secession. The author believes that secession was not a mass democratic movement, but one led from above by “the middling ranks of slaveholders who saw their aspirations blocked and denigrated by the Republicans.”


The fifth volume in Coddington’s studies of Civil War photographs [The others are on Union & Confederate Soldiers, images of black troops and civil war navies] The author links the personal stories of the nurses with their images in this work.


For those seeking explanations why Confederate memorials cause such violent reactions, this is the book to read. Domby traces the history of erecting Confederate statues during the 1890 to1920 period, and the racist rhetoric used at their dedications in North Carolina. The speakers at these dedications used them to insert the superiority of white supremacy. A must read.

Zachery Fry’s study of the politics of the rank and file of the Army of the Potomac overturns the traditional view that democratic politics as represented by its general officers dominated the army. Instead Fry believes that “the army’s junior officers remade the enlisted ranks in the image of Republican loyalty.”


A brilliant examination of the war’s impact on women, both south and north, black, and white. Glymph trances how the Civil War transformed women’s lives forever.


Called “an important addition” to Civil War studies, Noe’s work shows how weather impacted tactics, logistics and campaigns. The author shows how the floods and droughts in the South during 1862 to 1864 forced difficult choices by the Confederacy, to feed its soldiers or its civilians.


The 2nd Colorado Cavalry played an important role in rebuffing the Confederate invasion of New Mexico territory in the spring of 1862. But more than that they became “agents of empire” in their warfare against Native Americans on the plains. A “deft combination of military, social and environmental history” and the intersection of the Civil War and the West.


Reynolds, author of an award-winning biography of Walt Whitman, turns out a brilliant biography of Abraham Lincoln and the cultural influences that shaped him. As James M. McPherson notes in his advance praise “Reynolds’s splendid biography is chock full of fresh information and insights about Lincoln that disprove the adage that nothing new can be said about this iconic American”.


Formed in the spring of 1862, the 42nd Georgia saw action at Cumberland Gap, Vicksburg, Atlanta and the Carolinas. An excellent example of the new regimental histories being produced today, well research and written. A complete roster of the regiment is included.

The first modern history of the use of landmines by the Confederacy, Rutherford traces the development and use of these “hidden” weapons and the history of the “Torpedo” bureau. The Civil War saw the first widespread use of these weapons, that were not formally banned until the 1990’s.

Features

Off the Beaten Track - Sabine Pass, Texas
by Jeff Rombauer

On 8 September 1863 one of the most lopsided Confederate victories occurred at Sabine Pass, Texas where a small party of 46 men defeated a Union flotilla of four gunboats and prevented an invasion of East Texas by 4000 union troops. In a brief 35-minute engagement, the Confederate gunners at Fort Griffith disabled two Union gunboats and captured 350 prisoners while suffering no casualties. The defeat ended Union attempts to invade East Texas. Located in an industrial area near Port Arthur, a small park marks the site of Fort Griffith. While the earthwork fort has disappeared, the site includes an interpretive pavilion, a statue of the Confederate commander Dick Dowling, and a scale model of the fort. Entrance to the site is free. Also located in Port Arthur is the Museum of the Gulf Coast which celebrates the history, culture and biology of the region and features displays on the Civil War.

Regiment of the Month: The 25th New Jersey Infantry
by James L Dimond

In the late afternoon of 12 December 1862, at the battle of Fredericksburg, the final phase of Burnside’s attack against Marye’s Heights was launched to attempt to turn the tide of battle. This attack was the culmination of the failed Union assault at Fredericksburg.
The 25th New Jersey was formed as a nine month, draft-induced regiment to fulfill New Jersey's obligation to the cause of the Union. It was composed of men from all over the state who volunteered to avoid worse duty. After basic training, the 25th New Jersey was sent first to the area around Washington City, then was made part of the 9th Corps under General Wilcox. In the late fall of 1862, Burnside formulated the final plan to cross the Rappahannock River at Falmouth, Virginia. They used pontoon bridges to reach Fredericksburg. Suffice it to say that when the 25th New Jersey crossed the bridges, they became part of the final reserve to enter battle.

The regiment, as part of the brigade, passed through the town of Fredericksburg. The damage wrought on the town by the fighting and ransacking of the Union forces was extreme. As they emerged onto the battlefield, they were held in their reserve directly before Marye's Heights. Division after division were thrown into the fray by Burnside. The casualties were extreme also.

Burnside believed if he could throw one final thrust on the Confederate line, he could break it. The men of the 25th were in the last group to go forward that afternoon. As one of the veterans later described it, they received their "baptism of fire." As they went forward they
had to pass over the untended bodies of the Union wounded and dead. When they reached the base of Marye's Heights, in front of the stone wall on the Union left, the Confederates rained down a murderous fire on the 25th and the other regiments of the brigade. Most of the unit were casualties. The survivors recalled they knew it was a futile attempt. As darkness fell, they retreated back over to Falmouth, leaving their dead and wounded on the field too.

The stone wall in late December 1862, after the wounded had been attended to (photographer unknown, LOT 4165-G, no. 15 [P&P], public domain image at Library of Congress)

The broken unit spent the rest of their war in reserve duty in Virginia. They participated in one more engagement, at Suffolk. The survivors went home at the expiration of their tour, or were transferred to another unit. They formed a reunion association, and met for many years to recall their moment of fame. One of those men, Corporal Jesse S Godfrey, Company F, received injuries at the battle from which he never recovered. His obituary was published in the National Tribune of Washington DC on October 22, 1885. He died at Cape May, leaving a wife and six children. From one of these children was descended Jill Tracy Jacobs, the second wife of future President Joseph R Biden.
Those of you with long memories might remember the Pig War. It started when Lyman A Cutlar, a Yankee goldseeker, squatted on lands officially claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company’s Puget Sound Agricultural Company in the faraway San Juan Islands. The Treaty of 1846 was quite clear, or so its makers thought. The 49th parallel was the boundary between the United States and the Queen’s possessions which later became British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver Island was not part of the deal. The treaty specified that, when the 49th parallel struck water, the boundary was to dip south so as to leave the big island and its existing town of Victoria in British possession. The line was to follow the center of the channel which separated “Vancouver’s Island from the mainland.”

The makers of the treaty didn’t know there was an archipelago of islands, large and small, in the middle of that description. There wasn’t one channel. There were three: de Haro, Rosario, and the so-called “middle channel” between San Juan and Orcas. It would take two surveys, more than two decades, and the intervention of the Kaiser to decide that de Haro was the navigation channel best suited for the boundary. In the meantime, what’s now San Juan County was territory in dispute. Americans attached themselves to Whatcom County, Washington Territory for governance. Census enumerations were conducted of the territory in dispute. And people staked their claims on land claimed by both sides. Ultimately armed camps were established at the opposite ends of San Juan Island.
The first joint survey of the boundary began in 1858, and its long and involved history is a topic for another time. The Americans had one team of surveyors, including future Major General John Grubb Parke, Grant’s chief engineer at Vicksburg. The British had two teams, one for the water side and one for the land side. The land side survey started at the farthest west shore of Point Roberts (another anomaly that the treaty makers didn’t foresee). The water side survey was headed by Captain James Charles Prevost, who gave his name to the harbor which now becomes our story.

Canal de Haro makes a hard turn to the east between Moresby Island, British Columbia, and Stuart Island, Washington. Stuart Island was opened to American homesteading in 1874. The farthest piece of land to the northwest on Stuart Island is aptly named Turn Point, and Americans built a light station there in 1893. Light stations required lighthouse keepers (at least they did, until the stations were automated in the 1970s). Lighthouse keepers often brought other people--teachers, fishermen, truck farmers, sundry mariners. Two settlements sprang up on Stuart Island, one at the dock in Prevost Harbor and the other on the bluff at Turn Point. Prevost Harbor probably had a prior existence as a First Nations campsite.

It’s not certain what attracted John Chase Douglass to this far corner. Maybe it was because San Juan was a dry county and the sheriff never visited the island. Maybe it was because Stuart Island reminded him of his native Maine. But come he did.

The 1910 census records him as a single boarder in the home of Arthur Chevalier. Arthur’s brother Paul was assistant lighthouse keeper, another brother Edward caught salmon and harvested shellfish. They both had families, for whom there was a schoolteacher, Susan Halliday. No doubt John, and everyone else on the island, chipped in when chores needed to be done. It’s fairly certain that the Arthur Chevalier household was located at Turn Point. The other ten households on the island in 1910 were mostly oriented toward fishing. European immigrants (Norwegians, Germans, Danes, and Swedes) married British Columbia First Nations wives, and their children were Washingtonians. Of the unattached adult males, one was from New York, one was from Wisconsin, and one was from California. The three Chevalier brothers hailed from Iowa. There was no general store. The postal drop was a box on the Prevost Harbor dock. It was a cosmopolitan, peaceful existence.

I haven’t visited Douglass’ grave yet. It is marked, with a wooden marker, exposed to the harsh gales that sweep the San Juans in the wintertime. Douglass has the dubious distinction of being the registered Civil War grave to the farthest northwest in Washington and the continental United States. A few others have a greater distance to the west-northwest, in Clallam County, and to the north-northwest, in Blaine, and their cases could be argued too. His death on 19 April 1911 wasn’t even the last for a San Juan county resident, and delayed reporting listed his surname erroneously as Johnson. He had been eligible for age pension only for six months (born 10 May 1848 in Brighton, Maine).

Douglas was a veteran of Company C, 27th Massachusetts Infantry. He spent the majority of his wartime experience in North Carolina, particularly in New Bern. Since this real estate has been the topic of one of our recent speakers, I won’t rehash it here. The men of the 27th were borrowed for some Virginia peninsular activity, notably at Drewry’s Bluff. Whether
Douglass was with the unit at that time is unclear; he was a late enlistee and “over eighteen” during whatever service he had as a private. At the end of the war their entire brigade was taken POW at Wise’s Fork; their flags escaped capture by the expedient of ground burial. Casualties were light.

Turn Point was about as far away as anyone could get from all of that and still be in the lower 48.

San Juan Islands looking west from Mount Constitution, May 1934 (Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, AR-08503003-ph010089, Moran State Park Development, public domain image at Washington Digital Archives)
Ye Olde Editor’s Close

Photo credits this issue: Purdue University, Library of Congress, Washington State Digital Archives, Jeff Rombauer, and the Dimonds. Please visit our reconstructed Web site at www.pugetsoundcwrt.org for the latest in news, events, and announcements. Please consider contributing an article or two! Until next year, please stay safe and healthy.

Officers 2020-2021:
Rick Solomon, President (ricksolomon192@gmail.com)
James L Dimond, Vice-President Successor (shinodad@gmail.com)
Jeff Rombauer, Past President (jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com)
Richard Miller, Vice-President Programs (milomiller882@msn.com)
Pat Brady, Vice-President Programs (patsbrady@comcast.net)
Rick Solomon, Programs
Loretta-Marie Dimond, Vice-President Editor (Lmdimond1@comcast.net)
David Otis, Vice-President Marketing (davidotis81@gmail.com)
Arthur Banner, Vice-President Membership (banneras@comcast.net)
VACANT, Vice-President Reservations
Marie B Dimond, Website Administrator and Social Media (Marie.Dimond.Tech@gmail.com)
VACANT, Secretary
Chris McDonald, Treasurer (alpacamomchris@gmail.com)
Mike Kirschner, Director (kirschnermk@comcast.net)
Steve Garratt, Director (stephengarratt@gmail.com)
George Yocum, Director (georgeyocum@comcast.net)

Copyright © 2020
Puget Sound Civil War Round Table.
All rights reserved.