THE BULLETIN OF THE PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

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THANKS: To Rick Solomon for his talk on South Mountain. Rick's well researched presentation kept the 57 members in attendance on the edge of their seats. If only McClellan had not been McClellan, would the Civil War have ended in September 1862?

NEXT MEETING: Thursday October 14, 1993. 6 PM social Hour 7 PM Dinner at the Consolidated Club, Sand Point Naval Station. Write your menu choice, name and names of any guests on the enclosed card and mail it ASAP! We need an accurate count in advance to avoid delays in serving dinner. Menu: London Broil or Poached Halibut in White Wine Sauce served with Baked Potato and Honey glazed carrots.

PROGRAM: Our October speaker will be Dr. Sharon Van Meter, a forensic pathologist from Oakland, California. Dr. Van Meter will discuss Civil War bullet wounds, drawing in part on her own expertise. This program was well received when presented at the Gettysburg Civil War Institute.

DUES: 1993-1994 membership dues are now payable. $15.00 per individual and $20.00 for couples. For new members there is a $5.00 initiation fee which covers the cost of a name tag. Mail your check [payable to PSCWRT] to George Hood, 7105 156th Place NE, Redmond, WA 98052. Members who are current will see a P by their name on the enclosed roster.

VIDEO WATCH: An unusual 1970 Clint Eastwood movie The Beguiled is our recommendation for October. Directed by Don Siegel and starring Eastwood, Geraldine Page, Jo Ann Harris and Elizabeth Hartman, this film tells the gothic story of a wounded Union Soldier who is taken in by the women of a Southern girl's school, with tragic consequences. Due to mature themes this is not recommended for young children. 109 minutes/color VHS $19.95

A good anecdote is told of a lad on one of the Union gunboats. The vessel was just going into action when an officer sneeringly asked him if he was afraid?

"No I was praying," was the response.

"Well, what were you praying for?"

"Praying," said the soldier, "that the enemy's bullets may be distributed the same way as the prize money is, principally among the officers."

BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION: As noted in the latest issue of Civil War: The Magazine of the Civil War Society, The Central Maryland Heritage League is looking for donations to save 10 acres of the historic South Mountain Battlefield. As noted in the speech by Rick Solomon last month, the Battle of South Mountain, September 14, 1862 was an important preliminary contest before Antietam. If you would like to contribute additional information can be secured by calling either George F. Brigham, Jr. at [301] 371-7090 or David T. Whitaker at [301] 473-5991.

NEW BOOKS: Louisiana State University is issuing this fall a facsimile edition of one of the hardest books to find by a Civil War Artist, Thirty Years After: An Artist's Memoir of the Civil War by Edward Forbes. Forbes served as a staff artist for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspa
per and traveled with the Army of the Potomac for two years. Forbes's sketches concentrate not on grand battle scenes but on the everyday events in soldier life. The LSU edition will contain 189 black and white etchings and 20 half-tones. The price will be $65.00 and can be ordered by writing Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 70803 or obtained from University Book Store either in Bellevue or Seattle.

CIVIL WAR BOOKNOTES: Booknotes this month lists books and articles on Civil War surgery and surgeons.

DISPLAY TABLE & RAFFLE: Thanks to all who contributed to September's raffle table. We had so many prizes we were overwhelmed. Keep up the good work and remember that in November we will hold our Annual Silent Auction to raise funds for battlefield preservation. If you have something special to contribute, please bring it in November.

UPCOMING MEETINGS: For our November 11th meeting, Professor Thomas J. Pressly will discuss the Civil War in comparison to Switzerland's experience. For our December meeting, Alvin Kantor will talk about Sanitary Fairs. Remember in April noted Civil War Historian Emory Thomas will talk about Robert E. Lee.

TRUE TO HIS NAME
In ancient days, Jehovah said
In voice both sweet and calm,
Be Abram's name forever changed
To that of Abraham!

T was then decreed his progeny
Should occupy high stations
For Abraham, in Hebrew means
"Father of many nations."

In our own land an Abraham,
With speeches wise nor witty,
Went down to our Jerusalem,
The famous Federal City.

True to his name, this Abraham,
So changed are his relations
Instead of one great nation, be
"Father of many nations."

SPECIAL EXHIBITION: If you are planning on traveling to Los Angeles within the next year, plan on stopping by the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Between October 12, 1993 and August 30, 1994, The Huntington Library will host a major exhibit on Abraham Lincoln. Included will be nearly 100 original letters and documents written by Lincoln as well as artifacts associated with Lincoln and his family. A catalog of the exhibit will be available.

THIS MONTH IN THE CIVIL WAR: October 14, 1861, President Lincoln authorized Gen. Winfield Scott to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus anywhere in the North. Lieut. Gen. John C. Pemberton assumed command of the Confederate department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana on October 14, 1862. A year later on October 14, 1863 Confederate units engaged a retreating Army of the Potomac at Bristoe Station, Virginia. On Friday, October 14, 1864, there was skirmishing in the Shenandoah Valley between the armies of Sheridan and Early.
At the height of the secession crisis of 1860-1861, one Southern Fire-eater dismissed the prospect of war by asserting that he would be able to wipe up any blood spilled with his handkerchief. How wrong he was! During the four bloody years of Civil War between the North and South over half a million soldiers died. For the Union alone, the Adjutant General’s Office in 1885 calculated that Union soldiers suffered 245,790 gunshot wounds resulting in the deaths of over 110,000 officers and enlisted men and leaving 130,000 disfigured. The Confederates lost an estimated 94,000 to deaths caused by combat.

The Civil War era was not a particularly good time for a soldier to be wounded. The development of the rifled musket and use of the minie ball produced wounds which the "primitive" medical science of the period could not cope with. The minie ball in particular "produced a more savage wound than the lead missiles of the twentieth century." The slow velocity of the minie ball upon contact with a human target caused a shattering and splintering of bone which made Civil War era wounds to the extremities more dangerous than similar wounds of latter conflicts. Since 70% of gunshot wounds were to either the hands or feet, luck may have had as much to do with a soldier’s survival as did surgical skill.

If you are interested in reading more about Civil War wounds or surgery before October’s meeting, then the following books and articles are recommended.


Adam’s work contains two excellent chapters on "Wartime Surgery" and "Operations and Infections." The author believes that advances in surgery were few and limited because of the lack of understanding of antisepsis. Anesthesia allowed surgeons to undertake experimentation but infections caused "appalling mortality." The annotated bibliography is an excellent source for additional readings.


The Civil War as viewed from the ranks. Billings’ popular work [which has gone through many editions] contains a chapter on Hospitals and ambulances. Billings notes the common soldiers feeling that many amputations were unnecessary.

**In the Hospital**

At Peach-Tree Creek, Col. Thomas Reynolds of the Western army was shot in the leg, and while the surgeons were debating the propriety of amputating it, the Colonel, who was of Irish birth, begged them to spare it as it was very valuable, being an imported leg.

Billings - Hardtack & Coffee


Britton was a noted Union surgeon who served under Grant at the battles of Belmont and Fort Donelson.
before helping to establish the Army Medical Museum in Washington D.C.


The best brief book on the subject. Chapters 8 & 9 cover surgical operations during the war. Book includes excellent photos from the Army Medical Museum.


Briggs served as a Surgeon in the famous 54th Massachusetts Regiment. His letters are more concerned with details of the southern landscape and food, then with his medical duties.


The subtitle of the article explains it all "poorly trained surgeons, ignorance of antiseptics, and primitive treatments made the Civil War 'a medical hell.'"


Civil War Books calls this work "especially valuable for revelations on hospital service and personal observations in Virginia."

Hazards of Surgical Duty

"I heard that the surgeon who served before me, while dressing a soldier's wound, laid the knife for a moment on the bed. The man seized it and made a lunge at the doctor, but instead of killing him, as he had intended, only ran it into his arm, where upon the doctor instantly shot him."

Perry - Letters From a Surgeon of the Civil War


Chapter 3 in this volume of the Time-Life series on the Civil War is entitled "The Wasted Legions." Robertson offers a brief discussion of medical problems for sides during the civil war illustrated by some graphic photos from The Army Medical Museum collection.


Vickery started out as a private in the "hospital corps" of the 2nd Michigan Infantry, before becoming an assistant surgeon in 1862. He wrote this article as a thesis for work he did at the University of Michigan during the winter of 1863-64. The article contains excellent illustrations from the Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion.


Letters written by Major William Watson, who served as a surgeon in the Army of the Potomac from 1862 to 1865. Unfortunately the good doctor was more interested in reporting military affairs than medical.