



**August 10, 2009 Volume 23, Number 08**

**Monthly newsletter of the San Diego Civil War Round Table (SDCWRT)**

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## **August Meeting**

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We apologize for this month's Newsletter. For unforeseen technical difficulties the Skirmish Line for August 2009 is not available online but will be at the soonest possible date.

### **John Brown- "His Soul is Marching On"**

On Wednesday August 19, 2009 at 7:30 pm the SDCWRT will hold its 276th meeting at Palisades Presbyterian Church, 6301 Birchwood St. San Diego, CA 92120.

### **Rich Marcell will be speaking on John Brown.**

He is still one of the most controversial figures in American history. John Brown is to some people a great man of unparalleled moral courage and character, who sacrificed his own life to help free slaves. To others he was a crazy person, a murderer, a psychopath, the symbol of abolitionist extremism and purpose. After his raid on Harper's Ferry, October 16, 1860, it became nearly impossible to be impartial to the slavery debate.

The Harper's Ferry raid, and his execution made John Brown famous, and he will remain a permanent part of Civil War history, as some believe that after that act, war became inevitable. A month later, Abraham Lincoln, who didn't defend Brown's actions, was elected President. As states from the South began to secede they did so with a belief that the government of the United States was now in the hands of abolitionists, and that Brown's raid had been a prelude to what lay ahead.

## **Next Month Meeting "The September Social"**

The theme of this year's Social will be "Food of the Civil War". What did Billy Yank and Johnny Reb eat during the war? Join us and not only find out what kind of food was available to them, but you will also have a chance to sample some of the items for yourself. Dinner will be somewhat pot-luck with the club serving the main course. Dinner will be Beef, Ham, Baked Beans, Vegetables and Dessert. If you would like to bring something, please bring one of the following. Cornbread, A whole loaf of white bread (unsliced), salad or a side dish. There will also be a \$5.00 donation per person. It should be a fun evening and please feel free to bring a friend. Hope to see all on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September.

## Presentation of the Year

Vote for your favorite 2008-2009

Please Vote for one.

- The Man from Michigan, Tracking an Old Soldier  
July 16, 2008                      Pete Young
- Shootout at Cherbourg  
August 20, 2008                      Horace Dodd
- The Harvard Regiment at Gettysburg  
October 15, 2008                      Mark Shapiro
- Mercy in the Madness  
November 19, 2008                      Father Dennis Mikulanic, STD
- California Columns  
January 21, 2009                      Gene Armistead
- Civil War Camp Life  
March 18, 2009                      Dave Tooley
- Lee, Stuart and the Road to Perdition  
April 15, 2008                      Pedro Garcia
- Equines of the Civil War  
May 20, 2008                      Gene Armistead

Please vote for the best presentation of 2007-2008 by one of our local members and send to Bill Cooper at P.O. BOX 22369, SAN DIEGO, CA 92192-0369; give it to Bill at the regular meeting; or send Bill your vote on the internet at [trolley@cox.net](mailto:trolley@cox.net). We will also be voting at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## July Meeting

*By Travis Fuqua*

SDCWRT member Pete Young presented *The Leaders of the Luckless IX Corps* on July 15, 2009. The IX Corps is of specific fame because it was commanded by General Ambrose Burnside whose role and competence during the war was, and still is, the continued point of debate. Many of the other commanders in the IX Corps also had their fair share of fame and controversy.

The IX Corps was one army corps which consisted of two or more divisions, each of which had two or more brigades, of which, each had three or more regiments. The

size of the IX Corps varied throughout the war, but was usually around 20,000, but sometimes swelled to over 30,000 including artillery. The IX Corps was designated on July 22, 1861 and was placed under the command of Ambrose Burnside.

General Burnside was born on May 23, 1824 in Indiana and graduated from West Point in 1847. In the mid-1850s, he invented the Burnside carbine, but he lost the contract and vast amounts of money after some political and financial misfortunes. Although Burnside was popular with those under his command as many of his

subordinates adopted his unique style, he was not very popular on the national scene. He was criticized for his performance at the Battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, but some state that although he was not the best of generals, he was not as bad as we have been given to believe. Further, some have come to see that the failures attributed to him lie more in his superiors and he was their scapegoat. General Burnside did not command the IX Corps for the duration of the war but rather intermittently. He was finally relieved of command after the disaster of the Battle of the Crater in August of 1864 and resigned the next year. After the war, Burnside became involved in

politics in Rhode Island and he became very popular there, even representing that state in the United States Senate from 1874 to his death on September 13, 1881. He was also the first president of the National Rifle Association at its inception in 1871.

The commanders of the three divisions in the initial battles of the IX Corps were Isaac Stevens (1818-1862), Jesse Reno (1823-1862), and John G. Parke (1827-1900). General Stevens's time in the IX Corps was rather short as he was killed at the Battle of Chantilly on September 1, 1862. General Parke was in the IX Corps for the duration of the war and later served as its commander at the conclusion of the war after the removal of General Burnside. Parke remained in the Army for almost 25 years after the war and died in the City of Washington. General Reno was a popular general as he fought with his men, but he was killed at the Battle of South Mountain in Maryland in September of 1862. At the time of his death, he was acting commander of the IX Corps. General Reno's legacy lived on as the city of Reno, Nevada is named for him.

The first action that the IX Corps saw was the Second Battle of Bull Run in August of 1862. The IX Corps then continued on to the Maryland Campaign which included the Battle of Antietam in September. During the Maryland Campaign, General

Reno was in command as Burnside was in command of the right wing of the Army of the Potomac. Generals Orlando Willcox (1823-1907), Samuel Sturgis (1822-1889), Isaac Rodman (1822-1862), and Jacob Cox (1828-1900) were in command of the three divisions.

General Willcox had a lengthy career in the Army and was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1895 for gallantry at First Bull Run. He died in Canada. Sturgis was a cavalry commander who also had a lengthy career and fought the Indians after the war. General Rodman was from Rhode Island and was killed from injuries sustained at Antietam. General Cox was born in Canada to American parents, but later became involved in Ohio politics.

After Antietam, the IX Corps was involved at the Battle of Fredericksburg and the resulting failure led to a major blemish on the career of General Burnside. The IX Corps was transferred to the Western Theater. The IX Corps continued to the Vicksburg Campaign where it suffered heavy casualties from disease rather than battle, one of whom was division commander General Thomas Welsh who died of malaria. The IX Corps then proceeded to the Second Battle of Petersburg where it performed very well, but was forced to relinquish ground on account of a lack of support. The IX Corps under the command of General Burnside was involved at the disaster of the Battle of the Crater in which Burnside chose General James Ledlie to lead the assault in

a last minute decision. This was done because Burnside was instructed not to have black soldiers lead the charge and he chose Ledlie instead at the last minute. Ledlie's soldiers were not trained for the assault and he was not present at the assault as he was inebriated. Burnside received most of the blame despite the sudden change concerning the black soldiers coming from his superiors.

Division commanders during this period include William Burns (1825-1892), George Getty (1819-1901), John Sedgwick (1813-1864), William Smith (1824-1903), Robert Potter (1829-1887), James Ledlie (1832-1882), Thomas Welsh (1823-1863), John Hartranft (1830-1899), Thomas Leonidas Crittenden (1819-1893), Julius White (1816-1890), and Edward Ferrero (1831-1899). General Hartranft was especially noteworthy as he was the general who presided over the trial of the Lincoln conspirators and received in the Medal of Honor in 1886 for rallying several units during the chaos of First Bull Run. General Ferrero was also noteworthy in that he was a famed dance teacher who perhaps should have stayed such and was criticized for taking shelter along with Ledlie at the battle of the Crater.

The last action that the IX Corps took part in was the storming of Petersburg in April of 1865 after the lengthy siege since June of the previous year. The flags of the IX Corps were the first to fly over the captured city. After the fall of Petersburg, Richmond was evacuated and soon after the Confederacy fell and the war ended. The IX Corps was disbanded on July 27, 1865.

# Battlefield Preservation

*By Carla Schwartz*

*The ballot will be in the September Skirmish Line*

## Fort Gaines, AL

### History:

The history of Fort Gaines is intertwined with one of the most important battles of the Civil War. In 1864, the entrance to the last major Confederate shipping harbor, Mobile Bay, was guarded by two fortified batteries including Fort Gaines, on the eastern point of Dauphin Island, Alabama. Controlling Mobile Bay was crucial to ending Confederate resistance. Union Admiral David Farragut looked out over treacherous water mines, known then as torpedoes, littering the middle passage to the bay. When the lead boat, the ironclad USS *Tecumseh*, sank after striking a mine, panic and disorder overtook much of the fleet. To embolden his shaken forces, Farragut shouted the most famous command in maritime history, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!"

### Preservation:

Dredging practices in the Gulf of Mexico have greatly increased the rate of erosion on Dauphin Island. More than 400 feet of historic coastline have already been lost, complicating the continued operation of the Fort Gaines Historic Site. The loss of established dune systems means that the Gulf could eventually bisect the island, stranding Fort Gaines and other culturally important areas. Money would be used to stabilize its shoreline, including the possibility of an

engineered beach, which has proven successful for stabilizing neighboring beach areas in Alabama.

## Port Gibson, MS

### History:

Grant's army, on its way to Vicksburg moved across the river at Bruinsburg. McClernand's corps headed rapidly inland toward Port Gibson, about thirty miles south of Vicksburg. A small confederate force at Grand Gulf, outflanked, hurried towards Port Gibson to intercept McClernand. Throughout the day McClernand's men fought with those under Maj. Gen. John S. Bowen in a land of steep, sharp ridges and gullies, covered with thick vines and snaring undergrowth. Pushed slowly backward by the overwhelming Union force, Bowen retired to Port Gibson and then evacuated the town. Grant's bridgehead on the east side of the Mississippi was now secure and his army had room to move towards Jackson and Vicksburg. Grant famously called Port Gibson "a town too beautiful to burn."

### Preservation:

A controversial proposal to widen Church Street through the heart of town would threaten historic neighborhoods. The CWPT recently helped save 661 acres at the battlefield site. However, a proposed bypass could nullify this accomplishment.

## Port Republic, VA

### History:

The Battle of Port Republic was fought on June 9, 1862, in Rockingham County, Virginia, as part of Confederate Army Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's campaign through the Shenandoah Valley. Port Republic was a fierce contest between two equally determined foes and was the most costly battle fought by Jackson's Army of the Valley during its campaign. Together, the battles of Cross Keys (the previous day) and Port Republic were the decisive victories in Jackson's Valley Campaign, forcing the Union armies to retreat and leaving Jackson free to reinforce Gen. Robert E. Lee for the Seven Days Battles outside Richmond, Virginia.

### Preservation:

Money would be used to purchase farmland in the battlefield site and surrounding area. Also, aid would be given to private landowners, who face development pressure, to maintain their land in rural areas. Work is underway to prepare interpretive plans and a driving tour.

## Monocacy, MD

### History:

In the summer of 1864, with the Union army closing on Richmond and laying siege to nearby Petersburg, Confederate leaders devised a daring plan to threaten

Washington while the majority of the capital's defenders were deployed elsewhere. After crossing the Potomac at Shepherdstown, a small but well-led Confederate army moved on Washington from the north. On the morning of July 9, a hastily assembled Union force under the command of Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace encountered elements of Lt. Gen. Jubal Early's force on its trek to Washington. Badly outnumbered, the Federal force had little chance of defeating the Confederate; instead, their strategic goal was merely to hinder the invading enemy's advance long enough for reinforcements to be rushed to Washington by rail. Delayed by a day, Early arrived outside the capital on July 11, to find it defended by veterans freshly arrived from the siege of Petersburg. After losing the Battle of Fort Stevens and failing to capture the city, Early retraced his steps back into Virginia.

#### Preservation:

A proposal is currently under consideration by Frederick County, Md., to construct a waste-to-energy facility just outside the boundary of Monocacy National Battlefield. The incinerator on the facility would have a 150 foot tall smokestack, making it visible from much of the battlefield, and its footprint would be within the battlefield's boundary according to the National Register of Historic Places.

#### Spring Hill, TN

#### History:

Spring Hill was the prelude to the Battle of Franklin. On the night of

November 28, 1864, General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee marched toward Spring Hill to get astride Major General John M. Schofield's Union Army's life line. Cavalry skirmishing between Brig. General James H. Wilson's Union cavalry and Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest's Confederate troopers continued throughout the day as the Confederates advanced. On November 29, Hood's infantry crossed Duck River and converged on Spring Hill. In the meantime, Major General Schofield reinforced the troops holding the crossroads at Spring Hill. In late afternoon, the Federals repulsed a piecemeal Confederate infantry attack. During the night, the rest of Schofield's command passed from Columbia through Spring Hill to Franklin. This was, perhaps, Hood's best chance to isolate and defeat the Union army. The engagement has been described as "one of the most controversial non-fighting events of the entire war."

#### Preservation:

General Motors is seeking to sell approximately 500 acres of unused land surrounding the battlefield. It has volunteered to donate 100 acres for preservation. While that land will form a buffer around Rippavilla Plantation, plans call for high-density development — apartments, a hotel, a theater, restaurants, retail and office space — on approximately the 400 remaining acres. Money would be used to purchase land.

#### Wilderness, VA

#### History:

In the morning of May 5, 1864,

the Union V Corps attacked Ewell's Corps on the Orange Turnpike, while A.P. Hill's corps during the afternoon encountered Getty's Division (VI Corps) and Hancock's II Corps on the Plank Road. Fighting was fierce but inconclusive as both sides attempted to maneuver in the dense woods. Darkness halted the fighting, and both sides rushed forward reinforcements. At dawn on May 6, Hancock attacked along the Plank Road, driving Hill's Corps back in confusion. Longstreet's Corps arrived in time to prevent the collapse of the Confederate right flank. At noon, a devastating Confederate flank attack in Hamilton's Thicket sputtered out when Lieutenant General James Longstreet was wounded by his own men. The IX Corps (Burnside) moved against the Confederate center, but was repulsed. Union generals James S. Wadsworth and Alexander Hays were killed. Confederate generals John M. Jones, Micah Jenkins, and Leroy A. Stafford were killed. The battle was a tactical draw. Grant, however, did not retreat as had the other Union generals before him. On May 7, the Federals advanced by the left flank toward the crossroads of Spotsylvania Courthouse.

#### Preservation:

Preservationists are trying to block Wal-mart from building a 138,000-square-foot supercenter just a quarter mile from the edge of the national park. If built, it would be the fifth Wal-Mart within a 20-mile radius and ensure further commercial development nearby

## Featured Article

# The Website with the "Mostest" About the Civil War

(Submitted by SDCWRT member Gene Armistead)

There are thousands of web sites that provide information about the Civil War.

Many of are brief and provide information only about a particular locality, battle or person. Many others (far too many in my opinion) are not reliable as there is no check on the accuracy or veracity of information entered on the site. Fortunately there are some, like that of Louisiana State University or of the Gettysburg National Military Park, that are extremely good. One website exceeds them all - by a wide margin and perhaps even collectively - for the magnitude and accuracy of its Civil War information. It is absolutely essential for anyone wishing to study seriously any military aspect of the war to access this site by typing in the following URL on your keyboard:

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/browse.monographs/waro.html>

So, what is the result when this URL is entered? You get "The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies" - all 128 volumes of it. Often referred to as simply "O. R." or, better as "O. R. - Armies" the thousands of pages of text contained represent the most complete, accessible, unbiased documentation of the Civil War. This website, established and maintained by Columbia University, is an absolute godsend to the student of the Civil War

since printed copies of the entire set are difficult to find and extremely expensive. Collection and selection of materials for O. R. - Armies began in 1864 and published volume by volume beginning with the first four volumes in 1877 and continuing through 1901. The number of copies was limited to 11,000 with distribution to officers, contributors, Federal Deposit Libraries and those designated by members of the 4th Congress with only 700 copies made for sale. By 1917 only 197 complete sets were still available. Over the years sets were broken up, volumes and complete sets were lost to poor storage conditions and fire. Original sets of "O. R. - Armies" are therefore limited in availability. The first floor G.A.R. reading room of the Veterans Hall on Figueroa Street in Los Angeles has a complete set. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has microfilmed it. Perhaps your local genealogical center of the Church will have it available. There are other microfilm and microfiche copies but none are so readily available. The complete set has been reprinted in 1971-72, 1985 and 1992. The cost of course was prohibitive for most. This website meets a real need - ability to search and peruse these records at leisure in your own home.

It is important to understand what information can - or cannot - be found in "O. R. - Armies." When the program began there were three criteria: the records included must be (1) significant, (2)

official, and (3) prepared during the war. Determining which records were significant was, of course, a subjective decision. The intent of limiting inclusion to records prepared during the war was to better insure accuracy by preventing after the fact revisions (like justifications and exaggerations) of material. There was additional limitation by difficulty with lost Confederate records and in obtaining noncaptured records. The intention of seeking Confederate records was to prevent bias but

The number of Confederate records included is much less than the number of Union records. It was also decided to not include records that were published elsewhere. The War Dept. of course had no control or interest in the records of the Navy Department.

With these limitations, there are gaps in information contained in "O. R. - Armies" (and, of course, the copies of it available on the website):

1. No Naval records, therefore incomplete coverage of joint Army-Navy operations such as Vicksburg, Charleston Harbor, James River, for examples. (The 30 volumes of "O. R. - Navies" were published 1894 to 1917 are not internet accessible.)

2. No maps, charts or sketches. A separate volume, "O. R. - Atlas," that also includes plates of flags, corps badges, and equipments,

was published in 1905. (It has been reprinted most recently in 1983 and 2003.)

3. No records of the Adjutant General's Office (several different publications, 1875 through 1886) which would include courts martial.

4. No records of the Quartermaster General's Office (several different publications, 1862-1896.

5. No records of the Surgeon General's Office (3 vols. Of "Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion" published 1870-1888).

6. No records of the Secretary of War's Office.

7. No records of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War.

8. No muster rolls, personnel records, and unit movement records (these are available on National Archives microfilms - notably the Compiled Service Records) nor claims or contracts.

9. Incomplete Confederate records.

10. Only reports and correspondence subjectively considered "significant."

Keeping these limitations on content in mind, "O. R. - Armies" can be extremely useful. The website does not have its own index and the indices of "O. R. - Armies" are somewhat difficult to use. But it can be done! Here are the steps:

1. Turn on your computer and enter the URL provided above.

2. Scroll down to the final volume - No. 138 which is the General Index to all of the volumes. (There were no volumes 112 and 113.)

3. The screen will prompt for a simple, clean, or proximity search. It is easier to use the "Simple Search".

4. There will then be a prompt "Submit Query". Type in the name of the battle, the regimental information, or the name(s) of officers who may have submitted a report or signed correspondence. A "general" subject will not work.

5. The response will be a Volume Number.

6. Go back and find the first page of the volume(s) you now wish to check. This page will carry a summary of operations or correspondence periods covered within it. This information can help you determine if you really wish to look within the volume for your topic.

7. Go to the end of the volume and check the index - again, look for name of battle, name of regiment, or name of officer who may have submitted a report.

This index will provide you only with the first page of the report so you may have to read an entire multiple page report to check for information which you want.

And there you have it!

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/browse.monographs/waro.html>,

The website with the "mostest" - and most reliable - information about the Civil War. Good Hunting! And Enjoy!