

Sumter to Appomattox

The Official Newsletter of the New South Wales Chapter of The American Civil War Round Table of Australia

No.15, May 2004

A Message from the Chairman –

I was particularly moved by the response of members who were at the last meeting to hear my presentation on the life and death of George Armstrong Custer. The enthusiasm and interest shown for my efforts by those present made the many hours of research and preparation seem worthwhile. I was somewhat surprised by the numbers who attended the meeting as I was anticipating a small attendance given the number of members who had tendered their apologies. Most of all, I was “blown away” by the kind words and presentation that our new Honorary Member, Len Traynor, made at the conclusion of the meeting – such praise from the doyen of Civil War studies is somewhat humbling but greatly appreciated.

As I advised at the last meeting, Roger and Elaine Dixon have left their idyllic cottage in the Hunter Valley for a three-year appointment in a wine growing area of New Jersey. Whilst we will miss the opportunity of having our Christmas function at their home for the foreseeable future, I would wish to extend our best wishes to them for a profitable and fulfilling experience in “God’s own country” and assure them we will keep in contact, if only by the regular dispatch of this Newsletter.

I would wish to add my voice to the invitation to our members to participate in the Memorial Day Commemoration at Waverley Cemetery on Sunday, May 30. (See notice in is Newsletter for details). The service and the later social gathering provides an opportunity for our group to meet with interesting people, mainly of American origin, and some with an interest and knowledge of matters Civil War. In previous years we have had up to 10 of our members attending the Commemoration and I’m hoping we can at least match this number this year and possibly lay a wreath as part of the Service. Any member who needs transport to/from the Cemetery for this Commemoration should contact me to ensure arrangements are put in place.

Paul Kensey

Next Month’s Meeting

Our next scheduled meeting for this year is to be held at our normal venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Wednesday, June 16, 2004** with the meeting’s proceedings to commence at **7pm**. As usual, members will be able to meet at the Club **from 6pm for a bistro style meal**. In response to the many requests for another of this form of meeting, we are having a Members’ Forum, where four of our members in two teams of two will present differing perspectives on the subject of:

“What Caused the Civil War – Southern and Northern Perspectives”

David Wilson and Angus Hordern will present Southern perspectives on this important issue whilst Margaret Neil-Smith and Brian Elkington will present a Northern perspective. The forum will conclude with a synthesis of the issues raised by the meeting’s chairman.

A paper setting out each of the views expressed during the Forum together with the concluding synthesis of these views will be available at the conclusion of the meeting and later, on request. Members living outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have the paper mailed out automatically with the next Newsletter in May. Our last meeting where we used this forum format was an outstanding success and we are looking to this meeting to be equally successful and appealing to members.

Memorial Day Commemoration

The American Legion “Yanks Down Under Post No.1 is holding its Memorial Day Observance Ceremony at Waverley Cemetery (Solomon-Thompson family grave-site) on Sunday, May 30 commencing at 1pm. In the event of inclement weather, the service will be held at Bronte RSL Club in nearby MacPherson Street. After the service refreshments will be served at the RSL Club.

In previous years our Chapter of the ACWRTA has been well represented and we are looking to a similar level of support this year. We hope to see you there!

It Happened in June

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

June 1, 1831 – John Bell Hood (CSA) is born in Owingsville, Bath County, Kentucky;

June 3, 1808 – Confederate President Jefferson Davis is born in Christian County, Kentucky;

June 5, 1864 – On Matagorda Island, Texas, 13 black members of the Union's Corps de Afrique are hanged by Federal military authorities after convictions for mutiny;

June 5, 1864 – Brigadier General William E (Grumble) Jones (CSA) is killed in action in the Shenandoah Valley;

June 14, 1811 – Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is born Litchfield, Conn;

June 14, 1864 – General Leonidas Polk, (CSA) is killed at Pine Mountain, Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

June 17, 1862 – Braxton Bragg succeeds General Beauregard as Commander of the Western Department of the Confederate Army

April 22, 1861 – Robert E Lee is named commander of the forces of Virginia;

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

June 1 – 3, 1864 – Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia;

June 1, 1862 – Second day of fighting in the Battle of Seven Forks;

June 6, 1862 – The Battle of Memphis, Tennessee;

June 8, 1862 - Confederate forces under "Stonewall Jackson, successfully fight off Federal attacks and achieve victory at the Battle of Cross Keys, Virginia;

June 9, 1863 – Battle of Brandy Station, Virginia, which is the largest cavalry battle ever fought on American soil. In this battle JEB Stuart was surprised by the Union forces commanded by Alfred Pleasanton and narrowly escapes defeat;

June 10, 1861 – Battle of Big Bethel, Virginia, is the first major battle of the Civil War. Although outnumbering the Confederates by more than four to one, the Union attack failed disastrously:
ZZ

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont'd

June 12 – 15, 1862 – JEB Stuart's spectacular four-day reconnaissance that develops into a ride around McClellan's army on the Virginia Peninsula;

June 21, 1863 – Heavy skirmishing marks Lee's advance north with engagements at several places in Virginia and in Frederick, Maryland;

June 27, 1864 – Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Ga, results in a Confederate victory thus temporarily checking Sherman's march on Atlanta.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

June 4, 1862 – Southern planters burn huge stocks of cotton on the Yazoo and the Mississippi to prevent their capture;

June 19, 1862 – President Lincoln signs into law a measure prohibiting slavery in the territories of the United States;

June 20, 1863 – By presidential proclamation West Virginia is admitted to the Union as the 35th State;

June 23, 1861 – Federal balloonist Thaddeus Lowe observes and maps Confederate lines over northern Virginia;

June 25, 1864 – At Petersburg, Federal engineers begin digging a tunnel towards Confederate lines which they hope will enable them to blow apart the Southern earthworks;

June 28, 1863 – Lee diverts Confederate forces from an intended drive to Harrisburg to march them towards Gettysburg;

June 30, 1865 – All eight alleged Lincoln assassination conspirators are found guilty.

Famous Last Words

*"Hooker's career is exemplified by that of a rocket,
He went up like one and came down like a stick"*

- Captain George Armstrong Custer,
Union 1st Cavalry

"I'm as dead a man as Julius Caesar"

- Brigadier General Stephen H Weed, Union
Brigade commander mortally wounded at
Little Round Top, Battle of Gettysburg

In Defence of the “Lost Cause”

This article has been prepared by one of our members who is critical of one of the articles appearing in the March, 2004 issue the Chapter's Newsletter.

In the last issue of our Newsletter, (No. 14, March 2004), an article titled “After the War” was presented as part of a series about religion in Civil War times. The article sought to denigrate the South and its great military leaders and was little more than a feeble attempt at historical revisionism that is becoming popular in modern times.

In this article it is proposed to “set the record straight”, present the facts and let readers judge for themselves the validity of what these latter-day revisionist “historians” call the “Myth of the Lost Cause”.

In setting a context for the ‘War of Northern Aggression’ or the ‘War for Southern Rights’, as it should be more properly named, the stark contrast between the manpower and materiel resources of the North and the South should be noted including:

- The huge discrepancy in population and, as a consequence, the numbers of men available for the Union and Confederate armies;
- The overwhelming imbalance of numbers of trained and experienced officers opting to fight for the North and the fledgling Confederacy. (Indeed, the only thing that kept the Confederacy fighting for as long as it did was the superior quality of its officer corps);
- The contrast in the political leaders – Davis was a man of principle, Lincoln was the consummate politician;
- The fact that almost all of the war industries were located in the North necessitating the Confederacy to import most of its weapons requiring delivery through the naval blockade.

Furthermore, the Confederacy did not have an established army from which it could expand at the beginning of the War and had to “start from scratch”. Even the “strategic victory” of the Union forces at Antietam in 1862 as well as the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863 is just a euphemism to hide the fact that in both cases inept Union commanders allowed Lee to withdraw from the battlefield with his forces intact.

In 1864, the Overland Campaign (The Wilderness and Spotsylvania battles) culminating in the Battle of Cold Harbor pitted Lee against the Union's “best” in Ulysses S Grant for the first time and resulted in massive casualties for the Union forces - 29.6% of Union troops in the Wilderness battle were casualties! Grant was simply not able to inflict a decisive defeat on his gallant enemy. It was only in the following year when Lee was not able to replace his diminishing forces that Grant's overwhelming numbers were able finally to be victorious at Appomattox.

Indeed, one can only wonder how different the result of the War might have been if the Confederacy had a more even and fairer allocation of manpower and materiel resources throughout the War.

It is most regrettable that some modern “historians” are now seeking to reject the historical scholarship on the Civil War that has served us so well for over a hundred years since the end of the War. Such politically correct attempts to re-write history in terms of prevailing political and social philosophies do nothing to advance our knowledge and understanding of this conflict and dishonour the memory of the gallant officers and men of the Confederacy.

Well, What Do You Think?

The views expressed in this article are certainly in stark contrast to those presented in article “*After the War*” in the March issue of our Newsletter and may not be consistent with some of our readers' views.

If you would like to express your views on this (or any other) issue appearing in the Newsletter, we will publish it. To this end, you should simply contact Paul Kensey or John Cook with what you would like printed and we will seek to include it in the next issue of the Newsletter. There is no need to put your name to the contribution as anonymous contributions will be accepted for publication.

The “Custer Paper” is Available!

Those members who missed our last meeting where Paul Kensey spoke on the life and death of George Armstrong Custer missed a great presentation. Paul's presentations are always good but this one was something really special! The extensive research that Paul had undertaken for the presentation, including “walking the ground” of the Little Big Horn battle, where Custer met his death, was matched only by Paul's passion for this subject and the well rehearsed presentation we had the privilege to experience. Well done, Paul – your contribution to expanding our knowledge and understanding of this historical period is gratefully acknowledged by all of our members.

Copies of Paul's paper are available and can be obtained by contacting John Cook on 'phone 9412 3214

This publication is the official newsletter of the New South Wales Chapter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia. All inquiries regarding the Newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary/Treasurer of the Chapter by telephone on 9449 3720 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 75 or by e-mail to bpoconn@bigpond.com

Mrs Hancock's Dinner Party

On June 15, 1861, Captain and Mrs Winfield Scott gave a farewell party at Los Angeles for several officers who had just resigned their commissions in order to join the Confederacy.

The guest of honour at the dinner was Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, a brevet brigadier general widely considered to be one of the most capable officers in the army and late acting commander of the Department of the Pacific. Also present at the dinner were Major Lewis A Armistead, Captain Richard B Garnett and several other recently resigned officers.

Despite the awkward circumstances, the evening passed in good spirits and everyone parted on good terms with Armistead, a close friend of the Hancocks, giving Mrs Hancock a prayer book as a parting gift.

Source: North and South, Volume 7, No. 1, Jan 2004.

Fresh Rations?

During the Civil War, the US Army procured so many supplies that as late as 1890, troops were still being issued with rations marked "1863"!

Who Were Their Financial Advisers?

During 1861, a number of Southerners took advantage of the secession crisis to clear their financial situation by renegeing on the debts to Northern creditors. New York banks alone lost \$160 million from this scam!

Interactive Hunley Exhibit

This article is provided courtesy of Jenny Holder, one of our South Australian members

Visitors to MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. will soon be able to experience what it was like to crank the H.L. Hunley as the Confederate submarine silently approached a Union blockade ship off Charleston.

They will see what crewmen might have seen through the submarine's viewport and what it might have been like when the black powder charge at the end of a spar exploded, sending the USS Housatonic to the bottom and the Confederate sub into the history books.

The Burroughs and Chapin Co. announced plans Wednesday for a 4,200-square-foot interactive Hunley exhibit at its Broadway at the Beach entertainment and shopping complex, visited by an estimated 11 million people a year.

The company will pay a licensing fee and 20 percent of gift shop receipts to Friends of the Hunley for preservation of the submarine, which sank shortly after becoming the first sub in history to sink an enemy warship.

The H.L. Hunley Experience will be a \$1.6 million exhibit located in a \$1.4 million building now under construction at the complex. The exhibit, scheduled to open July 7, is in the company's Adventures in Science, History and Nature Building. The Hunley exhibit will be on display as long as there is interest, although other exhibits may replace it in future years, company officials said.

The Hunley was raised off Charleston almost four years ago and is now at a conservation lab in North Charleston, where a \$40 million Hunley museum is planned. The eight crewmen from the Hunley were buried earlier this month in what was called the last Confederate funeral.

State Senator Glenn McConnell, chairman of the South Carolina Hunley Commission, called the new exhibit good for Myrtle Beach, good for Charleston about two hours away and good for the state. "I think it's wonderful and our project will benefit," McConnell said. "It will kind of whet your appetite and encourages folks to take a drive to Charleston."

"The Hunley experience will now be available to people outside of Charleston," agreed Warren Lasch, the chairman of Friends of the Hunley. He said the group will receive a licensing fee of \$54,000 a year plus 20 percent of gift and souvenir sales from the exhibit's gift shop. Conservation of the Hunley costs about \$1.2 million a year, he said.

About 500,000 people a year are expected to visit the Hunley Experience, said Tom Jones, Burroughs and Chapin's chief officer for sports, entertainment and recreation. For competitive reasons, he refused to say how much Friends of the Hunley might get from gift shop sales.

"What the Hunley exhibit will do is provide both entertainment and education," said Pat McBride of the McBride Co. which is developing the exhibits. "People are going to find it an entertaining experience because it's a fascinating story. But they are also going to walk away with a great understanding of technological achievements and marine warfare and that period of our history."

A traveling exhibit of The Hunley Experience also is being created and will tour museums and other venues nationwide, officials said. Both exhibits will be updated with new findings on the Hunley as research in Charleston continues.

"The Hunley is first and foremost a technological marvel," said J. Egerton Burroughs, chairman of Burroughs and Chapin. "At this time in history, the Hunley, the Monitor, the Merrimac changed naval warfare and changed our world."