

THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER
PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/
JANUARY 2013

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, January 10, 2013

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.**

To make reservations and meal choices:

Call **Rod Cameron at 206-524-4434** and let him know what entrée you would like and how many will be attending.

Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, January 8, 2013.

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

STEVE RAYMOND WILL TELL OF THE BIRTH OF A REGIMENT, THE 78TH ILLINOIS INFANTRY, ESTABLISHED IN LATE SUMMER

1862. He will consider where its soldiers came from, why they enlisted in 1862 when they had not done so a year earlier, how the regiment was organized, who its officers were, and how they were appointed. In their own words, its soldiers describe how they adapted to camp life and learned to cook for themselves, cope with ill-fitting uniforms and poor weapons, and deal with the miseries of military drill. After just three weeks in service the regiment was summoned to what its soldiers thought would be the front, but instead turned out to be a long series of very unpleasant experiences. Steve Raymond, retired Seattle Times editor, is a long-time PSCWRT member. The story of the 78th Illinois is told in his tenth book, *In the Very Thickest of the Fight*, published by Globe Pequot Press. See Amazon.com at: http://www.amazon.com/Very-Thickest-Fight-Illinois-Volunteer/dp/0762782838/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1356590113&sr=1-1&keywords=steve+raymond+in+the+thickest+of+the+fight

IMPORTANT DISPATCHES

FEBRUARY ROUND TABLE MEETING SCHEDULED A WEEK EARLY!

Meetings of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month. However, next month there will be an exception. **The February, 2013 meeting will take place on Thursday, February 7, 2013**, a week earlier than normal. Please make note of this and plan accordingly. Also give thanks since it won't conflict with Valentine's Day, the second Thursday in February!!!

ANNUAL PSCWRT AUCTION

The Round Table auction is **tentatively scheduled for the May, 2013 meeting**. Although the board has not yet set the official date, this is the month we have scheduled it for the last couple of years. Keep your eyes and ears open as it may change. Meanwhile, you might want to think now about how you'd like to be involved. We are open to all kinds of donations, since anything valuable to you may also be of worth to others. Your generous donations and bidding on items helps raise funds to keep good speakers coming our way. Thanks for all of your help in the past- and for the future!

The following article is copied from the online blog "Mysteries and Conundrums", which focuses on the Civil War in the area of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania. It is written by noted historian and author John Hennessy, and I felt it was worth reprinting here, especially in light of last month's talk by Clay Mountcastle!

Here is the URL for it: <http://npsfrsp.wordpress.com/2012/12/10/a-momentous-decision-on-december-11-1862-the-fate-of-fredericksburg-and-the-changing-nature-of-war/#more-5969>

A MOMENTOUS DECISION ON DECEMBER 11, 1862— THE FATE OF FREDERICKSBURG AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF WAR

By John Hennessy

It's often overlooked, especially in Southern climes: the man most responsible for the town of Fredericksburg itself becoming a battlefield was Robert E. Lee. He fully understood that when he directed his men to contest the Union crossing at the river's edge, the Union army would respond in a way that would be unhealthy for Fredericksburg's neat urban landscape.

But that's not the decision I'm talking about today.

Let's speed ahead a few hours. Barksdale's men contest the crossing; the Union artillery responds with a bombardment intended to drive them out.

I'm not talking about that decision either. While destructive to the town, the Union decision to fire on the crossing sites was perfectly legitimate. There was little angst among the Union high command about that and certainly no surprise among the Confederates.¹

But when the bombardment of the crossings stopped and the Union bridge-builders again went to their work, Barksdale's men re-emerged again and again.

And that brings us to the decision I'm talking about.

Union chief of artillery Henry Jackson Hunt was of a mind common in the Army of the Potomac—convinced, as had been his friend George McClellan, that the war must be prosecuted carefully, without inflicting undue damage on Southern civilians or Southern "institutions" (slavery). The underlying philosophy was best described by Fitz John Porter in mid-1862:

"We will...reconquer the country in a manner which will develop Union feeling and cause Virginia to rejoin us. The army goes as a disciplined body, not an armed mob, compelled to respect private rights and to win the respect of the people we will be with."²

[A little aside for fun, because I think we don't describe people enough any more: Hunt was one of only four officers (at least so far as I can determine) who served in a command position in every major battle from Manassas to Appomattox (can you name the others?). Hooker described him as "opinionated but able," and a staff officer wrote that he had a complexion "about the color of an old drum-head." He was garrulous and much beloved by his fellow officers, who called him "Cupid."3]

A Forgotten but Dramatic Moment

On December 11 Hunt found himself both at odds with his commander and at a fulcrum point in the army's policy and practice of waging war.

In his report, Hunt took care to point out that the fire of his guns that morning (150 years ago this moment as I write this) was directed specifically at those buildings where Barksdale's men were thought to be secreted. When several attempts failed to subdue the Confederate infantry fire at the river, Burnside, no doubt frustrated, issued a momentous order. Hunt recorded, "All the batteries that could be brought to bear were now, by order of General Burnside, turned upon the town..." A general bombardment—not the targeted, purposeful (albeit ineffective) fire of the morning.

Edward Longacre, in his biography of Hunt, cites an 1886 letter I have not seen, from Hunt to C.C. Buel, editor of the Century War Series, the basis for *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. According to Longacre (page 131), Hunt was "shocked" by the directive and argued against the decision. Burnside remained adamant. Hunt complied, and as many as 183 guns fired into the hapless town. But Hunt and his conservative conscience could take it only so long. He soon ordered the bombardment stopped. Burnside just as quickly countermanded him and ordered the barrage to resume. And so Fredericksburg rocked and burned.

It was the first wanton, sanctioned, wholesale destruction inflicted on an American town by an American army. By expanding the scope of the bombardment beyond the likely hiding places of Confederates resisting the crossing, Burnside crossed a threshold that Hunt, Robert E. Lee, and many others recognized. It was a betrayal of the conservative principles of war that had so governed the high command of the Army of the Potomac since the beginning. And while neither this nor what followed would become policy, the decision certainly reflected the hardening of war.

[Regarding Lee, he likely watched the bombardment from his headquarters on a hill that now bears his name. John Esten Cooke noted that it was not the bombardment itself, but apparently its general nature that caused Lee to comment bitterly, "These people like to make war on the defenseless. It just suits them."]

A Decision that Doomed

Few if any others noted the change in the nature of the bombardment that afternoon, from specific to general. It's possible that only Hunt and Burnside were privy to it. It might be tempting, then, to say the change had little or no significance.

You'd be wrong. When the Union army entered the town that evening and all the next day, soldiers found a town not precisely shelled but generally ruined. Some soldiers saw in this an adoption of the high command an attitude that many of them had long espoused: hard war. A Connecticut soldier rejoiced, "the numerous secession families have been made to feel the awful horrors of war brought on by their treason." A man of the 140th New York proclaimed while he watched Fredericksburg burn that day, "At the present time we are witnessing a splendid sight, as the city of Fredericksburg is on fire....I call it beautiful because it is just the way that I wish to see our Generals operate, for then I begin to think that they mean business."4

Of all the things that lay the groundwork for the looting of Fredericksburg those ugly days, the general nature of the bombardment was by far the most important. **The general destruction inflicted by the bombardment implied, to the soldiers, sanction for the destruction to continue.** Chaplain John Stuckenburg of the 145th Pennsylvania state the perception clearly. "It seems to have been the intention of the generals to give the city for pillage to our soldiers, at least no efforts were made to check them in their work of plunder and of destruction."5

And so the looting of Fredericksburg followed—a horror to Hunt and other old-line officers of the Army. When the army's provost Marsena Patrick entered Fredericksburg on December 12, he thought the effect of the bombardment a "horrible sight." But, he said, "this was not the worst. The Soldiery were sacking the town!"6

This largely forgotten moment between Hunt and Burnside about noontime on December 11, 1862, begot the most dramatic and destructive days in Fredericksburg's history—a decision between two men that signaled one of those momentous shifts in the nature and bitterness of the war.

* * * * *

1 John Esten Cooke, "Fredericksburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, April 26, 1879. Cooke recorded that Lee fully expected the Union army to fire on Fredericksburg if his men resisted from the town.

2 Porter to Manton Marble, editor of the *New York World*, May 21, 1862, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress.

3 Joseph Hooker to Samuel Penniman Bates, February 18, 1878, Bates Papers, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and Morris Shaff, *The Battle of the Wilderness*, p. 45.

4 Letter of "True Blue" to the *Rochester Evening Express*, December 27, 1862.

5 Stuckenberg, *I'm surrounded by Methodists*, p. 38.

6 Patrick Diary, p. 188-189.

AH, THE FRENCH

By Mike Movius

One of the interesting things about Civil War study is that you get to find out useless information. Now, I mean useless in the most caring fashion. Take for instance the caste system of the old army. If you graduated at the top of a West Point class, you became an engineer. At the bottom, you were in the infantry. Even engineers were dichotomized between topographical, meaning you were concerned with cartography (map making), rather than the military engineering scum who built roads and bridges.

Abner Doubleday insisted that engineers used French in everyday language to flaunt their intellectual superiority. As I read his memoir **CHANCELLORSVILLE AND GETTYSBURG**, I had to continuously look up the meaning of his French terms. You will be impressive if you begin to use these words and phrases at round table meetings...really!

- Ventre à terre - Gallop
- Grand guards. - one of the posts of the second line belonging to a system of advance posts of an army.
- Tete-de-pont - A work thrown up at the end of a bridge nearest the enemy, for covering the communications across a river; a bridgehead.
- Disgarnish - To divest of garniture; to disfurnish; to dismantle.
- Garniture- Something that garnishes; an embellishment.
- Echelon - a formation in which units follow one another but are offset sufficiently to allow each unit a line of fire ahead or a group formed in this way.
- Objurgate - to scold or reprimand

I know. I know. But, they are all useless French to me.

[Editor's Note: the ante-bellum U.S. military hierarchy saw the French as the leading "experts" in warfare of the early 19th Century, hence their reliance on the French and borrowing their terminology. It does get somewhat confusing at times. Wonder what those leaders thought of the French after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870!]

THE LAST WORD

By Mark R. Terry

THE "LINCOLN" MOVIE

I was very glad to at last seen the movie that everyone has been discussing- Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln" starring Daniel Day-Lewis in the title role. As you know from my previous editorial, I was a bit skeptical that it could be pulled off and done right. Thankfully I was proved wrong and in most areas it went beyond my expectations. It would be difficult to say much more than has already been said, so I will keep my remarks short. Suffice it to say that it would be very hard to make a motion picture any better historically than this one has been made. Attention has been given to almost every detail and in the small

and big moments almost every scene rings true. One could nit-pick, but that would be missing the point, as the movie captures a moment in history that changed our nation for the better. I almost wish they could do a “prequel” or two to this movie, as the cast do such a superb job, it is a bit of a shame that more screen time couldn’t be spent showing Lincoln in his earlier life and then dealing with the many crises that affected the early part of his presidency. If you haven’t seen it, go immediately before it leaves the theater. And by all means pick it up when the DVD version comes out. I don’t think you will be disappointed...

NEW YEAR WISHES

As I write this, Christmas Day is behind us. The gifts have all been unwrapped, Christmas dinner is now leftovers in the fridge, and some of us have already made another trek to the mall to spend those gift cards or return that hideous necktie that you got from a distant relation...

Of course this also means that another year is ahead of us- 2013, or for those following the sesquicentennial calendar- the 150th Anniversary of the year 1863. It was certainly a momentous year in the history of the Civil War, with the Emancipation Proclamation, the bloody battles of Stone’s River, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Chickamauga, all of which made it into the Top Ten Bloodiest Battles of the Civil War list [7, 5, 1 & 2 respectively]. Of course probably the most decisive campaign- the siege and surrender of Vicksburg, Mississippi- opening the Mississippi River and splitting the Confederacy- on July 4, 1863. It should be an interesting year for commemorating these events and attending meetings of the PSCWRT.

Thank you for your membership in and support for the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table, and I hope and pray you and your family will be blessed in the year to come!

CIVIL WAR TRIVIA

Unlike other trivia questions we’ve had, you will NOT find the answers in the newsletter. Instead, we will ask these Civil War Trivia questions at the next meeting. There will be an additional “bonus question” that with the correct answer will allow you to have a special prize!

1. Who were the commanding generals at Stones River?
2. What happened to the chief of staff to the Union commanding general?
3. When did the Emancipation Proclamation go into effect?

DUES & DONATIONS

The PSCWRT season goes from September to the following May. Dues should be paid in September. 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. Mail to: Jeff Rombauer, Treasurer, 22306 255th Ave. SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038-7626. Call 425-432-1346, or email: jeffrombauer@foxiinternet.com.

We welcome your article or research submissions for the newsletter, but they may be edited. The deadline for the February, 2013 Washington Volunteer is Wednesday, January 23, 2013. Please have it in Mark Terry’s hands via email or snailmail by then. Thank you!

2012-2013 OFFICERS

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