

# THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER

## PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

[HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/](http://www.pscwrt.org/)  
**NOVEMBER, 2011**

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, November 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 (student rate), payable at the door, but reservations and meal choices are required.**

You have two choices to make reservations and meal choices:

1. Go to <http://www.pscwrt.org/> and click on "DINNER RESERVATIONS". Then follow the easy instructions to register your choices.

2. Call Jim Dimond at **253-277-3783** and let him know.

**Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, November 8.**

**LARRY TAGG WILL TALK ABOUT HIS LATEST BOOK, *THE UNPOPULAR MR. LINCOLN: THE STORY OF AMERICA'S MOST REVILED PRESIDENT***, focusing on the surprisingly low opinion many held of Lincoln, for reasons ranging from low regard for the institution of the presidency at the time, Lincoln's low electoral totals, his initial obscurity and personal idiosyncrasies, to the controversy over his proclamations. The author of *The Generals of Gettysburg*, Mr. Tagg teaches English and Drama in Sacramento, after an earlier career as a musician with the bands Uncle Rainbow and Bourgeois Tagg.

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

## **OREGON'S OWN HERO: EDWARD DICKINSON BAKER**

**President's Corner, November 2011**

**By Dick Miller**

Heroes, myth-making, and the Civil War in modern memory continue to be topics that fascinate me. Two months ago, in the September Washington Volunteer, I wrote about the myth of Robert E. Lee as "emancipationist." This month, with the October 21 sesquicentennial of the battle of Balls Bluff, affords me the opportunity to discuss a lesser-known, but also mythologized, Civil War hero, Edward Dickinson Baker. Baker, killed at Balls Bluff while attempting to rally the 71<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers, earned his place in history as the only sitting United States Senator to die in a military engagement. Although he had represented Oregon in the Senate for only a few months (and had been a resident of the state for not quite two years), Oregon memorialized her Civil War hero by naming Baker City and Baker County after him. Earlier this year, at the behest of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Governor John Kitzhaber signed into law Senate Bill 809 designating every February 24 as "Edward D. Baker Day" in Oregon.

The nation mourned Baker much as it had another “martyr”, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth who had been killed five months earlier dragging down the rebel flag from the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia. Both men had been close friends of Abraham Lincoln. An article on Baker published in the March 1908 issue of the Oregon Historical Society claimed that a grieving Lincoln had to be supported by Senators Trumbull and Browning as he entered the Senate chamber to hear his friend eulogized. Nesmith of Oregon, McDougall of California, Browning of Illinois, and Cowan of Pennsylvania—Senators from states in which Baker had resided since he and his English parents arrived in the United States in 1816—all rose to praise their fallen colleague. They praised his character, commented on his fame as an orator, and remembered his bravery in battle. But interestingly none of his Republican colleagues mentioned that he was a “fierce and consistent advocate of abolition,” as Oregon Senate Bill 809 asserted, or that his campaigning on behalf of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 had kept Oregon in the Union.

Knute Berger’s interesting talk in October on Oregon’s pre-war southern sympathies briefly touched on Baker’s tireless campaign against the Southern Democrat’s presidential candidate, John Breckinridge, and his running mate, then Oregon Senator Joseph Lane. The Republicans barely won Oregon’s popular vote, defeating the Southern Democrats by only 270 votes. Shortly after Lincoln’s election, Baker was appointed to the Senate seat vacated by Lane. Whether Baker actively campaigned on Lincoln’s behalf or simply opposed Lane’s election (some web sites on Baker suggest that he supported popular sovereignty and was more closely aligned in principle with the Northern Democrats) demands more research on my part. (Robert W. Johanssen’s Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict: The Pacific Northwest on the Eve of the Civil War might be a good place to start.)

But what does not need more research is Baker’s abysmal performance on October 21, 1861 at Balls Bluff. Like Lee at Gettysburg, Baker’s “blood” was up that day. Over the summer, he had regularly appeared in the Senate dressed in his uniform, with his sword laid upon his desk, ready for battle. As he arrived on the bluff on October 21, he approached Union Colonel William Lee and said, “I congratulate you upon the prospect of battle.” Unfortunately, Baker’s bravery and mettle should have been replaced by a good reconnaissance and a soldierly deployment of his troops. With their backs to the cliff and the Potomac below and the numerically superior Confederate forces surrounding them on three sides, the raw Union troops had little chance. Baker went down in a hail of bullets rallying his men, leaving them to surrender to the rebels or to be shot as they spilled down the cliff and attempted to re-cross the Potomac. Baker’s errors led to 900-1000 Union casualties at Balls Bluff.

It is not surprising that after his death, the country would remember Baker as a hero. It needed heroes in the early days of the war and after all, he was Abraham Lincoln’s close friend. His Republican colleagues had lost one of their own and soon formed the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War to investigate the failings that led to the debacle at Balls Bluff. But today? Why commemorate an officer—a political appointee--whose ineptitude cost the lives of countless Federal soldiers? It strikes me that making a hero out of Edward Dickinson Baker is not the way to remember the Civil War and the meaning it has for our country.

(Footnote: Stephen Sears writes about the trial of General Charles Pomeroy Stone, Baker’s superior at Balls Bluff, in his Controversies and Commanders, one of the books scheduled for

our December meeting. Although the chapter on Stone is not among the chapters assigned for discussion, it does treat of Sears' theme of the controversies surrounding McClellan and the McClellanite generals. Elsewhere in this month's Volunteer is the list of books up for review at the December 8 PSCWRT meeting.)

## **Only one more month to do your reading!**

By the time you read this, you will have about a month to complete the reading for the December meeting. I have added these reminders in each month's newsletter so that you will be prepared for that meeting, since we will be relying on each of you for your input regarding the topics coming from the three books that have been chosen, which are:

*Controversies and Commanders: Dispatches from the Army of the Potomac*, by Stephen W. Sears; *This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War* by James M. McPherson, and *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* by David W. Blight.

Remember that you are NOT required to read every page. You may choose to read only one or two of the books, but please try to be informed of the material. For the last time, here are the chapters/sections from each book that the discussion will be drawn from:

1) **Stephen W. Sears, Controversies and Commanders: Dispatches from the Army of the Potomac.** Read Preface and Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7, and 10, covering McClellan and the historians, McClellan's return to command after 2nd Bull Run, the revolt of McClellanite generals that undermined Burnside and Hooker, a defense of Hooker at Chancellorsville, and Sheridan's removal of the McClellanite Warren at Five Forks.

2) **James M. McPherson, This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War.** Read Chapters 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15, covering Confederate strategy, Lee's goals in the Gettysburg campaign, the Lost Cause textbook crusade, Grant and Sherman, Hard War, Lincoln and Grant on Vicksburg, Harvard at war, no peace without victory, and Lincoln and the historians.

3) **David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory.** Blight argues that postwar North and South achieved sectional reconciliation at the expense of the emancipationist vision and racial progress. Read the Prologue, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 (pages 237-254 only), 8 (pages 264-266 and 292-299 only), 9, 10 (pages 338-345 only), and the Epilogue, covering the transformation of decoration day, soldiers' memory and faith emphasizing soldiers' passion, heroism and memory immunized from causes of the war, sentimentalism vs. realism in war memory, the Lost Cause transformed into national reunion, dissenters from the Lost Cause, black memory and progress of the race, and the bronze relief memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts.

## **PSCWRT AN "ASSOCIATE" OF AMAZON.COM**

We are officially an associate of amazon.com! Mike Movius has been working to get this done, and Mike credits Dick Miller and Jeff Rombauer, who in his words helped him "put the last few pieces of the puzzle together". How does it work? If you will logon to the website at:

<http://www.pscwrt.org/reviews/> you will find several book reviews...followed by an Amazon.com widget. When you click onto the widget, you can purchase the book on amazon's website- and the Round Table will get 15% of the purchase price!

How can you help?

Provide Mike Movius a book review so other Round Table members will know what each other are reading, what's good and how to get it...quick, easy and at a savings. This is a service to ALL of the membership, while earning some revenue for the Round Table at the same time.

Even a short list of books you especially recommend; OR an itinerary of a recent trek you took and the guidebook you used will be helpful. In the coming days and perhaps weeks, Mike will be putting links to EVERY book mentioned on the website to Amazon.com using our unique codes. If we (as a club) can start buying books through our own website...we'll get 15%, and that is not only a benefit to your club, but, when coupled with a book review, it is a benefit to individual members.

Mike will be adding links for the December book discussion books next, to help support that effort.

Eventually, the Reviews section will not be the only one in which we will be linking items to Amazon. But, that is where it is starting. Send in your reviews!

## **WHAT'S NEW ON THE PSCWRT WEBSITE?**

### **CIVIL WAR TIMELINE**

How exactly did the state of South Carolina explain why they were leaving the union? And, was it different from what Texas or Florida reasoned? What did Jefferson Davis say at his inauguration as provisional and/or permanent president of the Confederacy? What words did Robert E. Lee use when he resigned his commission from the Union army? Was it personal in any way, did he mention his slaves and what was his mood? And, when President Lincoln suspended the right to habeas corpus in 1862, what was his reasoning?

If you were to go onto the website ([HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/](http://www.pscwrt.org/)), and click on the Civil War Timeline and choose 1861, for example, you will find answers to these and other questions nestled into the "accordion" style pages. Just click on the obvious links.

Because it is helpful to read the exact words of our civil war heroes, our webmaster has begun to add more depth to the website than we have ever experienced before. This is not only a work in progress (just think of the width and breadth of civil war literature). Most recently, he is looking to add the following:

- Special Order 191
- Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862
- the Militia Act of 1862
- the Secret Six and
- the Dred Scott decision

**What documents would you like to see on the website?** Just send your suggestions to [webmaster@pscwrt.org](mailto:webmaster@pscwrt.org) They will be greatly appreciated.

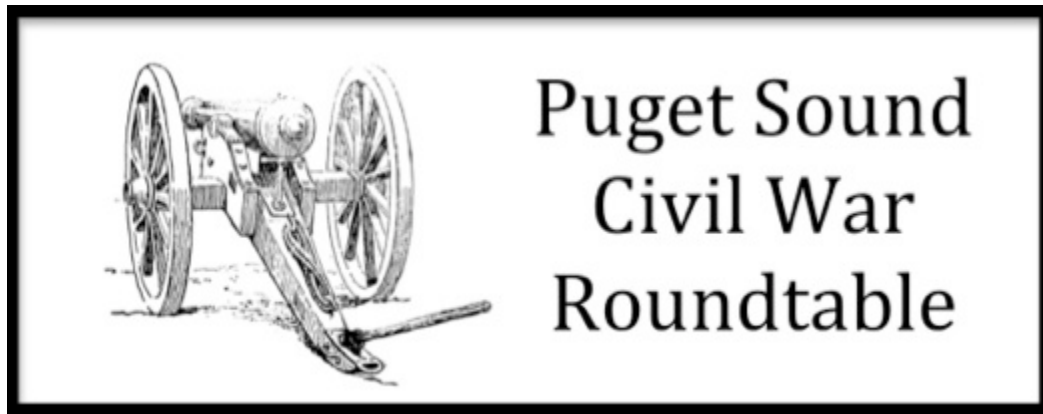
Here's another example of what you can find on the Civil War Timeline...click on 1863...go to July...and then click on Gettysburg. You will find a treasure trove of maps, official reports and a campaign analysis....and there is also a link to some videos!

## PSCWRT LOGO

One of the things that the Board has been pursuing is the development of a logo. As you are aware, logos have become an important part of the identity of any organization. For our round table, has been considering using the logo on shirts and hats, as well as buttons and name tags. Several logos have been proposed. The criteria the Board has been using for adoption include simplicity, identity and replication.

For the last several weeks, the latest entrant in the logo derby has been published in the WHAT's NEW page. If you haven't already looked at it and made a comment, please do so by logging onto the website at [www.pscwrt.org/new](http://www.pscwrt.org/new)

Below, is the logo in two separate aspects...Tell us what you think at [editor@pscwrt.org](mailto:editor@pscwrt.org).



## THE “LAST WORD”

By Mark R. Terry

This is a “Reader’s Digest” account of my trip to the 150<sup>th</sup> Battle of Ball’s Bluff Event, near Leesburg, Virginia. I cut it back from the three pages it was at first.

**Willard Hotel**, in Washington D.C. As in the past, the Willard is still is a place where the “movers and shakers” meet socially as they did 150 years ago. They have a nice exhibit showing the history of the hotel and some of the people who stayed there, including of course, President Lincoln.

**Point Lookout POW Camp**. Opened in August, 1863, Point Lookout, located at the southern tip of Maryland held 20,000 Confederate prisoners. Remote and desolate, the area really hasn’t changed much, although the camp is gone. There was a non-stop cold wind while we were there- brrr.

**White Oak Civil War Museum** (<http://www.whiteoakmuseum.com/>). Located across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, this privately run museum is a treasure trove of artifacts and information, especially regarding the camps of the Army of the Potomac during winter quarters 1862-63.

**North Anna River Battlefield Park**. Located along the south bank of the North Anna River, the park essentially preserves the Confederate earthworks built by the Army of Northern Virginia in the famous “inverted V” built in late May of 1864. The trenches, traverses, rifle pits and bombproofs are surprisingly well preserved. Much of this is probably due to the site being off the beaten track.

### **The Event: 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Battle of Ball’s Bluff**

As we like to do, our small our band of eight stepped off the first night for a march and camp out on our own. We ended up getting lost as someone had changed one of the directional signs! Our group eventually ended up marching to the edge of the Potomac River, way off course. Finally, after some countermarching, tired, sore and sweaty, we found a dry patch of ground and laid our blankets down to sleep. The next morning we marched back to the main event site. Prior to battalion drill, I was detached to be part of the color guard of the battalion. This would prove to be a good place to be later on. Our camps were about a 2 mile march from the original battlefield. At one point as the column enclosed two sides of a field, the shout “deer!” was heard. I looked over just in time to see a deer bolt right through our line of men, crash into a wire fence and then vault over it- first time I’d seen that in 18 years of reenacting. The battlefield was the actual site of the main fighting that took place 150 years before- a rare occurrence in reenacting. My company was detached and sent to the left to be deployed as skirmishers, while I stayed with the color company in the rear rank of the color guard. We’d been told that our part in the fight would not really be that much- to advance and retreat straight ahead, and that when we were finally decimated, the colors would not be captured, but go behind the stone wall of the small cemetery enclosing dead Federals from the 1861 battle. Sure enough, the Rebs (Mississippi and Virginia troops) appeared out of the far edge of the clearing and exchanged volleys with other Federal troops to our right and front. Our artillery posted directly to our front fired over and over. Finally we came forward and marched almost halfway across the field- as far as we would go as it turned out. With Confederate units moving through the woods on our right and left, outflanking our supporting troops, we were forced back. Directly in front, the Rebels boldly advanced, screaming out their “Rebel Yell”. This is where the “acting” in reenacting really began. One of our officers had been designated to play the role of Col. Edward Baker, commander of our 1<sup>st</sup> California. Being in the color guard of the same, I had a front row ticket. As the graycoats came closer, Baker stepped out in front of our unit, almost closer to the enemy

than to us. The Rebs seemed to hesitate, but finally fired and the Colonel was down! After the battle, "Col. Baker" told his story. It seems when he stepped out from our line to become a better target and re-create Baker's fate, the Rebs in our front stopped firing! It was an awkward moment. Finally to fulfill the scenario- the climax of the event- he began yelling at the Confederates in front of him "SHOOT ME! SHOOT ME!"- and they finally did. I doubt these words were uttered by the *real* Col. Baker.

After one more battle the following day, still in uniform, but with our gear stowed away, we drove north until we came to **Gettysburg**. Only being able to spend a couple hours, we focused on finding the monument to the 1<sup>st</sup> California, which after Ball's Bluff was designated the 71<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry. Their monument was easy to find- right at the apex of the stone walls at the Angle. From there, we walked across the field to the Tennessee and North Carolina Monuments, then south to the imposing Virginia monument with a mounted General Lee gazing towards the Federal line. As the sun went behind the South Mountain range, we completed the loop, approaching the Angle as Pickett's Division did in 1863- a fitting end to our Gettysburg visit. Our final Civil War site was the battlefield of **Monocacy**, Maryland on the way to Baltimore. We didn't get to spend too much time there, but enjoyed the visitor's center and talking with the historian there who pointed out the hill Lee's HQ was on during the time when Order 191 was lost during the Sharpsburg Campaign. Very cool!

**Photos of the Ball's Bluff Event:**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/cwpt/sets/72157622304360160/with/6276495017/>

**DUES & DONATIONS**

Now that the new season is beginning, here is your third reminder that membership dues are payable either at the meeting or by mail: \$20 per individual, \$25 for a couple. Also, donations are gratefully accepted. These will help secure speakers for our meetings. Please note that all donations are tax deductible as the PSCWRT is a 501(c)3 organization.

**We welcome your article or research submissions for the newsletter, but they may be edited. The deadline for the December, 2011 Washington Volunteer is Monday, November 21, 2011. Note that this is earlier than normal, but Thanksgiving is that week. Please have it in Mark Terry's hands via email or snailmail by then. Thank you!**

**2011-2012 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, Jeff Rombauer

Secretary, Larry Jilbert,

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

**Appointed**

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

Assistant Treasurer, vacant

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

Webmaster, Michael Movius

Official Greeter, Larry Cenotto, cenottothe5th@yahoo.com

**Elected Board of Directors:** Jim Dimond, Mike Movius, Rick Solomon