

Newsletter of Sgt. William Pittenger Camp #21

The General

*Department of
California & Pacific*



*Sons of Union Veterans
of the Civil War*

Vol XXIII Number 5

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Nov 25, 2017

With Thanksgiving now behind us and Christmas looming straight ahead, it will not be long before we find ourselves in a new year. As the activity level increases in preparation for Christmas and New years celebrations take a moment, pause, and reflect on the "reason for the season" and I hope that gives you the peace and the contentment that is intended at this time. These are emotions probably not enjoyed by our Union ancestors in the stark winters 1861 through 1864. You might be interested to know that a great many of the traditions that we enjoy today were also observed by your veteran ancestor. Decorated Christmas trees, Christmas caroling, exchanging of gifts and even the modern image of Santa Claus was common to the populace and to the military. Despite the wartime reality of the military camps and units, efforts were made to alleviate those conditions and improve upon morale by allowing a degree of observance. Trees would be cut and decorated and placed for all to enjoy. At times, the quality



and serving of meals reflected the comfort associated with a traditional Christmas dinner. Many received gifts from home. For many, however, it was not a time of joy. Southern parents told their children that, due to the Yankee blockade, Santa might not be able to deliver his presents. Several great battles, Fredericksburg, Virginia and Savannah, Georgia, took place just at Christmas time. Many families had suffered the loss of a son, a father or the loss of property and livelihood. What I come to admire is that strength and the resolve of these folks to continue the fight and to preserve our Union.

Wishing you and Yours a Very Merry Christmas, A Happy New Year and a Safe and Joyful Holiday

Hope to see you at the meeting.

Yours in Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

John C. Finch

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THE GENERAL is the official newsletter of Sgt. Wm. Pittenger Camp 21, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. It's published each odd-numbered month for Camp members. It's also available by newsletter exchange to other SUVCW or Allied Orders groups. Such groups are welcome to reprint articles from *The General* with attribution. Brief articles are invited and most appreciated: send to Newsletter Editor listed above: space limitations may require editing.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS should be mailed to Camp Secretary at address above. Failure to notify Camp of change of address will result in missed issues of *The General* and *The Banner*.

CAMP EMAIL DIRECTORY. If you wish to be included in the Camp Email Directory, send your permission and email address to Dave Allyn at: svrsuvcw@yahoo.com

SONS OF VETERANS RESERVE (SVR) is the uniformed contingent of the SUVCW. Uniforms are encouraged but not required. You need not be a reenactor to join. Annual dues are \$6.00. Interested SUVCW Brothers should contact the SVR Representative listed above.



Christmas During The Civil War

It can be difficult to relate to the men and women of the Civil War era. Despite the extraordinarily different circumstances in which they found themselves, however, we can connect with our forebears in traditions such as the celebration of Christmas. By the mid-19th century, most of today's familiar Christmas trappings — Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decoration — were already in place. Charles Dickens had published “A Christmas Carol” in 1843 and indeed, the Civil War saw the first introductions to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant.



"Christmas in Camp," an illustration by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, “In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc.” John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, “It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman’s Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus.”

In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: “A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of... **DISAPPOINTMENT!** The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water...and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended.” For many, the holiday was a reminder of the profound melancholy that had settled over the entire nation. Southern parents warned their children that Santa might not make it through the blockade, and soldiers in bleak winter quarters were reminded, more acutely than ever, of the domestic bliss they had left behind. [Robert Gould Shaw](#), who would later earn glory as the commander of the 54th Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, “It is Christmas morning and I hope a happy and merry one for you all, though it looks so stormy for our poor country, one can hardly be in merry humor.” On the Confederate home front, Sallie Brock Putnam of Richmond echoed Shaw’s sentiment: “Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned

<https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/christmas-during-civil-war>

upon us... We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us." For the people of Fredericksburg, Virginia, which had been battered only a matter of days before Christmas, or Savannah, Georgia, which [General Sherman](#) had presented to President Lincoln as a gift, the holiday season brought the war to their very doorsteps. Christmas during the Civil War served both as an escape from and a reminder of the awful conflict rending the country in two. Soldiers looked forward to a day of rest and relative relaxation, but had their moods tempered by the thought of separation from their loved ones. At home, families did their best to celebrate the holiday, but wondered when the vacant chair would again be filled.



"Christmas Eve," an illustration by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly, January 3, 1863

Camp Calendar: Event, Location (* = SVR participation)	Time, Day, Month, Year	Contact Person(s)
Camp Meeting/Elections/Christmas Party, JVC Peter Huelsenbeck's home, 1014 S. Ridge Dr, Fallbrook, CA.	DEC 9, 2017 Sat @ 1200	JVC P. Huelsenbeck/CC John Finch (760) 728-3769
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	FEB 10, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	APR 14, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	JUN 9, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	AUG 11, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	OCT 13, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch
Camp Meeting, Mimi's Restaurant, 10788 Westview Pkwy. San Diego.	DEC 8, 2017 Sat @ 10:00 AM	CC John Finch

Minutes of Meeting Held October 14, 2017

Present: Brothers David Allyn, John Finch, Tom Helmantoler, Clay Hoffman, John Keenan, Dimas Lovato, Deane Poole, Jerry Sayre, Mike Schooling, and guests Gay Allyn, Brenda Poole, and Kim Sayre.

The meeting was called to order by Commander John Finch at 10:06am at Mimi's Restaurant, 10787 Westview Pkwy., San Diego, California. The opening prayer was offered by D. Allyn and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by J. Sayre.

I. Honored Attendees

none

II. Announcements

Br. John Gilman is traveling around SE Asia.
Br. Dave Allyn would like someone to take over as Newsletter Editor.

III. New Members

Richard Finnegan is in the process of applying for membership.

IV. Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were approved (Sayre/Allyn).

V. Officers' Reports

Treas. J. May forwarded a report that the Camp balance remains \$5511.65.

Eagle Scout Coordinator M. Schooling reported that we have one applicant for the SUVCW JROTC Award.

J. Sayre reported that the National Encampment went well.

JVC T. Helmantoler gave a presentation on the Spanish-American War at the Welcome Home to Oceanside event.

VI. Committee Reports

none

VII. S.V.R. Report

none

VIII. Upcoming Events

Next Camp Meeting is at P.

Huelsenbeck's home, Dec. 9. 12 noon.
Remembrance Day, Nov. 18 in Fallbrook.
J. Sayre will organize.

IX. Old Business

Discussion on how to use \$2500 donation.
Minter's Ranch project was suggested as well as the Civil War Trust. D. Lovato suggested putting it toward education.

X. New Business

1. Slate of officers for next year:

Commander: John Finch
SVC: Peter Huelsenbeck
JVC: John Keenan
Sec./Treas.: John May

A motion (Schooling/Allyn) to accept the slate of officers was passed.

2. Dimas Lovato membership still needs application and dues to be approved.

3. D. Allyn discussed the Stephenson Memorial in Illinois. A motion (Schooling/Allyn) for the Camp to supplement members' donations to make a total donation of \$500 was passed.

XI. Members' Minutes

none

XII. Program

none

The closing prayer was offered by D. Allyn and Cmdr. Finch adjourned the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, while Camp Brothers and our ladies enjoyed their lunch, Tom Helmantoler presented a report/review of his ancestor's Civil War service; everyone enjoyed Tom's offering.

Respectfully submitted,

John May, Secretary

Remembrance Day November 18, 2017 at Pittenger House, Fallbrook



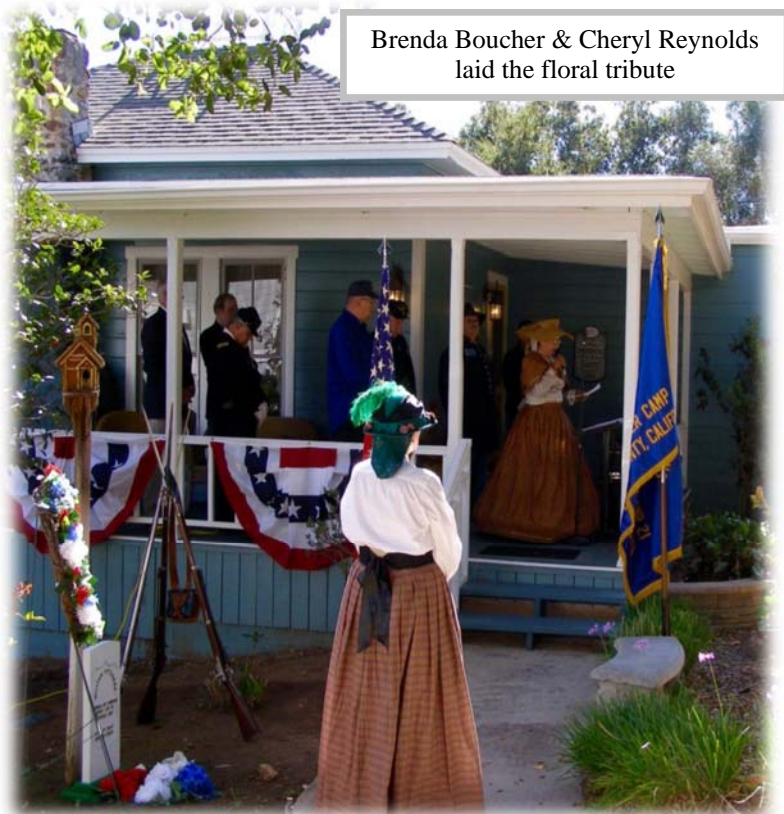
Color Guard, Brian Bingham & Peter Huelsenbeck



PDC Jerry Sayre recited Lincoln's Gettysburg Address



Left: Bro. John Keenan spoke on the Battle of Gettysburg and "The Irish Brigade," especially on Chaplain Father Corby's General Absolution of troops about to go into action



Brenda Boucher & Cheryl Reynolds laid the floral tribute



Pittenger Camp Scrapbook



Retiring Colors



Closing Prayer



Inside Pittenger House



Guests with Kim Sayre (back to camera)



Brian Bingham and Peter Huelsenbeck



Welcome New Brother!

**Richard A. Finegan, Jr.
of Vista
whose ancestor served in
the
35th Kentucky Volunteer
Infantry**

(To be voted into Camp 21 at our
Dec. meeting)

HUZZAH !!!

Civil War Terms

Gabions: (pronounced *gay-bee-en*) Cylindrical wicker baskets which were filled with rocks and dirt, often used to build field fortifications or temporary fortified positions.

Greenbacks: Paper currency which began to circulate in the North after February 1862 with the passage of the Legal Tender Act. The bills were called “greenbacks” because of their color.

The San Diego Civil War Roundtable meets the Third Wednesday of each month, 7 PM at Palisades Presbyterian Church 6301 Birchwood St., San Diego & is open to the public. For further information, contact Pres. Dave Tooley 858-672-2593 or on the Web at www.sdcwrt.org

This Month in The Civil War

Nov. 6,1860.. ABRAHAM LINCOLN is elected the 16th President of the United States. Before his inauguration, seven states will secede.

Nov.8,1861...The Union Navy stops 2 Confederate diplomats sailing for England. The British government demands their release. Lincoln states “one war at a time” and ends a diplomatic standoff by releasing them.

Nov.7,1862...President Lincoln has grown impatient with McClellan’s “lack of attack” after Antietam. He mentions to Mac “if you don’t want to use the army, I should like to borrow it for awhile.”

Nov.19,1863... “**Gettysburg Address.**” Pres. Lincoln stuns his audience and burns his simple speech into U.S. history while dedicating the Soldiers National Cemetery at the former battlefield in Pennsylvania.

Nov.23-25,1863...“**BATTLE OF CHATTANOOGA:**” Gen. Grant defeats CSA Gen. Braxton Bragg at Chattanooga, TN ending the 2 month siege.

Nov.8,1864...Pres **Abraham Lincoln** is reelected by a landslide even carrying the states of Tennessee and Louisiana. His opponent is his former Union commanding General George B. McClellan with the Democratic “Peace” Party. The first time soldiers vote “from the field.”

Nov.15,1864...“**THE SAVANNAH CAMPAIGN:**” Gen. William T. Sherman leaves captured Atlanta after convincing Grant and Lincoln he can “break” his supply lines in Georgia and march his army to the coast living off the land. The Union army will cut a swath of destruction through the heart of the confederacy, burning farms and fields and any supplies they cannot take on their march.

Pittenger Camp Facebook Page by Editor Dave Allyn

Our Camp now has it’s own Facebook page! Thanks to my daughter, Emily Hope Allyn, who set it up and made it a reality. In Facebook (FB) protocol she made it a, “Club/closed group”; meaning you have to join it by submitting a “request.” If you have a Facebook page this is an easy process: from your FB page go to our page; **Sons of Union Veterans Pittenger Camp 21**, then locate the “**JOIN**” (this group) button, push it - which will send me a message to add you to our page. You will get a “request sent” response on your computer/tablet/smartphone, then after I add you to our group page you will get a notification. You **do** have to have a FB page to join but you don’t have to be on FB to view content on our page.

A word about internet security: many people have expressed concern and even some fear of social media (such as Facebook) and I respect those concerns. That is why our Camp has no requirement to join Facebook and we have no plans to use only Facebook to send our brothers news of interest, etc. The General will still continue to be our principal means of reporting with email as the main means of getting pressing news disseminated. I view our FB page as another means of getting the existence of our Camp before the general public. Millions are using FB daily to search for various organizations; it’s quite possible our FB page might attract somebody’s attention. Our Camp 21 Brothers are encouraged to join

The Civil War Trust is the largest nonprofit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its mission is to preserve our nation’s endangered Civil War battlefields and to promote appreciation of these hallowed grounds. To date, the Trust has preserved more than 46,000 acres of battlefield land in 23 states. Learn more at www.civilwar.org, the home of the Civil War sesquicentennial.

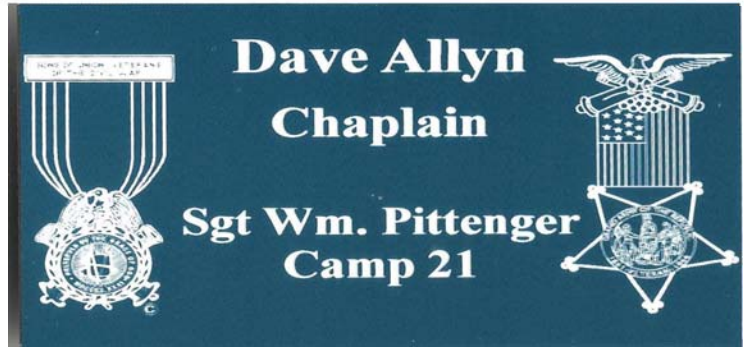
NEXT MEETING: Sat Dec 9, 2017 12:00 Noon

SAT DEC 9, 2017 12:00AM

Camp Badges Available

LOCATION

Peter Huelsenbeck's home
1014 S. Ridge Dr.
Fallbrook, CA
760-728-3769



Our Program
Brief Business
Election/Installation
of Officers for 2018

Lunch

Fellowship and
Games

If you would like to order a Pittenger Camp 21 Name Badge, please mail a check for \$10.00 to Jerry Sayre along with the following information:

Your Name as you would like it engraved and Camp Office title if you like. (This could change year to year).

Specify if you prefer a Pin Clasp or Magnet on the back.

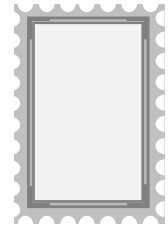
Make checks payable to Fallbrook Awards.

The General

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Sgt. William Pittenger Camp 21
Dave Allyn, Newsletter Editor
13460 Hwy. 8 Bus., Spc. #61
Lakeside, CA. 92040 - 5201



Preserving the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic & "The Boys in Blue," 1861 - 1865