

# THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER

## PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/  
FEBRUARY 2014

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 13, 2014**

**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 Tso's chicken, fried rice and fresh fruit.**

**Cost is \$21 for adults and \$10 for minors and college students, payable at the door, but reservations and meal choices are required. See below.**

To make reservations and meal choices, use one of these options (most preferred first):

Click on <http://www.pscwrt.org/about/dinner-reservations.php>

Email **Rod Cameron** at: [rodcam@comcast.net](mailto:rodcam@comcast.net)

Or lastly, call **Rod Cameron** at **206-524-4434**

**Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, February 11, 2014.**

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

## STEVE RAYMOND WILL DESCRIBE THE 78TH ILLINOIS INFANTRY'S BAPTISM OF FIRE.

After a year of service, the 78th Illinois had yet to "see the elephant," but in September 1863 the regiment faced its first combat on the second day at Chickamauga. The 78th drove a veteran Confederate unit from the crest of Horseshoe Ridge, and then held on against a furious series of counterattacks, losing nearly a hundred men and ending up under the temporary command of a young lieutenant. Its heroism helped General George Thomas earn his immortal nickname, the Rock of Chickamauga. PSCWRT Member Steve Raymond tells the full story of the 78<sup>th</sup> in his tenth book, *In the Very Thickest of the Fight*, published by Globe Pequot Press.

## IMPORTANT DISPATCHES

Starting Monday, **February 17** (President's Day), the **Washington State History Museum** in Tacoma will be opening an exhibit called "**Civil War Pathways in the Pacific Northwest**". This exhibit will run until July 6, 2014.

Given how little attention is paid to Civil War history in this neck of the woods, you are encouraged to see the exhibit and get involved in some of the events associated with it. According to the webpage

<http://www.washingtonhistory.org/page.aspx?id=191>, "On display will be over 150 original artifacts including rare items such as an early photograph of Abraham Lincoln, Isaac Stevens' sword, rare manuscripts, drawings from the U.S. National Archives, and a host of weapons,



*maps, sketches, and photographs. Together with the stories gleaned from the research project, visitors will experience a powerful exhibit connecting the issues of the past to those of today.*" Please note that there is an admission charge for the museum. Here is the press release for the exhibit: <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/files/library/civil-war-press.pdf>

In conjunction with the exhibit, there is also a "**Civil War Book Club**" that is meeting once a month in January, February and March. Interestingly, authors of two of the three books have connections with the PSCWRT. **Lorraine McConaghy** of MOHAI and the curator of this exhibit also wrote "*Free Boy: A True Story of Slave and Master*" which is the focus of the first meeting. The March meeting features the book "*Wilderness*" by **Lance Weller**, who gave a presentation to us about this book in September 2013.

Link for the book club: <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/files/library/civil-war-book.pdf>

The museum contacted the Round Table to see if anyone could donate items for the exhibit. PSCWRT Member Mark Terry was able to donate a replica single-breasted Confederate frock coat and slouch hat.

Lastly, a very well written Seattle Times article was published about "Civil War Pathways". I was thinking of reprinting it in the Washington Volunteer, but it was too long. Here is the link: [http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2022520345\\_0119coverhistoryprojectxml.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2022520345_0119coverhistoryprojectxml.html)

## **DATE FOR ANNUAL AUCTION SET!**

**The Annual Auction for the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table will be held at the April 10, 2014 meeting.** As you know, beyond the payment of dues and income from door prizes, the auction is the Round Table's only source of income.

The auction will be upon us before we know it, so PLEASE start collecting items to donate. Remember, items donated for the auction do not need to be "Civil War related". Anything that someone will bid on is fair game. Use your imagination and creativity!

Current plans are to hold the meeting upstairs at China Harbor for that event. Please put the date on your calendar and start pondering what to donate. There will be more information as the event draws closer...

## **ARTICLES**

**The "Original 'Magic Bullet' Revisited": An Example of Civil War research**  
By Mark R. Terry

You may remember an article in the November 2013 issue of the Washington Volunteer, which was entitled "The Original Magic Bullet". The story, from the Richmond Examiner of May 10, 1863 goes like this- in condensed form:

During a changing of the guard at Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, two Confederate soldiers, Private J. T. Newson of Co C, 32<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina and Private Charles Johnson of the 25<sup>th</sup>

Virginia Infantry Battalion got into a verbal scuffle. Newson brought his musket down in a threatening manner and Johnson immediately left the scene. Newson, still upset, came upon Private Martin Gripp of the 25<sup>th</sup>. Gripp challenged him to a fight if Newson would drop his weapon. When Newson hesitated, Gripp slapped him in the face. In response, Newson stepped back, leveled his musket and fired. The bullet clipped Gripp in the right shoulder, then went on to severely wound a “Private Frey” in the left shoulder and finally came to rest in the abdomen of a third victim, Private R. Morris- all three soldiers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Virginia Battalion. The article states that Frey’s left arm had to be amputated, and that Morris died of his wound. Meanwhile Newson ran away but was soon captured and held for trial.

There were enough details in the article that I was compelled to see what else I could find out about these men and what really happened that night. Using several online resources, especially Fold3, which specializes in military records, I was able to find some interesting information...

I first set about to determine whether the 32<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Infantry and the 25<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Battalion were in the Richmond area at the time. At the beginning of each regiment’s records is a summary which show where the unit was and what it did during the war. Although the 32<sup>nd</sup> as a regiment was not always in Richmond, there are several records which show that Company C was on “detached service” in the city.

The records of the 25<sup>th</sup> Virginia are more certain. The battalion was raised within the city for “local defense” in August, 1862. The summary of their duty in the war declares they were on guard duty “in and around the City of Richmond” up until the city came under attack in the spring/summer of 1864, when the battalion was ordered into the trenches north of the James River.

Now to the men involved in the incident. Looking up the shooter, Private J. T. Newson, Company C, Thirty-second North Carolina, I found a **Private John T. Newsom**. He enlisted on July 29, 1861 at the age of 19 in Northampton County, N.C. He was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporal. But then, between June and July, 1863, his rank was reduced to Private. There is no direct reference to the Libby Prison incident in Newsom’s records but his muster roll for September/October 1863 states he was “Absent- in confinement”, which was probably punishment for the shooting.

Although the hotheaded Tarheel was the villain in this tragedy, I was struck by his steadfastness as a soldier. For instance he is listed on a “Roll of Honor” for the regiment (no date). He stayed with the Army, even though sickness. He is listed as being in the hospital at Danville, Virginia three times in 1864. He last reported to the Farmville, Virginia hospital on March 16, 1865 and was released April 4, 1865, just days before Lee surrendered.

The man who was the initial instigator of the incident, but then had the wisdom to back off when he did, was Private Charles Johnson, Company F, Twenty-fifth Virginia battalion. Looking through the roster, this was probably **Private Charles J. Johnson**, who enlisted in Richmond on January 3, 1863. He transferred to the Richmond Hampden Artillery on February 3, 1864 but there seems to be no record of that and Johnson was said to have deserted.

Unlike Johnson, Private Martin Gripp, Company F, Twenty-fifth Virginia battalion surged right into the dispute and provoked Newsom into firing. I couldn’t find a “Martin”, but there was

someone very similar in a **James M. Grepp**. Could Martin have been his middle name? Grepp enlisted March 3, 1863 at Richmond. Sure enough, in a register of surgical cases, Grepp appears at General Hospital No. 9 in Richmond. "Flesh wound of shoulder joint not injured", dated October 15, 1863. Little else is recorded, except that after several months in the trenches, Grepp went "Absent without leave" in February, 1865. Union records show he deserted to the Army of the James in the area of Bermuda Hundred on February 9, 1865. Grepp took the Oath of Allegiance on February 13, 1865, signing the form with an "x". He was furnished passage to New York City from Washington D.C. February 15, 1865. That's one way to get out of the war! I also have to make note that in his physical description, Grepp is listed as 5'5" tall. No wonder he was so combative!

The third man mentioned was a "Private Fry", Company A, Twenty-fifth Virginia battalion. The only one who came close was Private **John Fry**, a baker, who at age 33, enlisted May 1, 1863 at Richmond. Records are spotty, but seem to show Fry always "sick". Fry was admitted to 21 Richmond Hospital October 3, 1863, which appears to be the date of the Libby incident. It was recorded that Fry's left arm was amputated, but not exactly when. Fry returned to his quarters October 5, 1863. On September 5, 1864 it was recorded that Fry was "permanently retired". Records indicate he later became a member of the Invalid Corps. Another record shows him with a gunshot wound in his *right* arm in March of 1865, so perhaps he came too close to the front lines in the last days of the war.

The last man listed was Private R. Morris, Company D, Twenty-fifth Virginia battalion. On the roster, there was a **Richard Morris**, farmer, age 28. Morris enlisted April 13, 1863 at Richmond. There were very few records for Morris. He was admitted to 21 Richmond Hospital on October 3, 1863. Morris died of a gunshot wound in Richmond, October 3. There is no more information about Morris.

What I found most interesting is that unless you had read the article and knew the circumstances, you would not know from the service records that any of these men were involved in a "friendly fire" incident. This shows how important it is in historical research to use as many different sources as possible to get to the truth.

The other factor is the date. Why the article states this incident took place in May of 1863 is a mystery, when all the dates from the records seem to indicate it happened on October 3, 1863. I don't have any explanation for that.

I hope this short article was of interest to you and that hopefully it will encourage you to do your own research. The following websites were accessed for this article: **Fold3.com**; **Ancestry.com** and **civilwardata.com**.

## CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUIZ- 150 YEARS AGO

*This month's quiz focuses on the events of February 1864. Interestingly enough, it was a busy month in Civil War history.*

1. On February 17, 1864 an historic "first" in naval warfare took place. What was it?

2. Union forces were defeated on February 20, 1864 in this, the only battle to take place in the State of Florida. What was the name of the battle?
3. On February 29, 1864 the U.S. Congress passed an act authorizing the rank of Lieutenant General. This was done to pave the way for the appointment of Ulysses S. Grant to that position. Who was the only other full Lieutenant General previous to Grant?

Remember, there will be a “bonus question” revealed at the meeting!

## THE LAST WORD

### “Nothing Happens Without You”

By Mark R. Terry

This is my fourth season of editing the newsletter. In that time, I’ve often encouraged more involvement in the Round Table by you, our membership. One of the things we struggle with on the Board is how to increase membership. Lately, we have pushed into the Brave New World of “social media” in order to increase awareness of our brand. Michael Movius has been instrumental in making that happen.

However, Mike can’t do it by himself. I cannot do it by myself. None of us can make it happen alone. But if we work TOGETHER, I have no doubt we can achieve the goal of increasing membership and interest in the PSCWRT.

What are some ways you can help?

- Join the Board. We could use your presence on the board so you can understand what makes the Round Table “click” and also be able to share your ideas, suggestions and goals as a part of the leadership of this organization.
- Write articles on your research into the Civil War, or find and share items from the Internet you believe the membership would be interested in. In every newsletter, I encourage article submissions to the newsletter.
- Respond honestly when you are asked for your opinion on what we need to do. Share ideas with the board, even if you aren’t interested to be on the board. Respond to questions in the newsletter such as “How has the Civil War changed *your* life?” which I just put out in the January newsletter. So far, no one has responded. Was it a dumb question to ask? Let us know!
- Volunteer when asked. Last season, we asked Blaine and Beverly Gunkel to organize the annual auction. They agreed and did great! Blaine emceed the auction to record donations last spring. What can you do? How could you use your talents to help the Round Table?
- Donate. Like any non-profit organization, we need funds to do what we do. Pat Brady, our VP of Programs, is always looking for new speakers. It costs money to do this, especially for those speakers coming in from out of state. By the way, donations are tax-deductible!
- Attend Meetings! It is too easy, especially this time of year, to not make the effort to attend our monthly meetings. This is the main reason we exist, so please come to meetings. I guarantee you will learn something new- and sometimes take home a book about the Civil War as well if you go for a door prize!

- Recruit! You may have family, friends and acquaintances who are interested in the Civil War. Invite them to a meeting. Pass along the newsletter to them. Let them know about the website (which, by the way, is one of the best Civil War websites on the 'Net). This is probably the most effective way to grow our membership.

I could go on, but I will stop. Let me say THANK YOU to all of you who have been involved, who read the newsletter and go on the website. Thank you for your communication and all your good ideas. We really appreciate you.

## **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 255<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038-7626. Call 425-432-1346, or email: [jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com](mailto:jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com).

**We welcome your article or research submissions for the newsletter, but they may be edited. The deadline for the March 2014 Washington Volunteer is Tuesday, February 25, 2014. Please have it in Mark Terry's hands via email or snailmail by then. Thank you!**

## **2013-2014 OFFICERS**

### **Elected:\***

President: David Palmer: [davidpalmer7@comcast.net](mailto:davidpalmer7@comcast.net)

Vice-President-Successor: Rick Solomon, [ricksolo@ricksolo.com](mailto:ricksolo@ricksolo.com)

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*\*Except for Past President, an automatic position.*

### **Appointed:**

Official Greeter, Larry Cenotto: [cenottothe5th@yahoo.com](mailto:cenottothe5th@yahoo.com)