



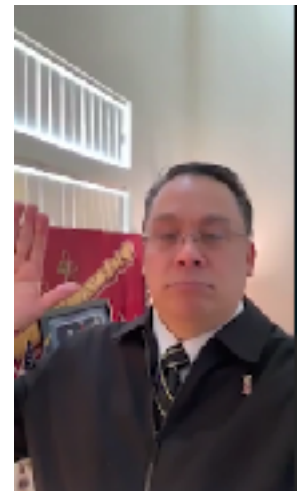
SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR  
General Alfred Pleasonton Camp 24

GUIDON NEWSLETTER  
APRIL 2022

Editor: Steve Johnson, Camp Secretary  
Camp Commander: Robert Mayer

**Camp 24 Receives a New Member**

Our newest member is Brother Ray Galas, who lives in Hawaii. Since Hawaii does not have any camps at this time, those who wish to join the SUVCW may join a camp in an adjacent state, which in this case is California, only 2,393 miles away. Ray petitioned to join our camp, and we were delighted to have a brother from the Aloha state. Ray became interested in the Sons when he learned that one of his in-laws had an ancestor in the Civil War; he also was inspired by the mission of the SUVCW to promote patriotism and honor veterans of all wars who served their country. Born in Jacksonville, Florida to a career Navy couple, Ray served in the Army in a joint US/NATO peacekeeping force, and over the years he has been elected to serve on a number of city and state commissions in Hawaii. His uncle, Ben Galas, was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal for Bravery in Action in the Far East campaign in World War II. Ray is currently living on an Army base in Hawaii with his husband, who commands a unit of the 25th Infantry Division at the US Army Garrison there.



Brother Ray takes the oath of membership as an Associate



Fortunately with Zoom it is easy to communicate over large distances, so on April 2 we had an investiture ceremony officiated by Senior Vice-commander Glenn Martin, with Commander Robert Mayer, Secretary Steve Johnson, and Junior Vice-commander Jeffrey Nibert attending. (Brother Jeffrey joined us from Australia while visiting a wildlife park there!) Brother Ray was very touched by the ceremony and

the warm welcome he received , and we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated and enthusiastic Brother join our camp.

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## Award Presented to Sea Cadet aboard the *Hornet*



In March, Brother Glenn Martin presented a Patriotic Award to Seaman Apprentice Daniel Huang of the US Naval Sea Cadets aboard the carrier *Hornet* in Alameda. The Sea Cadet Corps program was founded in 1958 and is sponsored by the US Navy to teach high school students about the naval military service, as well as to promote community service, team-work, citizenship, and discipline. Our camp, through the efforts of Commander Mayer, has adopted the local sea cadet group and every year presents an award to an outstanding cadet who exemplifies patriotism by doing good work for the community.

Cadet Huang receives an award from Camp 24, here presented by Senior Vice-commander Glenn Martin

## Memorial Day Event

As of this writing there is still no word about a Memorial Day Parade and Remembrance at the Presidio in San Francisco this year. If there is, then our camp will join in the parade as we have done in the past. If there isn't, we will still post ourselves at the entrance to the cemetery and welcome families and relatives with a salute, as we did last year. Some of us will also give tours of the cemetery, telling the story of Civil War soldiers and officers who are buried there. If you are interested in participating, please let the commander know.



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## **Camp 24 Meeting and Barbeque on May 28 at 11 a.m.**

Our next camp meeting will be held at the home of Brother Brad Hatton in Fremont , who has graciously offered his home for a meeting and an outdoor barbeque. At the meeting we will be given a report about the recent Department Encampment in Bakersfield, the upcoming Living History Day at Fort Point, and other activities in the coming months. Afterward we will enjoy companionship and a luncheon with barbequed chicken, potato salad, and baked beans prepared by our host. You can bring your spouse, your own beer or wine, and a dessert to share if you wish. Please reply to this email from Brother Steve Johnson, camp secretary, confirming that you are coming and if you are bringing a family member or spouse. You will be given Brad's address and driving directions by return email.

## **Abraham Lincoln and California by Brother Steve Johnson**

Like many Americans, Lincoln was intrigued and fascinated by the stories he heard about California, such as the vast quantities of gold being discovered, the huge trees that were hundreds of feet high, the verdant fields and valleys, and the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains. In March of 1865 he told his friend, Charles Maltby — who was the superintendent of Indians Affairs in California — the following:

“I have long desired to see California; the production of her gold mines has been a marvel to me, and her stand for the Union, her generous offerings to the Sanitary Commission, and her loyal representatives have endeared your people to me; and nothing would give me more pleasure than a visit to the Pacific shore...”<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, Lincoln never made it to California. But while in office he signed into law four important pieces of legislation that directly affected California.

### **The Yosemite Park Act**

Early visitors to Yosemite valley were awestruck by its unique beauty, and one man in particular began to push for its preservation. Frederick Law Olmstead - the famous landscape architect who designed Central Park in New York - believed parks were essential for people to enjoy the beneficial effects of nature and pressured California legislators to introduce legislation to protect the park.<sup>2</sup> This happened in March of 1864 when California Senator John Conness introduced the Yosemite Park Act, which granted the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to California with the stipulation

“...that the said State shall accept this grant upon the express conditions that the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation, and shall be inalienable for all time”

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<sup>1</sup> “A Visit to the Pacific Shore: California in the Age of Lincoln”, California State Archives.

<sup>2</sup> “An Unexpected Lincoln Legacy: The Preservation of Yosemite” by Richard Helleesen <https://www.fords.org/blog/2post/an-unexpected-lincoln-legacy-the-preservation-of-yosemite/>

Though it might be stretching it to call Lincoln an environmentalist President, he always had a love of nature from his years in Kentucky, and it no doubt gave him pleasure to sign into law the act that set aside an extraordinary place of natural beauty for all generations to see. This set a precedent for the government to set aside land for parks, for in 1872 President Grant signed the Act of Dedication, making Yellowstone the first National Park. (Yosemite became a national park in 1890).

### **The Transcontinental Railroad**

Talk of building a railroad to connect the East with the West had been going on since the 1830's. By the 1850's Congress authorized surveying parties to study the best route for a transcontinental railroad and in 1861 civil engineer Theodore Judah presented his maps for the proposed route to Congress. Lincoln, who had been a lawyer for the railroads, was a supporter of this plan and in 1862 he signed into law The Pacific Railway Act, which granted two companies lands and bonds to build the railroad from east to west (the Union Pacific) and from west to east (the Central Pacific). Lincoln believed it was important to unify the country, both North and South, and East and West. He knew the railroad would provide communication, trade, and travel between the two coasts and bind them closer together.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ending Slavery in California**

Even though California had come into the Union as a free state, slavery was common - especially in Southern California which was mostly populated by Southerners. It was usual for them to bring their slaves from the South to work their farms and mines. This was considered common practice and there was no law enforcement of the no slavery law. The legislature and the courts were filled with Southerners in the 1850's and laws were passed that in effect promoted slavery. Such a law was the 1852 California Fugitive Slave Act which required any slaves who had fled to this state had to be returned to slavery. Native Americans fared no better. Congress never approved the 1852 treaty to give reservation lands to California tribes, most of whom had been dispossessed of their ancestral lands. As a result, many landless natives were considered vagrants and were required to work on farms or as domestic servants — virtual slaves. Such practices were made illegal when Lincoln signed the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery.

### **Missions returned to the church**

By the time California came into the Union, the 21 Catholic missions were already in decline. Many of the buildings were in disrepair or in ruins, some were used for stables or businesses; only two remained as parish churches on private land. In 1865 Lincoln signed a proclamation returning certain mission lands to the Catholic church. This initiated a movement to restore all mission lands back to the church and today all but two are parish churches — two are California state parks (Sonoma and La Purisima Conception). While today we see the

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<sup>3</sup> "The Pacific Railway" <https://railroad.lindahall.org/essays/brief-history.html>

missions in a different light, being labor camps for captured Native Californians, nevertheless they were part of early California history.<sup>4</sup> San Francisco's own mission, for example, is the oldest intact building in the city and Mission Dolores has the only curator who is a Native Californian, of the Ohlone people. The mission's narrative panels tell the story of the mission from the Indian point of view, and shows the importance of telling a broader history of the missions.



Painting of Yosemite Valley, 1864, by Albert Bierstadt, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The above article appeared in the February 2022 issue of the Friends of Civil War Alcatraz newsletter

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<sup>4</sup> For a condensed version of the fate of California Indians, see this state report <https://nahc.ca.gov/resources/california-indian-history/>