



SOUTH BAY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

South Bay Civil War Roundtable Meeting Minutes December 3, 2024

Meeting Location: Holder's Country Inn Restaurant located at 10088 N Wolfe Rd STE 130, Cupertino, CA 95014 across from the former Vallco Fashion Mall and via ZOOM

Special Activities & Events:

2nd Annual Central Coast Conference

- Event Theme: Seldom Heard History of the Civil War
- Location: Stanton Center, Monterey, California
- Date: May 2-4, 2025
- Event URL: <https://whtours.org/seldom-heard-history-2025.html>

Officer Reports

President

No Report

Vice President

No Report

Treasurer

- SBCWRT Wells Fargo checking account as of 10/31/24 had a balance of \$2,266.48

Secretary

- Civil War Quiz: What Do You Know About The Spencer Rifle?
(Vernon Hayashida)
Meeting Attendance: Total: 11 (10 in-person; 1 via ZOOM)

This Month in Civil War History: November

1861: President Lincoln appoints General George B. McClellan as General-in-Chief of all United States armies.

1862: President Lincoln replaces General George McClellan with Major General Ambrose Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

1863: Battles for Chattanooga. US forces break the Confederate siege of the city in successive attacks. The most notable event is the storming of Lookout Mountain on November 24 and Battle of Missionary Ridge the following day. The decisive Federal victory sends the Confederate Army south into Georgia where General Bragg reorganizes his forces before resigning from command on November 30

1864: General Sherman's Army of Georgia begins the March to the Sea.

Person of the Month: John E. Wool Participant in Three Wars

War of 1812 (I)

- At outbreak of War of 1812, Wool was practicing attorney in Troy, NY
- Volunteered at age 28; commissioned a captain in 13th United States Infantry Regiment
- Battle of Queenston Heights
 - Shot through his thighs
 - Command involved with killing the British commander Isaac Brock
 - Battle was eventual American defeat

War of 1812 (II)

- Battle of Plattsburg
 - Promoted Major of Infantry Regiment
 - Fought until British suffered major setback by losing naval engagement against the U.S. Navy

After War of 1812

- Orphan with little formal education, Wool remained in military was promoted to Colonel and Inspector General on April 29, 1816
- Sent to Europe in 1832; observe military organizations and operations
- Participated in removal of the Cherokee from Georgia and Tennessee in the 1830s (Trail of Tears)
- In 1841, Wool promoted to Brigadier General in U.S. Army and years later in 1847 made commander of the Department of the East

At Start of Mexican-American War

- 4th in army seniority; 62 years old in 1846; Spare man of medium height
- Deeply religious and hated profanity
- Active demanding officer – called high-strung martinet

- Lew Wallace quote:
 - In short, there is no limit to the general's unpopularity
- Others considered him one of the most capable officers in the United States Army and a superb organizer

Mexican-American War

- Assigned command of Center Division and led Chihuahuan Expedition, which resulted in capture of Saltillo
- At Battle of Buena Vista; scouted the defensive position
- Wool's leadership was recognized with a Congressional sword, a vote of thanks, and the brevet of Major General
- After battle, commanded the occupation forces of northern Mexico

Eve of the Civil War

- Most senior of five highest general officers (along with Winfield Scott, David E. Twiggs, William S. Harney, and Joseph E. Johnston)
- Aged 77; ranked as Brigadier General for past 20 peace-time years
- Commanded Department of the East
- Was oldest general on either side of the ensuing Civil War
- Wool still reasonably fit; could mount a horse (unlike Winfield Scott)

Civil War

- August 1861, John Ellis Wool named commander of Army Department of Virginia; held until June 1862
- Equipped first regiments sent from New York to the nation's capital
- Quick and decisive moves secured Fort Monroe, Virginia, for the Union
- Wool thought McClellan was not aggressive enough in push towards Richmond; in May 1862, he sent troops to occupy the Norfolk Navy yard
- Was promoted to a full Major General in the regular army thereby becoming only the 23rd man to hold this rank
- Commander of the Middle Department in June 1862, which then became the VIII Corps on July 22, 1862
- Served as 1st Commander of 8th Corps until December 22, 1862

Civil War and Retirement

- On January 3, 1863, again assumed command of the Department of the East where he served until July 18, 1863
- Led troops to regain control in New York City during and after draft riots in July 1863
- Despite tiny force, Wool contained situation until reinforcements arrived
- During July 13–17, 1863 was de facto Military Commander of NYC
- On August 1, President Lincoln sent an order retiring Wool from service after 51 years in the Army

- Wool believed he was still healthy and fit enough for duty, was stunned and outraged at his dismissal and wrote a series of letters to the War Department in protest, but to no avail
- He died on November 10, 1869, in Troy, NY

Historian

Fitz John Porter – Court Martial

- The court-martial of Fitz John Porter (November 25, 1862 – January 22, 1863) was a major event of the American Civil War.
- Major General Fitz John Porter was found guilty of disobeying a lawful order and misconduct in front of the enemy, and was removed from command based on internal political machinations of the Union Army.
- The court-martial was later found to be unjust and overturned, and Porter was reinstated in the United States Army

Other Topics

Political Cartoonist Thomas Nast - Tonya McQuade

- Link to the article Tonya McQuade wrote Christmas 2023 for Emerging Civil War about political cartoonist Thomas Nast's Civil War illustrations of Santa Claus for Harper's Weekly.

URL: <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2023/12/24/how-civil-war-cartoonist-thomas-nash-created-our-image-of-santa-claus-and-turned-santa-into-a-full-fledged-union-supporter/>

November Presentation

Speaker: Kristin Patterson

Topic: “How the State of Wisconsin Assisted Civil War Soldiers’ Families”

December – No Meeting

January Presentation

Speaker: Ron Vaughan

Topic: “The Battle Of Little Round Top -- More Than Just Chamberlain!”