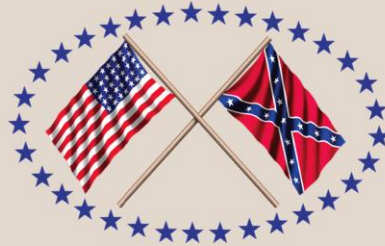
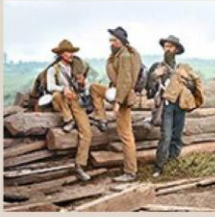


# Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)

[www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

Number 128 Dec 2024 – Jan 2025

## President's AGM Report

Dear Members,

As far as the Round Table is concerned, 2024 was the year of the nomads. Our last meeting at The Roseville Club, before it closed for reconstruction, occurred on 20 February 2024. We then tried meeting in Waitara at the Magpies Club in April, June and August. It is a good club but not entirely suited to our needs. This caused us to try the Chatswood Club from October onwards, with a special arrangement in regard to a buffet style dinner, which has worked well.

Since the last Annual General Meeting and including that meeting, we have held six in-person meetings.

I again thank our wonderful committee for making the task of being President of our Round Table easy. The Committee for 2024 has again been John Morrison (Program Director and Vice President), Dan Howard (Secretary), Wayne Morrison (Treasurer), Jannette Greenwood (Newsletter Editor), Peter Zacharatos (Membership Director), and Bruce McLennan (Immediate Past President). The Committee has held six formal minuted meetings and many additional informal discussions through the year.

We held member meetings on 6 December 2023, 20 February, 16 April, 18 June, 19 August, 8 October and now this AGM on 2 December 2024. Six again excellent editions of the newsletter have been published in 2024. The newsletters can all be found on our website and are an invaluable record of our presentations and proceedings.

*cont. p. 2*

## Our Next Meeting

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 6.00pm**  
**at The Chatswood Club**  
**11 Help Street Chatswood**  
*A short walk from the station or*  
*Free parking on site*

**Bookings required - by **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 6pm** on this link:**  
<https://www.trybooking.com/CYYMZ>

## Topics

### ***Winning the Coles Quiz***

Emeritus Life Member **Len Traynor** will tell us how he won the Coles Quiz, which gave him the opportunity to go to the US

### ***We Won the War – Now let us Win the Peace – Reconstruction***

We are fortunate to have as our speaker **Prof. Frances Clarke** from the University of Sydney. Prof. Clarke recently won the Lincoln Prize for her latest book. She will have copies to sell and sign.

The topic relates to a common theme at the end of a war. In his second inaugural address, President Lincoln spoke of "*With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right*". His intention was to let the South down easy since he believed that both sides shared responsibility for the war and both sides had borne the terrible cost of the war. So began the period of Reconstruction after the war.

On our **Website** you will always find the date of our next meeting. [www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

## President's AGM Report (cont.)

The recipient of the Len Traynor Award for contribution to the Newsletter was John Verhoeven in 2023 and the awardee for 2024 has been chosen and it will be presented at the December meeting.

The newsletters record that presentations throughout the year included **"Horses and Mules as Pack Animals"** (John Morrison), **"The Relationship between Horse and Rider including some famous ones"** (Mike Bosch), **"Artillery"** (Mike Bosch), **"Pack Horses and Wagons"** (Denis Smith), **"Civil War Cavalry"** (John Morrison), **"The Peninsula Campaign: Hampton Roads to Seven Pines March-July 1862"** (Tony Kovacevic), **"The Jackson Valley Campaign"** (Peter Zacharatos), **"Hospital Sketches – Louisa May Alcott's Nursing Experiences"** (Tom Dixen), **"The Seven Days Battles"** (John Morrison), **"General John C. Frémont 1813-1891"** (Bob Carr), **"The Battle of Second Manassas 28-30 August 1862"** (Peter Zacharatos), **"Henry Wager Halleck 'Old Brains'"** (Ian McIntyre), **"Corinth – The Crossroads of the Confederacy 29 April – 30 May 1862"** (John Morrison), **"The Maryland Campaign of 4-20 September 1862"** (John Morrison), **"The Emancipation Proclamation"** (Dan Howard), **"Lee's Lost Order"** (Wayne Morrison), **"Antietam – Burnside's Bridge"** (Ian McIntyre), **"The Battle of Antietam – America's Bloodiest Day 17 September 1862"** (John Morrison).

It turned out to be a busy year.

Thank you to all presenters. Much appreciated.

Best wishes to all for 2025.

*Ian McIntyre*

## Club Parking

The club offers free parking, with ample space for up to 50 vehicles. The parking lot provides direct access to the club.

### How to Access the Parking:

□ The entrance to the parking lot is located at the back of the club, accessible via McIntosh Street.

□ For GPS directions, enter '12 McIntosh Street, Chatswood.' This will guide you to the general area.

□ Upon arrival, look for the parking complex with signage that reads 'Club Parking' in black lettering. There are internal stairs up to the Club. This image should assist you:



12 McIntosh St

## Our Last Meeting

The Christmas meeting was well-attended, and members enjoyed a buffet dinner followed by a very nice dessert. They also appreciated the opportunity to catch up with old friends and new members.



**The recipient of the Leonard Traynor Award for Contribution to the Newsletter was announced. Congratulations to Tom Dixen for his fascinating and detailed article he termed "Hospital Sketches" – about Louisa May Alcott's experiences. He will receive the award at the next meeting.**

*We were privileged to have two guest speakers both members of the Round Table give very informative presentations to the Christmas meeting.*

## Fascinating Facts about Union Generals Len Traynor

*Esteemed Life Member Len Traynor gave an engaging talk off the top of his head, providing many fascinating statistics related to Union generals.*



Union generals were the architects both of winning strategies and of overwhelming defeats. No matter how good, bad or indifferent they were, the War could not have been won without them. Some are still household names; others are forgotten.

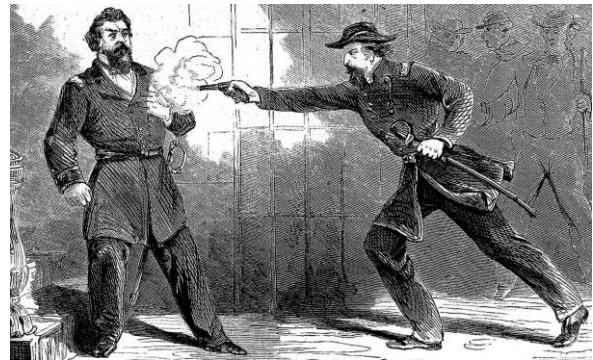
In 1860, prior to the breakup of the States, the United States Regular Army was 15,295 enlisted men and 1,189 officers, of which 56 were Majors or above. There were 5 line Generals: General John Wool, who was born in 1784; Winfield Scott, 1786; David Twiggs, 1790; Robert Patterson, 1792; and William Harney, 1800. When David Twiggs was dismissed for treason, he was replaced by Edwin Bose Sumner Jr., who was born in 1797. These were men of mature years. The average age of a Union General was 39.

In the course of the Civil War, the Union Army had 583 generals, of whom 374 were still serving at the end of hostilities. Of the 583, there were 450 Brigadier Generals, 132 Major Generals and, on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1864, one Lieutenant General. Of those 583, 217 were West Point graduates; 11 were non-graduates; 9 were graduates of other military colleges; 40 had served as officers in various states' militia; 36 were, or had been, regular Army officers; 62 were Mexican War veterans; 20 had served as officers in foreign armies; and 188 approximately – or one-third – had no military experience before the Civil War at all. This gives some support to the comment by a foreign military observer, who said that "The Civil War was fought by armed mobs mostly commanded by amateurs".

Of the 583 generals, 47 were killed in action or died of wounds and 18 died for other reasons. As an example, Ormsby McKnight Mitchell, the architect of the Andrews Raid, died of yellow fever on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1862, Edwin Bose Sumner Jr., the oldest core Commander, died of fever on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1863 aged 66 and John

Buford, the hero of Gettysburg, died of typhoid on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1863.

Of the remaining Generals, 6 retired, 22 had their commissions revoked and 1 was murdered – Major General William "Bull" Nelson on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1862 when he had a verbal altercation with a fellow Union General, Jefferson Davis. According to one witness, it became heated and there were two versions: "Bull" Nelson, as he was called, called Davis an "insolent puppy" and slapped his face. Another said he flicked a ball of paper in his face. Whatever happened, Davis was so incensed that he produced a handgun and shot Nelson, who died within the hour. Due to his powerful political friends, Davis was not arrested, charged, or brought to trial, and served out the rest of the war as a division commander.



One general committed suicide – Frank Patterson shot himself on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1862, rather than face a court-martial. Three were cashiered: Fitz John Porter was brought to trial on various charges related to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Manassas. His trial, which began on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1862 and terminated on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1863, was, until the 1920s, the longest military trial in US history.

The second was Justus McKinstry. It was claimed he was the greatest rogue to ever wear a blue uniform. As Quartermaster in St Louis, he took generous bribes in return for issuing lucrative government contracts. One of these bribes was a silver tea service for his wife which, in today's value, was worth over \$100,000. When General Hunter took command, he took charge of McKinstry, who was removed and jailed for 12 months and cashiered. He later became a stockbroker.

The third to be cashiered was John Spiers who, even though he was a Union general, was a slave-owner. The Emancipation Proclamation upset him greatly and he was very critical of the administration in Washington, and this filtered through to Washington. He was quietly told to 'shut his mouth', but he continued to denounce the Proclamation. He was told he had two choices: retire or get court-martialled, which

occurred when he refused to retire. He died in 1868. Of the remainder, 110 resigned, and some of these resignations were just a short jump from a court-martial.

Who was the first Union general to die in battle? Nathaniel Lyon, killed at the Battle of Wilson's Creek on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1861. Regarding the last Union general to die in battle, two names have been put forward: General Theodore Read, who was killed at the Battle of High Bridge on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1865, and Brigadier General Thomas Alfred Smyth, who died of wounds on April 9<sup>th</sup> at the Appomattox Campaign.

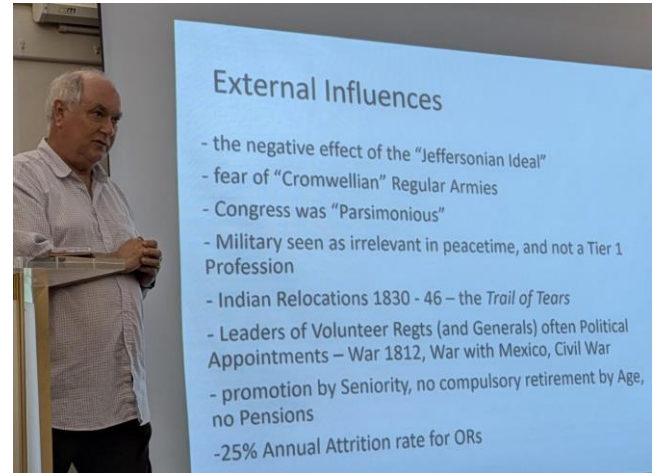
Who was the longest-living Union general? Adelbert Ames, who died on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1933, in his 98<sup>th</sup> year. And who was the oldest Union general in the War? John Wool, mentioned already, who was born in 1784. When he retired in 1863 at the age of 79, he was the oldest Union general to have a field command.

The youngest Union general was General Galusha Pennypacker, born 1<sup>st</sup> June 1844. When the War broke out in 1861, he was appointed a Lieutenant at the age of 16 into the 97<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves; at 17, he was a major. Due to his brilliance throughout the course of the War, he was made a full colonel, and, as a full colonel, led an attack on Fort Fisher on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1865, where he was severely wounded. However, such was his performance, he earned the General Star. Six weeks before he turned 21, he became the youngest general in the history of the US Army. When the War ended and the regular army was reorganised in 1866, he was appointed a full colonel of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment, becoming the youngest full colonel in the history of the United States army. He retired in 1883 as a Major General and died in 1916.

Who was the tallest Union general? Winfield Scott, at 6'5" and 300lbs, is a prime contender. This was at a time when the average height was 5'8¼". "Bull" Nelson was also a candidate – 6'4" and 300lbs but the winner was General John White Geary, at 6'8". Who was the smallest general? Some say General Sheriden at 5'5" but it was Isaac Stevens, born in 1818, who was top of his class at West Point in 1839 and was killed at the Battle of Chantilly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1862, leading a charge. He was 4'11".

Whether these general's contribution to the War was large or small, their names deserve to be written on the pages of Civil War history.

## Pre & "War of States Rights" Training of Officers Ian Wolfe



*Ian is a recently retired LTCOL in the Australian Army Reserve and is a graduate, and was an Instructor, at the ADF Staff College. He has held extensive Command and Staff appointments from Brigade to Strategic Planning Divisions and Joint Operations Command. His commercial career included crafting and implementing Strategic Plans for large Banks, Telcos and Multinationals.*

*His very comprehensive and informative presentation was well-received by the members.*

The scope of this Article covers the period from 1815 (the end of the War of 1812) to the American Civil War up to 1863. It only covers the Army (the Navy is a complex and separate topic). The focus is on both **formal** and **informal training** i.e. *On the Job Experience (OJE)* as well as *On the Job Training (OJT)* and uses "modern" terms to aid assimilation. It also briefly examines results in the field, and asks "Could it have been better?"

At the commencement of the Civil War, the European Powers dispatched Military Observers to seek to see if any insights could be harvested. Britain and France sent Lt. Colonels, but the Germans only sent a reserve Captain (and he had not attended staff college) i.e. they were not serious. After 18 months in America, he returned to Germany and wrote a Report for the General Staff. He was then interviewed by Helmuth von Moltke, the Chief of the Prussian General Staff from 1858. Subsequently, Moltke is alleged to have said:

*"The American Civil War is nothing but 'two armed mobs' running around the countryside and beating each other up, from which very little of military utility could be learned."* (This comment probably (?) came from the Captain,

who then ceased military service and, as a commercial activity, proceeded to give lectures to German Gentlemen's Clubs.)

However, leveraging off the insights from the Crimean War (1853-6) and the Indian Mutiny (1857-8), the Prussians had deeply studied the application of modern technology to War i.e. railways for mobilisation and logistics, telegraph to coordinated activities, as well as the implications of rifles and steel artillery guns to extend the lethality envelope in the field etc.

As a consequence, they had significantly revised their whole corpus of how they saw warfare being conducted and altered their Operational Plans accordingly. However, these new concepts had not been validated in the field and thus were to a degree "*theoretical*". This was where the US Civil War was of great utility to the Prussians in that it showed that their concepts did work very effectively and on a mass scale. This gave Von Moltke the objective basis to confidently advise Bismarck that the military could implement his plans for the unification of German via the strategy of "*Blut und Eisen*" (Blood and Iron).

Through the short *Second Schleswig War* (Feb to Oct 1864), the Prussians refined their new approach. Then, during the Austro-Prussian War (June to July 1866) at Sadowa, they fought the first Industrial Age battle, with 20,000 Austrians dying under massed artillery fire in 20 minutes. This then set the scene for the Franco-Prussian War (July 1870 to Jan 1871) where, at *Sedan*, in a deliberate *kesselschlacht* (*Cauldron Battle*), the Germans encircled 140,000 French soldiers, whose surrender led to the fall of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic.

As such, whilst the alleged quote above is partly accurate, it fails to acknowledge the immense contribution the Civil War made to the emergence of modern Europe i.e. all those who think that a united German is a "good thing" for the World, then you can thank the Americans....

### **Degree of "Professionalism"?**

Most historians assess that the conduct of the Civil War was initially fairly amateurish and, thereafter, improved over time due to practice and experience in War. A major constraint was the lack of formal training in both the Regular and Volunteers/Militia before and during the War. This was exacerbated by the small peacetime Army experiencing massive growth pains. It should also be accepted that the volume of new industrial age technologies probably would have challenged any Army.

### **External Influences**

These included:

Firstly, the "*Jeffersonian Ideal*", presenting the Republic as comprised of stalwart families farming their own land and largely being self-sufficient. This flowed into the military sphere via a very strong focus on the Militia, led by informal Leaders. This, combined with the fear of "*Cromwellian*" Regular Armies, meant that Congress was very "parsimonious" towards the Standing Forces.

Of the available funds, a very significant percentage (\$23 million USD/yr on average) was absorbed by building, equipping and provisioning the 42 stone-and-brick Coastal Defence Forts (comprising the "*Third System*") erected during this period around the coasts of the USA (As the Members of Congress were mainly drawn from commerce, they were financially interested in the protection of trade). This reinforced the stereotype that the permanent Military were largely irrelevant in peacetime and that it was not a Tier 1 "*Profession*".

Secondly, the horror of the Indian relocations over the period 1830-46 (notably the *Trail of Tears*), where very large numbers of Indians died through mismanagement which led to many Officers resigning in disgust.

Thirdly, the practice of appointing, during the 1812 War and the War with Mexico, leaders of Volunteer Regiments (and Generals) primarily on political grounds, disenchanting regular Officers. This was exacerbated by the deleterious effects of promotion being by seniority and there being no compulsory retirement by age (as there was no Pension scheme). The stultifying effect of this can be illustrated by the realisation that, at the start of the Civil War, over 60% of the Colonels and Generals were veterans of the War of 1812 (which had finished 46 yrs earlier). Except for General Joseph Johnston, none were able to transition to being competent Field Commanders, and most were retired within 6 months.

Finally, there was a 25% annual attrition rate for other ranks. This was a combination of discharges for injury/sickness and desertion. This flowed from the Army being comprised, throughout this period, of an average of 40+% new Immigrants who, after a couple of years of seeing how the country operated courtesy of the Army, departed to take advantage of the numerous opportunities for advancement in the West.

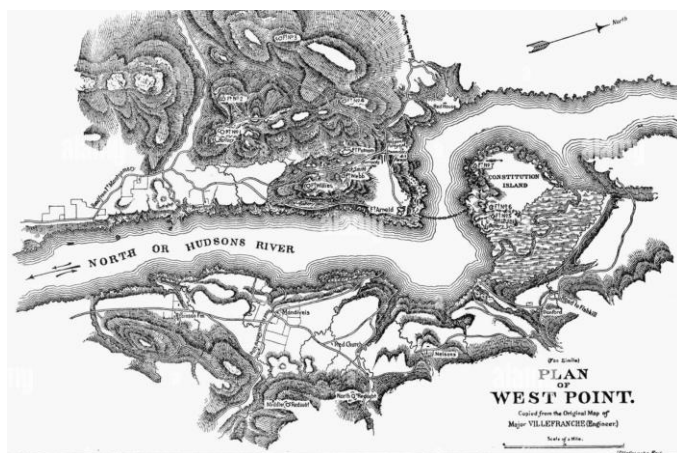
Additionally, the senior Non-Commissioned Officers were very poorly paid (only 30% of

their British equivalents). Thus, on completion of their term of enlistment, they leveraged off their stripes to get a well-paying commercial supervisor job. As a result, the Army was hemorrhaging expertise every year and barely treading water.

### Relevant International Benchmarks

In 1741, the British established Woolwich College to train Engineers, Surveyors and Gunners. The French followed shortly afterwards with the École Polytechnique, and these Officers were primarily employed on “National Tasks” rather than just military tasks. The Americans were exposed to such Officers during the Seven Years War (1757-63) and were deeply impressed by their professionalism and capability. Then, during the so-called War of Independence (really more appropriately called the “The Great Self Indulgent Tax Avoidance Revolt”), as they had no indigenous Engineering Officers, they had to buy them in from outside – some, like Kościuszko, were very effective; others, like Lafayette, improved over time.

This meant that, after the scare of the Quasi War with France (1798-1800), the Americans realised they needed to train their own Engineering and Gunnery Officers. They made the decision in 1801 to found a school at West Point (the site of the primary wartime engineer works to block the Hudson River and thus the route to Canada). Initially, there were only 20 graduates from the 4-5yr course, with this growing to 42 by 1861.



Plan of West Point

Following the example of the *Ecole Royale Militaire* (founded in 1751 for the sons of poor nobles, which became St Cyr in 1802) and Sandhurst (in 1801), the new Superintendent in 1817, Sylvanus Thayer, modernised the curriculum and made it an “All Corps” school.



Sylvanus Thayer

However, the US Military missed out on the major innovation in military education of the century and did not follow the British example to found a Staff College (at Camberley in 1801) or the far more professional Prussian Staff College in 1810. The latter was a 1-2 yr course for the top 10% of the Prussian Captains and Majors (average age 32). This used what we now call “Experiential Learning” through the use of “Staff Rides” (practical terrain exercises) and “Kriegsspiel” (competitive war gaming) to produce a team of full-time specialist military Staff Officers. Their role was to aid/guide the Commander (they were mostly Princes and Dukes, who were part-time Officers) in the planning and conduct of campaigns. The lack of such a body of experts was probably the single greatest reason for the fairly-amateurish conduct of the Civil War (and the associated avoidable mass casualties).

### West Point Curriculum

This focused on Mathematics, Engineering, Surveying, Physics, Geology and Chemistry. All students learnt oral and written French (However, even though German was the first language of 25-30% of the population of the US, this does not appear to have been in the curriculum!).

The subjects commenced with an introductory lecture and then devolved into extensive reading lists and tutorials with problems to be worked through. As such, this was a very

“mechanical” rather than a “conceptual” education aimed at producing “Doers” rather than “Thinkers”. Assessment was by a combination of written and oral exams. In addition, a heavy emphasis was placed on assessment via sporting prowess and personal integrity. As the students were regularly given parade ground drill and conducted garrison duties (Guards, Inspections and Pickets etc), they were well prepared for standard garrison life.

However, only 10% of their time was spent on military subjects, and Tactics/Strategy was based on the teachings of Swiss Military Officer Antoine-Henri Jomini, that is, *offensive-focussed*. This changed slightly in 1832 when the Napoleon Club was founded by D.H. Mahan. This was an extra subject which studied the campaigns and battles of Napoleon and used maps and models as analytical tools. Additional clubs were founded by graduates in the large garrison depots.



Antoine-Henri Jomini

### Alternates to West Point

As West Point only met about 50% of the new Officer needs of the Army, a range of other organisations provided the residue via shorter courses. These included The Citadel in South Carolina, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and a number of Northern equivalents (which came and went over time). These were short courses (1yr) and basically a technical college equivalent that provided a Gentleman's education. Graduates provided the bulk of Officers for the Cavalry and Infantry, usually for short commissions (5 yrs or so).

These Colleges also provided many of the Officers for the Eastern State Militias, under the broad guidance of the State Adjutant General (a Major General). Commissions were secured by “networking”, and then a facilitated “election” within the Unit. The Commission document was conferred by the Governor, rather than the President for Regulars. Many Officers, on

discharge from the Regulars, transferred to the Militia.

### Post Graduation

The Engineers went to a Corp School for an additional 2 years of detailed training. They were then employed on military construction projects (forts etc.), but this involved a great deal of civil construction (roads, bridges, canals, towns etc.) associated with making the forts sustainable. The Gunners similarly went to Fort Monroe (which guarded the major Naval Base at Norfolk) for 1-2 yrs. The smaller number of Ordnance Officers had a similar regime.

The Cavalry & Infantry Officers were directly posted to Regiments. These allocated Areas of Operation were primarily located west of the Mississippi. The Regimental Head Quarters (RHQ) was usually centrally located in a town with the CO, Adjutant, a “Depot” Company, as well as a “Ready Reaction” Company. The rest of the Regiment was usually allocated to a *Post* (often notionally called a “Fort”, as they rarely had a palisade or walls) comprised of two Companies. This was a cost-effective allocation to ensure that there were sufficient soldiers (about 130) to perform both garrison and patrol tasks.

The training of new Officers was supervised by the Post Commander (a Captain) but often delegated to the Post Adjutant (a 1st Lieutenant). He assigned a more experienced Lieutenant as the new Officers’ “Coach” and one of the Sergeants was aligned as a “guide” when in the field. As such, they were eased into the complexities of Frontier Warfare.

For larger operations, the practice of the time was to use contracted civilian Army Scouts to utilise their deep knowledge of the terrain, weather, routes and the Indians to closely advise Officers of what to do and what not to do. In effect, they performed the Operations and Intelligence functions. These Scouts also commanded and directed the use of Indian Scouts (who were drawn from “pacified” rival tribes) to conduct detailed long-range terrain and tactical reconnaissance. This meant that, at the start of the Civil War, the proficiency of the regular Cavalry and Infantry was often quite low in these key functions.

However, the conduct of garrison functions did teach and provide practice for new Officers in many important skills i.e. about every 3 days or so they acted as “Duty Officer of the Day”, and, as such, were responsible for the mounting of Water and Wood Collection Parties, Livestock Grazing Parties and local Security Patrols, as well Guards, Inspections and Work Parties of all

sorts. As there was often a *security dimension*, they were well practised in minor tactics.

Hunting wildlife from quail to buffalo was a primary means of recreation and of sourcing food. Here they used the Indian Scouts, and there was a considerable transfer of skills in relation to terrain appreciation, stalking, ambushing and marksmanship etc. As the wildlife included grizzly bears, mountain lions and moose, which were very capable of hunting and killing humans, the Officers learnt to deal with the associated stresses.

Beyond the Post, new Officers were engaged in a large number of convoying duties. This involved escorting Logistic Resupply wagons (in the Spring and Fall), escorting Pioneer wagon trains (where they learnt a great deal from the experienced *Wagon Masters*) and the escorting of stage coaches etc.

In addition, they regularly conducted long range patrols and Clearance Ops against hostile Indians. Whilst there were 21 Indian Wars in the period, there were no true "*Battles*" as such, where each side had a scientific and architected Plan. Rather, encounters were usually fleeting skirmishes and scuffle fights as the Indians were loath to suffer casualties.

### **On the Job Training**

The Army did publish an updated *Reading List* of military publications, and this served as a source of inspiration for Christmas and Birthday presents. As such, all Officers had their own small personal library with them, usually taking a book on patrol to read in the evenings. On arrival at a new Post, they would usually deposit their books with the Post Adj. to enhance the Post Library. This enabled what we would call a *Reading Club* to occur in most Posts. This saw a Chapter nominated for reading, and then a group discussion session each week. These were often enhanced by the use of maps, blackboards and blanket models.

Material was drawn from the numerous books published by British Officers after the *Peninsular War*, and the French covering the *Napoleonic Campaigns*. In 1831 the *Royal United Services Institute* was founded in London and operated in a similar fashion to our Association i.e. a monthly meeting with a presentation and publication of a very prestigious journal with papers. There were similar journals in the USA which came and went. *Halleck's* article is a prominent example of how some Officers enhanced their reputation.

Doctrine was limited to Scott's 1830s Manuals (mainly "*Drill*" handbooks rather than tactical

guides) and on the same theme, Hardee's *Light Infantry Tactics 1855*. Both had heavily leveraged off French products, and the latter was the main primer for the training of regiments in the Civil War.

As in peacetime, the regiments were dispersed across a large area. The CO's exercised Command via written *Directives*, supplemented by a "*ride around*" in the Spring and Fall to enable a week-long personal visit at each Post. Quite often such visits included an evening lecture and discussion on a tactical subject.

The next level of command were the 7 Departments (each the area of 3-4 modern States). The Department Commanders similarly conducted a *ride around*, with the aim of visiting each Post once per 2-3 yrs. They, and their accompanying staff, also gave lectures. Sometimes this was followed up by a Map Exercise or a "*Tactical Exercise not involving Troops*" (i.e. a TEWTs). Very rarely, an actual Field Problem was conducted for a few days. During the Civil War, McClellan and some other Generals utilised these more practical techniques.

Within Regiments, there was a semi formal career progression program: i.e. Coy Officer, Coy 2IC, Post 2IC, thence to RHQ to be either the Adj. or QM. Thereafter, Officers were either posted, detached or seconded to the Staff of the Departments, or the ten Bureaus, with the latter located in Washington.

The Bureaus were primarily peacetime administratively focussed. They operated in a semi- autonomous manner under what we would today call a "*weak matrix*" structure. Whilst there was a *Commanding General*, he was primarily just a Coordinator and a Facilitator. Each of the Bureau Heads had the right of direct access to the Secretary and the Congress. They guarded these privileges jealously and there was much rivalry and dysfunctional competition (This structure had been deliberately put in place by the Congress to keep the Army weak.).

Further, selection of Officers for the Staff was on a personal basis by Commanders and was not centrally planned or managed. Nor was there any formal training for new personnel. In addition, Officers tended to remain in these sinecures and only departed on promotion or discharge due to ill health. As there was no centralised Intelligence, Operations or Plans Cells, these critical functions were performed ad hoc by the Bureau Heads and the Commanding General. As such, there were no substantive Contingency Plans prepared to meet foreign threats or the Civil War.



Appointments as Instructors to West Point and the Engineer or Artillery Schools was the only formal mechanism for consolidating military knowledge. Unlike other Armies of the period, there was no higher education in National Strategy, Military Strategy, Tactics, Logistics or Command. This materially contributed to the amateurish way the Civil War was conducted.

However, during the Civil War, a significant number of executives from large and successful commercial enterprises joined the Union and Confederate Armies. They brought with them refined management, organisational and logistic skills, which they were often able to apply with considerable success. The optimisation of the Union rail network is a prime example and is acknowledged today as probably the single greatest reason why the Union won the War.

### Wives

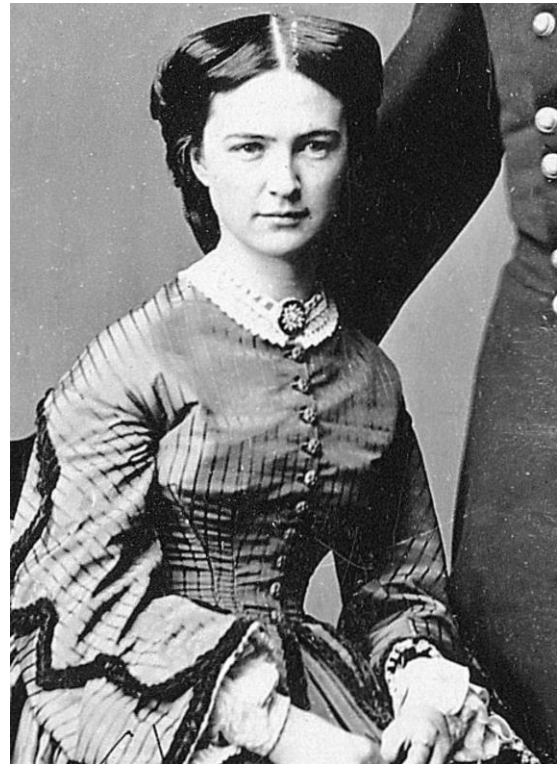
Most Officers waited about 5 years until they were promoted to 1st LT., before heading home on extended leave to find a wife (although the pay increment was small, as a 1st LT., their housing allowance was quite a nice duplex 2-story house). It's an old saying that "*Behind every great man is an even greater woman prodding him onwards*". This particularly applied to the very brave young women who took the plunge to marry a *Soldier Boy* and venture into the West.

Most came from middle-class backgrounds, were 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> daughters who had been kindly but firmly given their *marching orders* by their parents. Most had gone to some form of Finishing School and often spoke a 2<sup>nd</sup> language, played an instrument, could sing or recite poetry, were trained in etiquette and "*influence management*" i.e. charming. Most were much better read in the classics than their husbands. Plus, they had a substantive support network in the form of their "*sister*" wives, and they colluded together to put matters to rights.

With their husbands away from the Post 60+% of the time, it was the wives who read the few newspapers that came through, talked to the passing pioneers and merchants and who read the orders on the notice boards etc. Then, via their daily sewing or knitting sessions with the other wives, they had the opportunity for deep dialogue, and then discussion on issues – they were thus the Mistresses of "*Situational Awareness*".

They often ran the family, its finances and plotted their husbands' career moves. It was they who rehearsed their men to make sure *their Team* put their best foot forward when the CO and Dept. Comd. visited. This was because getting out of a remote Post by transfer to an

RHQ or Dept HQ in a town or city was to be aspired to. In short, they were "*formidable*", and often had no hesitation in giving their husbands firm and robust guidance i.e. refer to Libby Custer's letters to George and it's clear who wore the pants in that family....



Libby Custer

However, their husbands were smart tacticians and they knew all about the value of withdrawal and re-positioning to engage from a more advantageous position. In short, they learnt self-defence concerning '*Female Management*'. Thus, in the Civil War, when managing occupied enemy territory, when they were confronted by stalwart women running everything, they had some hope of dealing with the *Scarlet O'Haras*....

### Ancillary Learning

As most of the West was constituted in this period as Territories (i.e. under Federal control) rather than States, the Army was regularly drawn on to perform civil functions. This meant that the Officers learnt skills that were directly relevant to the control of occupied territory during the Civil War, and Reconstruction thereafter. Law enforcement meant interaction with Sheriffs, Marshals, Texas Rangers (many being ex-Army SNCOs) and Judges. Up until 1849, the Indian Agents were under the control of the War Dept. Thereafter, due to the inherent money-making opportunities, they came under civilian control, which led to constant problems.

Logistic resupply of the Army required interaction with Haulage Managers, Town Mayors, Cattle Kings, Mining Magnates & Railway Barons. All of these provided multi-

dimensional issues/problems which necessitated adroit and innovative responses from Officers as did dealing with the significant religious dimensions in the West i.e. the *Mormon War*, and the interactions with the various forms of Quakers. The conflict over slavery required the Army to seek to mediate between Abolitionists and pro-slavery factions. "*Bleeding Kansas*" and "*Murdering Missouri*" gave the Army bloody experience in Guerrilla Warfare, Raiding and Rear Area Security Operations. This was where Jeb Stuart and others gained their cavalry skills.

### **Medical**

At any particular time, at least 25% of the Army was either in the Sick Bay or recovering on light duties. This limited the troops available for Garrison and Patrol tasks and engendered a focus by the Officers on the fitness of their soldiers. As such, they learnt the value of daily inspections to identify and isolate sick soldiers and also the value of basic hygiene and a wholesome diet etc. As there was only 1 Surgeon and 1 Assistant Surgeon in a Regt, the medical staff in a 2 x Coy Post was limited to the 4 Musicians (as a secondary duty). This meant that it was the Duty Officer who inspected the Sick Bay to confirm the treatment to be provided and who allocated the best rations to be provided to the sick. On patrol they learnt the value of selecting water points for humans upstream of those for animals, and the value of proper latrine siting. However, the lack of antibiotics meant that STDs, infections, parasites and contagious disease substantially constrained the force e.g. during the Peninsular Campaign the fouling of the low water table meant that McClellan's Army suffered recurring bouts of dysentery.

### **Mexican War**

The War saw the Regular Army double in size, but the bulk of the force employed were Volunteers engaged for 1 yr terms (this short duration meant that after training and transitting to and from the Front, they were generally only engaged in active operations for about 3 months). The Mexican Army was fairly mediocre when it came to conventional operations and thus did not pose a significant challenge. This allowed the US Army to overly congratulate itself in respect of its capacity for battlefield manoeuvres, use of mobile Artillery to fire grape at close range into the largely immobile Mexican lines, and the utility of conducting assaults against entrenchments without detailed preparatory or covering artillery fire (all costly lessons to be unlearnt in the Civil War, when faced by a more competent opponent).

However, the use of the Brevet system, combined with senior Officer casualties due to sickness, did give many young Officers exposure to higher command roles and battlefield decision-making. Men such as Lee, Grant and Jackson clearly extended their expertise and gained great confidence in their own abilities under fire due to these experiences.

However, only about a third of the Officer Corp was directly involved in the campaigns. Of these, 1 in 4 died of wounds or sickness and another 1 in 4 retired due to sickness. Additionally, many Officers retired afterwards due to the reductions in the size of the Army and having "*done their war*". This meant that the residual value of being exposed to "*Big Army*" was limited.

Finally, although Clausewitz's seminal work "*On War*" was published 1835, my concerted research has found no instance of it having been read or applied by any American Officer before or during the Civil War (it was not translated into English or French until 1872 but, as above, many US Officers were of German ethnicity and could read German). This meant that the Civil War Generals lacked the knowledge and training to think or act in a deeply strategic manner, in the multiple dimensions of "*Whole of Nation*".

### **The War of Northern Aggression**

Whilst the Regular Army was significantly expanded, it was not able to match the salaries and allowances being offered by the competing States to their Volunteers. As Regular Officers and NCOs could often jump up a couple of ranks when they joined the Volunteers, many sought to transfer whenever possible (thus diluting the expertise of the Regulars).

However, the whole "Volunteer" system was quite dysfunctional to the total Union War effort. Enlistment terms started at 3 yrs but, by War's end, had reduced to 3 months. The criteria for promotion varied widely and Colonels were usually appointed on political grounds. Training was often ad hoc and based on the rash of popular Manuals that proliferated (e.g. Casey's Cavalry Pamphlets). This, combined with Volunteer Regiments not being reinforced to account for wastage once raised, led to a very high level of variability between units. On a number of occasions, engagements were initiated for no better reason than to "use" the Volunteer Regiments before their impending date of disbandment...

During the Civil War, the US Army's system of conferring largely honorary/ceremonial promotions (called Brevet) to Officers for acts of

bravery or exemplary service on operations (in the absence of a separate Award system i.e. medals and commendations etc.), meant that the disparity in relation to their actual permanent (i.e. termed "substantive") rank became large. In addition, the completely separate promotion system used by the States for their Volunteer Regts. further confused matters. For instance, Custer started the War as a substantive 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. and finished it as a Major General of Volunteers, and was a substantive Capt. in the regular Army, and a brevet Major General in the regular Army.

In addition, favouritism, politics and the influence of the Media to evoke popularism bedevilled the appointment of individuals to senior Command positions, both in the regularly Army and the Volunteers. Disputes frequently erupted between Officers dependent on the type of Commission they held, the date of their last promotion and the type of promotion. This led to much acrimony before and even during battles.

As a consequence, overall performance was in the mediocre-to-brilliant category i.e. as demonstrated by Nathan Bedford Forrest. The absence of properly trained staff meant that, once the battle was launched, the capacity to adjust and conduct proper manoeuvres was minimal. One area of significant performance was in the mounting and conduct of large scale and long duration Cavalry Raids. However, these were usually only conducted at the tactical level of war and lacked coherence at the Operational or Strategic levels.

Some innovations, like the use of field Telegraph Cable and Balloons, did enhance command, control and communication. Conversely, the experimentation in the employment of longer-range breach-loading artillery was marred by metal quality control issues, as was the optimal use of rapid-fire rifles (with large ammunition magazines) due to propellant variability issues. Improvements in the technology of canning food (the famous "*Pork and Beans*" as well as condensed milk) did enable the logistics needed to sustain long duration operations.

### Could it have been better?

The answer is 'Yes', as indicated by the following list of practices that were in operation in other Armies of the period:

- have promotion based on a mix of Seniority and Merit
- establish a minimum time in each rank (6yrs), and maximum time to be considered for promotion (i.e. by yr 10)

- set a specific age for retirement by Rank and put in place a basic Pension scheme. Enhance this with a specific program to facilitate Officers/NCOs, on retirement, to move into suitable Federal jobs in the administration of the Territories
- have basic written and oral exams for promotion from each rank
- establish Logbooks to record the type of service/experience and mandate specific competencies to be attained by rank i.e. a Lt. must have escorted at least 1 wagon train
- put in place a planned program of career rotations by types of jobs and locations
- on posting in of new Officers to the Departments or Bureaus, have them complete a 2-week Basic Staff Course at the Department and 4 weeks at the Bureaus
- send top performing Officers as students to attend foreign Staff Colleges then allocate them to the *Defence Attache* role in that country, or as War Observers
- for the select Militia (i.e. the 75,000), have an annual "*Concentration*" in the Fall (after the Harvest) for 3 weeks to train them in large scale manoeuvres
- constrain political appointments to Volunteer Regiments by the above initiatives
- pay the NCOs far better
- during the Civil War, have a Training Regt allocated to each Corp/Army to conduct Officer Trainee Short Courses, Promotion Courses and a basic Staff Course. Do the same for the NCOs

It is submitted that such a combination of fairly simple and cost-effective measures would have significantly increased the professionalism and competency of the forces.

### Summary

The training of Officers operated under significant constraints. With there being no perceived external threat, there was no focus on continuation, or Unit or higher formation training. The multiple and cumulative negative effects of the Volunteer approach were substantive. However, informal training (OJT & OJE) did enhance Officer performance, but this was "*patchy*". As a consequence, average performance was low above Regt, and quite variable. Further, the multiple debacles of the higher-level organisation of the US Army in the Spanish-America War showed a low level of

institutional learning in that the expertise gained in the Civil War had been allowed to dissipate.

However, this variability meant that on the day, in any particular battle during the Civil War, anything was possible. Officers could perform superbly or ineptly, and thus the conflict was not formulaic and remains an enduring example of the diversity of historic soldiering within the context of America's "Great Experiment".

*God Bless the Republic* .....Bing Videos:  
*The Battle Cry of Freedom*

Ian Wolfe CSM, RFD, psc(r), MPM  
Dec 24

## Letters from the Front *Dan Howard*

These extracts of letters provided by Dan illustrate very clearly the thinking and attitudes of the time.

### **Extract from a letter from Chauncey H Cooke, a soldier in the U S Army, to his mother, July 28, 1863**

Dear Mother,

This war ain't over yet. There may be a lot of money paid out for substitutes yet. Just think of it, they are paying as high as a thousand dollars for substitutes in many of the states. It all means that people are getting tired of the fussy way the war is being carried on. If the slaves had been declared free right at the start, just as father said, and put into the ranks to fight, the war might have ended long ago. I see by the papers there are fifty thousand freedmen under arms and they are doing good service. The poor black devils are fighting for their wives and children, yes, and for their lives, while we white cusses are fighting for what Capt. Dorwin calls an idea. I tell the boys right to their face I am in the war for the freedom of the slave. When they talk about the saving of the Union I tell them that is Dutch to me. I am for helping the slaves if the Union goes to smash. Most of the boys have their laugh at me for helping the "Niggers" but Elder Harwood and Ed. Coleman and Julius Parr and Joel Harmon and Chet Ide, the last two of Mondovi, tell me I am right in my argument.

Your boy, Chauncey.

If anyone has another brief (5 min) talk on a particular topic they would like to present, please contact Program Director John Morrison. We are keen to hear from our membership, so please consider it.

### **Extract from a letter from Colonel Robert Gould Shaw stationed at St Helena's Island, South Carolina, to his family, July 4, 1863 (two weeks before his death, aged 25, leading the coloured troops of the 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, in the attack on Fort Wagner).**

Today there has been a great meeting for the colored people, at the Baptist church, six or seven miles from camp. I rode down there, and heard a speech from a colored preacher, from Baltimore, named Lynch. He was very eloquent. Can you imagine anything more wonderful than a colored abolitionist-meeting, on a South Carolina plantation? Here were collected all the freed slaves on this island, listening to the most ultra-abolition speeches that could be made, while two years ago their masters were still here, the lords of the soil and of them. Now, they all own something themselves, go to school and to church, and work for wages! It is the most extraordinary change. Such things oblige a man to believe that God is not very far off. A little black boy read the Declaration of Independence, and then they all sang some of their hymns. The effect was grand. I would have given anything to have had you there; I thought of you all the time.



The Robert Gould and 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment Memorial created by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907)



Shaw neighbourhood and Metro Station in Washington DC are named after Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. It has had a mainly black population.