

National Civil War Association

Dispatch

MARCH 2020



NCWA1863.org

P.O. Box 266, Santa Clara, California 95052

NEXT COMBINED BOARD MEETING:

Saturday, April 4, 2020, 11:00 a.m.

This meeting will be a telephone conference.

Details to follow.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

ELK GROVE TACTICAL CANCELLED

The NCWA Administrative Board would like the membership to know that the Board is fully aware of the current coronavirus situation that is overtaking our communities. We are aware that it will be affecting our reenactments. We will be making every reasonable effort to maintain our activity schedule, but will do so within the bounds set fourth by the Department of Health of the State of California. We will not give in to panic, but will take into consideration every possibility for the safety of our members and supporters.

Therefore, we are very sorry to have to cancel this weekend's tactical at Mahon Ranch. With six Bay Area counties under "shelter in place" orders and the governor's call for gatherings of no more than 10 people, we feel it would be irresponsible to continue with plans for the tactical, much as we all would have enjoyed it. We will keep you informed about upcoming events; we are hoping to proceed with our first event of the season, also at Mahon Ranch in Elk Grove, on the weekend of May 16 and 17. In the meantime, stay safe and stay healthy.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello, NCWA members. My name is Skott Borello, your 2020 president.

I have been told that it is appropriate for an incoming president to address the membership, so here goes. Last year's Administrative Board, led by President Jon Nickerson-Tremayne, did a phenomenal amount of work for the club. My intention is to follow through with the endeavors that were initiated by that board. My plan is to focus on continuing to develop the new events—Marysville, Elk Grove, and Half Moon Bay; to strengthen Tres Pinos, and to support Angel Island and Duncan's Mills. Additionally, we will continue recruiting efforts. With that in mind, we are working on a mobile club information booth that can easily be transported to any event by any person with a towing vehicle. We are actively seeking volunteers to man that booth starting with our first event in May.

The plan for Flo, the club's 3-inch ordnance rifle, is that the club will retain ownership of the gun for one year as an experiment for recruiting and promotion, and as a nucleus for a new artillery unit for both current members and new ones who have not yet decided where they wish to participate.

The club has ceased spending money on the storage unit. Its contents have been moved and are currently awaiting completion of a club utility trailer. My personal thanks to Debra Johnson, Cosme Muñoz, Nelson Snook, Mike Sanders and Jeff Polder for all their hard work, and especially Cosme and Yvonne Muñoz for temporary storage of club's materials and donation of the trailer frame.

We are hoping to hold a ball at the beginning of next year and have a committee exploring that possibility. The potential date would be the 2nd or 3rd weekend of January, and the probable location would be in Lincoln, California, north of Sacramento. We are looking forward to this possibility to celebrate our reenacting year. The board would appreciate the membership's input, thoughts and feedback to help make this happen.

Skott Borello
President, NCWA



FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Three quick little items for everyone as we kick off 2020:

First: I want to thank everyone who took the time to vote in the 2020 election. That few minutes it took to fill out and return your ballot may not seem like much, but it shows that you care about this club and you want it to continue on into the future. For that support, I am grateful.

Second: the 2020 schedule has changed just a bit, so make sure to look it over either here or on our website (reminder, use NCWA1863.org) and start making your plans for the events you will be attending. Although we hope that everyone will attend all events, we all know that may not be realistic. I can assure you that you will be welcome at any and every event you are able to attend.

And finally: please get your membership forms filled out and sent in! It makes the process go much smoother if this is done early in the year. Both your club secretary and treasurer will appreciate you taking care of that pesky little detail before the first event of the year. And if you fill out your safety test ahead of time and bring it to your first event, your Mayor will certainly be grateful!

OK, now to get started on all those things on the To-Do list that I still have not gotten to yet...

Your 2020 Town Counsel:

Lynne Ashby, Mayor townplanner@comcast.net

Debra Johnson, Vice Mayor johnsondle@sbcglobal.net

Susan Pfiefer, Town Clerk spfiefer@comcast.net



A THOUGHT FROM THE 9TH VA CAVALRY

As commander of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, I would like to thank other re-enactors in the club for bearing with appearance of the cavalymen hamming it up on the battlefield or the seeming to be immortal. Our mounted troopers do take hits as frequently as possible, but only a few of us have the ability to take hits and fall from a moving horse safely. PACWAR actually discourages such activity (though we do it anyway). Some cavalymen are just not physically able to take such hits. So, when you fire a volley at mounted cavalymen and no soldiers hit the ground, please be patient. We are doing our best.

Skott Borello
Commander
9th Virginia Cavalry



ELECTION RESULTS

President: Skott Borello
Vice President: Jon Nickerson-Tremayne
Secretary: Melani Van Petten
Treasurer: Marcelo Pontin
Civilian Mayor: Lynne Ashby
Vice Mayor: Debra Johnson
Town Clerk: Susan Pfiefer
Federal Brigade Commander: Charles Kenyon
Confederate Brigade Commander: Jon Nickerson-Tremayne
Other positions empty or declined

CIVIL WAR MEDICINE

Lest we forget...

During the 1860s, doctors had yet to develop bacteriology and were generally ignorant of the causes of disease. Generally, Civil War doctors underwent two years of medical school, though some pursued more. Most Civil War surgeons had never treated a gunshot wound and many had never performed surgery. Medical boards admitted many "quacks," with little to no qualification. Yet, for the most part, the Civil War doctor (as understaffed, underqualified, and under-supplied as he was) did the best he could, muddling through the so-called "medical middle ages." Some 10,000 surgeons served in the Union army and about 4,000 served in the Confederate. Medicine made significant gains during the course of the war. However, it was the tragedy of the era that medical knowledge of the 1860s had not yet encompassed the use of sterile dressings, antiseptic surgery, and the recognition of the importance of sanitation and hygiene. As a result, thousands died from diseases such as typhoid or dysentery.

The deadliest thing that faced the Civil War soldier was disease. For every soldier who died in battle, two died of disease. In particular, intestinal complaints such as dysentery and diarrhea claimed many lives. In fact, diarrhea and dysentery alone claimed more men than did battle wounds. The Civil War soldier also faced outbreaks of measles, small pox, malaria, pneumonia, or camp itch. Soldiers were exposed to malaria when camping in damp areas which were conducive to breeding mosquitos, while camp itch was caused by insects or a skin disease. In brief, the high incidence of disease was caused by a) inadequate physical examination of recruits; b) ignorance; c) the rural origin of my soldiers; d) neglect of camp hygiene; e) insects and vermin; f) exposure; g) lack of clothing and shoes; h) poor food and water. Many unqualified recruits entered the Army and diseases cruelly weeded out those who should have been excluded by physical exams. There was no knowledge of the causes of disease, no Koch's postulates. Troops from rural areas were crowded together for the first time with large numbers of other individuals and got diseases they had no immunity to. Neglect of camp hygiene was a common problem as well. Ignorance of camp sanitation and scanty knowledge about how disease was carried led to a sort of "trial and error" system.



Both Armies faced problems with mosquitos and lice. Exposure turned many a cold into a case of pneumonia, and complicated other ailments. Pneumonia was the third leading killer disease of the war, after typhoid and dysentery. Lack of shoes and proper clothing further complicated the problem, especially in the Confederacy. The diet of the Civil War soldier was somewhere between barely palatable to absolutely awful. It was a wonder they did not all die of acute indigestion! It was estimated that 995 of 1000 Union troops eventually contracted chronic diarrhea or dysentery; their Confederate counterparts suffered similarly. Disease was particularly rampant in the prisoner-of-war camps, whose conditions were generally worse than the army camps.

To halt disease, doctors used many cures. For bowel complaints, open bowels were treated with a plug of opium. Closed bowels were treated with the infamous "blue mass"... a mixture of mercury and chalk. For scurvy, doctors prescribed green vegetables. Respiratory problems, such as pneumonia and bronchitis were treated with dosing of opium or sometimes quinine and mustard plasters. Sometimes bleeding was also used. Malaria could be treated with quinine, or sometimes even turpentine if quinine was not available. Camp itch could be treated by ridding the body of the pests or with poke-root solution. Whiskey and other forms of alcohol also were used to treat wounds and disease ... though of questionable medical value, whiskey did relieve some pain.

Battlefield surgery was also at best archaic. Doctors often took over houses, churches, schools, even barns for hospitals. The field hospital was located near the front lines—sometimes only a mile behind the lines—and was marked with (in the Federal Army from 1862 on) with a yellow flag with a green "H". Anesthesia's first recorded use was in 1846 and was commonly in use during the Civil War. In fact, there are 800,000 recorded cases of its use. Chloroform was the most common anesthetic, used in 75% of operations. In a sample of 8,900 uses of anesthesia, only 43 deaths were attributed to the anesthetic, a remarkable mortality rate of 0.4%. Anesthesia was usually administered by the open-drop technique. The anesthetic was applied to a cloth held over the patient's mouth and nose and was withdrawn after the patient was unconscious. A capable surgeon could amputate a limb in 10 minutes. Surgeons worked all night, with piles of limbs reaching four or five feet. Lack of water and time meant they did not wash off hands or instruments.



Bloody fingers often were used as probes. Bloody knives were used as scalpels. Doctors operated in pus stained coats. Everything about Civil War surgery was septic. The antiseptic era and Lister's pioneering works in medicine were in the future. Blood poisoning was common and often very deadly. Surgical fevers and gangrene were constant threats. One witness described surgery as such: "Tables about breast high had been erected upon which the screaming victims were having legs and arms cut off. The surgeons and their assistants, stripped to the waist and bespattered with blood, stood around, some holding the poor fellows while others, armed with long, bloody knives and saws, cut and sawed away with frightful rapidity, throwing the mangled limbs on a pile nearby as soon as removed." If a soldier survived the table, he faced the awful surgical fevers. However, about 75% of amputees did survive.

There were some advances, mainly in the field of military medicine. Jonathan Letterman, revolutionized the Ambulance Corps system. With the use of anesthesia, more complicated surgeries could be performed. Better and more complete records were kept during this period than they had been before. The Union even set up a medical museum where visitors can still see the shattered leg of flamboyant General Daniel Sickles who lost his leg at the Trostle Farm at the battle of Gettysburg when a cannon ball literally left it hanging by shreds of flesh.

The Civil War "sawbones" was doing the best he could. Sadly when American decided to kill American from 1861 to 1865, the medical field was not yet capable of dealing with the disease and the massive injuries caused by industrial warfare.

*This article has been condensed from **USCivilWar.Net** The full article can be read at:
<https://ehistory.osu.edu/exhibitions/cwsurgeon/cwsurgeon/introduction>*

2020 CIVIL WAR REENACTING EVENT SCHEDULE

DATES	EVENT	SPONSOR
The Elk Grove Tactical has been cancelled		
May 16-17 School Day May 15	Elk Grove	NCWA
June 13-14	Angel Island	NCWA
July 25-26	Duncan's Mills	CHAS
September 19-20 School Day September 18	Tres Pinos	NCWA
October 3-4 School Day October 2	Marysville	NCWA
November 7-8 School Day November 6	Half Moon Bay	NCWA

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE GO TO
[NCWA1863.ORG/EVENT-CALENDAR/](https://ncwa1863.org/event-calendar/)**

ncwa1863.org

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NCWA CONTACT INFORMATION

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