

*Celebrating our 25th
Anniversary 1985-2010*

**THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER
PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/
MARCH, 2011**

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 10, 2011

China Harbor, 2040 Westlake Avenue North, Seattle, Washington

Time: Social hour at **6 p.m.**; Dinner served at **7 p.m.**; Program at **8 p.m.**

MENU CHOICES: Mongolian Beef, Chicken or Salmon

Dinner includes: salad, vegetable delight, General Tao's chicken, fried rice and fresh fruit. **Cost is \$21 for adults and \$10 for those under 18 (new student rate), payable at the door, but reservations and meal choices are required.**

To make reservations and meal choices, **Contact Rod Cameron at 206-524-4434** or email him at **rodcam@comcast.net**. **Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, March 8.**

**DONALD STOKER WILL SPEAK ON THE FIVE STRATEGIC
MISTAKES OF THE CIVIL WAR**

from the Southern decisions to start the war and invade Kentucky in 1861, to Lincoln's removal of McClellan and Halleck's march on Corinth in 1862, to Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863. Professor of Strategy and Policy at the US Naval War College, Professor Stoker is the author of *The Grand Design: Strategy and the US Civil War* (a selection of the History Book Club, Military History Book Club, and Book of the Month Club), and many other works on strategy, the arms trade, insurgency, and naval history.

NOTE: Remember to turn off cell phones before the meeting so there are no distractions for the speaker. Thank you!

IMPORTANT DISPATCHES

The following is information concerning you and the PSCWRT. Please read and take notice.

REMINDER: SEEKING VOLUNTEER TO SERVE AS TREASURER

As President Dick Miller mentioned at the February meeting, we need a member to step forward to fill the role of Treasurer for our Civil War Round Table. Stephen Pierce has done a superb job,

but he is getting tired after many seasons on the job. Please know that Stephen will work with you to get you started. Thanks for your help in advance.

CIVIL WAR BOOK DISCUSSION

During next season, Sept 2011 thru May 2012, one meeting will feature our first Round Table book club discussion. Two books will be discussed, and everybody will be asked to choose one of those books, read it, and pitch into the fireworks at the meeting. Read both books if you want. *FOR NOW, PLEASE GIVE YOUR BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS TO PAT BRADY*, patsbrady@comcast.net, 206 246 1603 (home), or 206 689 8570 (work). The best books for discussion tend to be those that argue a viewpoint, so please recommend books like that. We are always looking for more speakers on more topics. To volunteer, please contact Pat Brady. See email and phone above.

NEW MEMBER:

Please note: If you are a new member and you have not been listed here, let me know. Thanks.
John McIlhenny 2432 Tolmie Ave, Dupont WA 98327; H 253-912-8989, O 360-586-5379,
jmcilhenny@comcast.net

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

April 14, 2011 Michael B. Ballard: Grant's time of trial, after Shiloh to the end of 1862

April 30-May 1 Fort Steilacoom Reenactment. We may have a booth set up to publicize our Round Table.

May 12, 2011 A panel of members will share their research on their Civil War Ancestors. Our **ANNUAL AUCTION** will be held in conjunction with this meeting.

June 25-26, 2011 Port Gamble Civil War Reenactment. We usually have a booth there to publicize the Round Table

One hundred fifty years ago today, Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as President of the Confederate States of America. I have been thinking about this event and the appropriate way to commemorate it. Earlier this week, USA Today published a front page article that highlighted the ironies of the inauguration's planned commemoration just blocks from the great sites of the Civil Rights struggle. The article noted that fifty years ago, the Civil War Centennial Commission "tried to show the valor of fighters on both sides and the unified nation born of the struggle." But in this effort, slavery and race "were swept under the rug to celebrate Blue-Gray reconciliation."

The article's author believes that this anniversary will be "different." The author pointed to the Museum of the Confederacy's promise to pay more attention to the role of slaves, black soldiers, women, and children as one example of the Sesquicentennial's focus on history, not myth. Yet there are many Americans vitally interested in the Civil War who believe it to be a fight over States Rights or Northern economic aggression. And we Americans all love our myths, including the myth of the Lost Cause, and the symbolic power of reconciliation between North and South, between brother and brother.

Lonnie Bunch, the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, made a moving plea to move beyond myth in an editorial he wrote for Diverse: Issues in Higher Education. He wrote:

As America turns to commemorate the sesquicentennial of this war, it is disappointing that so many of these myths and a-historical distortions still shape the popular understanding of the impact and legacy of the Civil War. Particularly because the past 50 years have seen an impressive and unprecedented outpouring of scholarship that deepened our understanding of Black agency and the intersection of race and war, repositioned women and issues of gender and enhanced our sensitivity to the ambiguities and contradictions that are also part of the meaning and contemporary resonance of the war. Reputable historians continue to debate aspects of this conflict, but now most realize that the Civil War was a watershed that transformed America's notions about education, governmental responsibilities, healthcare, western expansion and the role of technology—not to mention the impact of the emancipation of 4 million enslaved Americans on the nation's sense of self, equality, and citizenship.

Although Mr. Bunch calls on the neo-Confederates to recognize the intellectual dishonesty of their interpretations, he does not begrudge the men and women who revel in their Southern antecedents by attending a “Confederacy Ball” or participating in a Rebel unit during a battle re-enactment. But he does call on them to “embrace the totality of their heritage” and to recognize that the “process of remembering involves embracing hard truths and complex issues.”

So as I think about the proper way to commemorate the secession of the deep South states or the inaugural of Jefferson Davis, I realize that Mr. Bunch has it just right—that it is our responsibility to remember that the Civil War was much more than a series of battles fought by white men and led by famous (and infamous) generals. I am glad that Cynthia Wilson shared with us her study of African-American soldiers who settled in the Pacific Northwest after the war and that Andrew Ward talked about The Slaves' War last September. But I would encourage all of us to expand our studies and our discussions during the next four years to include all Americans—men and women, native-born (including native Americans) and foreign born, free and slave—who had such an impact on the defining event of our nation's history.

CIVIL WAR QUIZ

My apologies, but there will be no quiz this month...stay tuned for April!

150 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH: MARCH 1861

The month of March, 1861 was filled with uncertainty across the country. Now that seven states had seceded from the Union and formed a government, what would happen next? How would the incoming Lincoln Administration deal with the crisis? President Elect Lincoln had not given very many specifics on what he would do, and the Buchanan Administration was relieved to be handing power over to the Republicans.

In the South, there was uncertainty as well, with questions related to whether more slave states would join them, whether Lincoln would accept secession or use force, foreign recognition, and of course what to do about Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens. Meanwhile across the south, Federal posts and forts were evacuated and taken over by the various states.

March 1, Friday

Confederate authorities assumed control over from the S.C. Militia over the defenses of Charleston Harbor, facing Fort Sumter. They made improvements to the batteries facing the fort. Relations between the two sides were amicable, with provisions being allowed to go to the fort,

but Maj. Anderson was concerned about the delay in decision regarding their fate. In Washington, Lincoln worked on filling his cabinet.

March 2, Saturday

New territories were admitted- Nevada and Dakota. The Senate rejected the proposal of the Peace Convention of February 27 which Sen. John J. Crittenden had hoped would head off conflict.

March 3, Sunday

Named on the 1st by President Davis, Brig. Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard took command of Confederate troops around Charleston Harbor.

March 4, Monday

Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States in Washington, D.C. The tone of his address was somewhat conciliatory, offering no interference by the Federal government in the Southern states, but also warning those states that in his view the “Union is perpetual” and that he would make sure that “the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States”. Reaction in the South was negative, with some even saying that Lincoln’s words meant war. In Montgomery, Alabama, the new First National Flag (also known as the “Stars and Bars”) flew over the capitol.

March 9, Saturday

A long cabinet meeting took place over the Ft. Sumter crisis. Most of the members favored evacuation of the fort. Lincoln wrote to Gen. Winfield Scott asking how long the Ft. Sumter garrison could hang on and what it would take to reinforce the fort.

March 15, Friday

Having Gen. Scott’s response that it would take a massive effort to reinforce Sumter, Lincoln again had a meeting of his cabinet. Again, there were disagreements as to how to proceed. In the end, Lincoln again postponed a final decision.

March 18, Monday

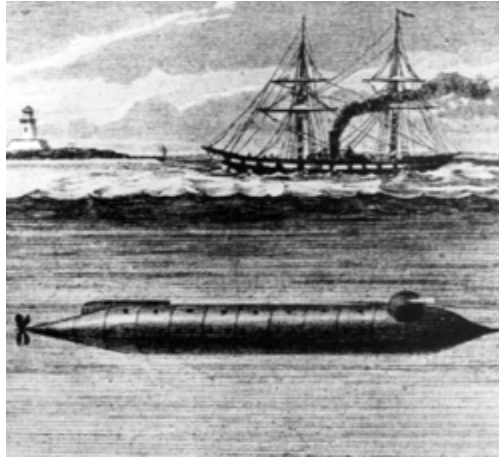
In Arkansas, a state convention turned down secession, 39-35 but proposed a public vote on secession in August 1861. Lincoln wrote a memorandum listing pros and cons of relieving Fort Sumter and gave it to his cabinet.

March 29, Friday

A day after hearing from Gen. Scott- who now recommended evacuation of Fort Sumter- Lincoln chose to go ahead with a plan to resupply and reinforcement of the fort with vessels leaving “as early as April 6th”. The cabinet was mostly behind Lincoln’s decision, which had been made after two recent visits by his representatives to the Charleston area and the fort.

March 31, Sunday

It had become a rumor that Fort Sumter would be evacuated. Confederate commissioners, from their contacts with Secretary of State Seward were also convinced of this. Meanwhile a relief expedition for Fort Pickens was authorized.



The Story of the *Alligator* [This was sent to us by John Hinds- Thanks, John!]

Within weeks of the beginning of the Civil War, the navies North and South turned to submarines. To the Confederates, these were a means to break the Union blockade; to the Federals, a way to destroy the underwater obstacles that barred their attacks from the sea upon the ports through which vital supplies from Europe flowed to arm the rebels. Submarines, along with underwater mines, were considered “infernally if not illegal means of waging war. Because of the secret nature of this first “war beneath the waves,” the exploits of these early submariners are little known. However, the story of one boat and the men who crewed her is slowly coming to light . . .

The Civil War’s first submarine (and the first such vessel accepted into the U.S. Navy), was designed by an immigrant Frenchman eager to help his new country. Brutus de Villeroi had a history of submarine experiments dating back to 1832 in France , where he first demonstrated a functional boat designed for salvage work. One month after the Civil War began, de Villeroi popped up in the waters off Philadelphia Navy Yard to show his most recent vessel to the Navy officers there; acting upon rumors of an unusual vessel possibly intent upon sabotage, the harbor police impounded the boat. But the Navy agreed to examine the vessel. Impressed by what they saw, de Villeroi was asked to build a larger submarine.

While the main role envisioned for Union submarines would be to clear obstructions, the Navy contracted for de Villeroi’s boat for an entirely different reason. Rumors of a powerful Confederate ironclad building upon the remains of the burned out *Merrimack* had northern sailors rushing to find a means to meet this new threat. Three types of iron-plated vessels were rushed into production (*Galena* , *New Ironsides*, and *Monitor*); a squadron of civilian-owned transports was hired to ram the enemy ship; and, at the shipyard of Neafie & Levy in Philadelphia , constructors worked feverishly to complete the “submarine propeller” designed by de Villeroi.

One of the features that made this vessel so unique was the fact that it employed an air-scrubbing system to remove carbon dioxide from the interior environment of the boat. No other Civil War submarine had such a system. Unfortunately, the expense of the components of this system, the unfamiliarity of Navy officials with its workings, and, quite probably, the fact that neither the shipyard nor the Navy had ever dealt with a self-described “natural genius” before meant construction was delayed long after the threat of the CSS *Virginia* had been met. Completed in the spring of 1862, the Navy’s new submarine was sent up Hampton Roads in Virginia for its

first combat mission: to destroy a railroad bridge over Appomattox Creek and thereby cut a major supply line to Richmond .

About this time, the new submarine acquired its name—not in any official ceremony, but at the whim of a newspaper reporter who likened the progress of the green-painted boat through the water to that of an alligator. Although not recognized by the Navy, the new name stuck. The image was suggested not only by the color of the vessel, but also from the fact that this first version was propelled by banks of oars! De Villeroi had opted to discard the already-traditional propeller for individual oars that deployed and feathered with each stroke.

So, how does a submarine attack a railroad—especially in this early period when self-propelled torpedoes were still twenty years in the future? *Alligator*'s mode of attack was advanced for its day. In addition to the crew of 14+ men and an officer, the submarine deployed a diver through a forward airlock. Exiting the boat, the diver could attach mines to a target, return to the boat, and detonate the mines by connecting an insulated copper wire from the mines to a battery in the vessel. Unfortunately, *Alligator* was denied this second chance to make history when local Navy officers warned of shallow water along the Appomattox; passing through this area would make the submarine easily visible and most likely simple to capture. In the hands of the Confederates, *Alligator* could be used to attack the blockading fleet and there would be little that the Union vessels could do to defend themselves. *Alligator* was towed back to Washington .

Over the summer and winter of 1862, the Navy replaced the civilian crew with one of its own, officered by Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge. Running extensive tests with the boat resulted in the substitution of a propeller for the unwieldy oars; this doubled the speed of the boat from two to four knots. After completing these tests and making it very well known that he thought little of submarine warfare, Lt. Selfridge and his men were transferred to the Mississippi Squadron and *Alligator* came under the command of Acting Master Samuel Eakins. This officer was a professional diver (who worked for the Czar of Russia in the years before the Civil War, trying to salvage Russian ships lost during the Crimean War). Eakins had a small conning tower with viewing ports added to *Alligator* over the winter of 1862-63.

In the early spring of 1863, *Alligator* was assigned a new mission to destroy underwater obstacles barring the waters around Fort Sumpter in Charleston harbor. Admiral DuPont intended to use his squadron of ironclads to destroy the fort and finally take the town, but knew he would be hampered by obstructions and minefields. In late March *Alligator* began the long voyage to South Carolina under tow by USS *Sumpter*. Its route took it around stormy Cape Hatteras , the “Graveyard of the Atlantic ” which had already claimed USS *Monitor* and almost taken its fellow ironclad, USS *Passaic*

On April 2, 1863 , in a storm described as one of the most violent ever experienced by the captain of *Sumpter*, the lines connecting *Alligator* to its tow vessel began to part. As the small (47') submarine yawed back and forth in the violent waves, slowly filling with water from broken portholes and loosened iron plates, the decision was made to cut the remaining lines before the boat dragged down *Sumpter* as well. *Alligator* disappeared from the view of the men on *Sumpter* as they fought for their lives against the storm. Admiral DuPont's ironclad attack went in three days later, and was a dismal failure.

With the close of the war and de Villeroi's death in 1875, knowledge of this advanced submarine was all but lost. The United States, surrounded by protecting oceans, had little need to develop a

submarine force at this point in its history.

Now, the hunt is on for *Alligator*. In a project spearheaded by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and including the Navy & Marine Living History Association (NMLHA), historical research as well as probes into the waters off Cape Hatteras are underway. The biggest find so far: a complete set of original plans drawn by de Villeroi in 1863 and sent home to France!

While finding *Alligator* would be interesting from an historical perspective, there are also compelling reasons to develop the technology to locate something so small in such deep waters. These include national defense for, in the words of Rear Admiral Cohen of the Office of Naval Research, "If we can find *Alligator*, we can find anything!"

The ability to "find anything" is also critical for protecting our seas and shores from environmental dangers: for more than a century, metal-hulled vessels have been sinking and taking down cargoes of lethal chemicals and fuels. Corroding in the salty waters of the oceans, those ships are a ticking time bomb that will eventually poison our coasts. Finding them and securing them before it is too late is absolutely necessary.

If you would like to be informed of developments in the Hunt for the *Alligator*, visit either the NOAA or NMLHA websites and sign up for email updates. We'll let you know when new information is posted to the sites.

2010-2011 OFFICERS

Elected*

President, Richard Miller, 425-201-3234 or 206-808-8506, Milomiller882@msn.com

Vice-President/Successor, Steve Bass, sbass@monsonandbass.com

Immediate Past-President Mark Terry, 425-337-6246, markimlor@comcast.net

Vice-President, Programming, Pat Brady, 206-246-1603, patsbrady@comcast.net

Vice-President, Newsletter, Mark Terry (info above)

Treasurer, Stephen Pierce, 425-640-8808, horseless1@juno.com

Secretary, Larry Jilbert,

**Except for Immediate Past President, which is an automatic position.*

Appointed

Publicity Chairman, Stephen Pierce, (info above)

Assistant Treasurer, vacant

Dinner Reservations Coordinator, Rod Cameron, 206-524-4434, rodcam@comcast.net

Webmaster, Gary Larkin, 206-510-7033, gary.larkin@sound60.com

Official Greeter, Larry Cenotto, cenottothe5th@yahoo.com

Elected Board of Directors

Jeff Rombauer, Jim Dimond, Larry Jilbert

Website: <http://www.pscwrt.org/>

Puget Sound Civil War Round Table meets on the second Thursday of each month, September through May. The PSCWRT is a 501c3 organization, and as such, donations you make to the organization are tax deductible.

Membership Dues

Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$25 for a couple. You can mail your dues to the PSCWRT, c/o Stephen Pierce, 8008 190th Street SW, Edmonds, WA 98026. **Questions?** Email: horseless1@juno.com, or call him at 425-640-8808.

