

Sumter to Appomattox

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

www.americancivilwar.asn.au

No. 18, November 2004

A Message from the Chairman –

Our final meeting for 2004 is an important one in that we will be holding the elections for your Executive and Committee for the next two years. I am able to assure all members that none of the present Executive and Committee has an “emotional attachment” to these positions and new faces for all positions will be most welcome. Accompanying this issue of our Newsletter is a nomination form for the Executive Positions of Chairman (it does not have to be a male), Program Director, Secretary/Treasurer, Publicity Officer and for the Committee (6 positions). Please give some consideration to nominating.

Members who have not as yet paid their 2004 – 2005 subscription will see a remainder invoice with this Newsletter and I hope that you will give the matter your immediate attention by contacting our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O’Connell, with your subscription of \$25.

Reflecting on this year’s meetings, I believe we have maintained the high standard of presentations that has been a feature of our Chapter’s activities in previous years. The efforts made by our various speakers, both in their presentations and the preparation of the papers provided to members has been a credit to them and sets a standard that other groups use as a benchmark of sound planning and organisation. My special thanks needs to go to those who have helped in this way. I look forward to next year’s program being as interesting and varied as that which has gone before and that we will maintain our reputation for quality.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a book of tickets for our Giant Christmas Raffle (valued in excess of \$1000) which seeks to provide financial support to bring an overseas speaker to the Melbourne Conference and our first meeting for 2005 in February. I hope that you will be able to sell these tickets and return the money for the scheduled drawing of the prize either at our Christmas function.

Lastly, I would draw your to the enclosed “flyer” for our Christmas function on

Paul Kensey

Next Month’s Meeting

Our next and final meeting for this year is to be held at our normal venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Monday, December 6, 2004** with the meeting’s proceedings to commence at **7:30pm**. The later start for the meeting’s proceedings continues with the successful trial of it last meeting. As usual, members will be able to meet at the Club **from 6pm for a bistro style meal**.

Please note the change in day from Wednesday to Monday, due to the unavailability of the Club on our scheduled meeting night.

The speaker at this meeting will be John Cook, whose presentation is entitled:

“Neither an Exact Science nor an Oxymoron – Military Intelligence During America’s Civil War”

John has “stepped into the breach” to give this presentation after the scheduled speaker had to withdraw. During his preparation for the presentation, John found that although over 50,000 books and pamphlets have been written about the Civil War, there remains a dearth of authoritative writings about what we now call ‘military intelligence’. What had been written has been described as “... a sad array of potboilers... books descended from the memoirs of men and women who claimed, not all of them truthfully, to have been spies for the Union or Confederacy” and that later writers “... have added to the numerous fictions and occasional facts in these books”. It was not until 1959 that papers were discovered in the National Archives Office that allowed an authoritative “intelligence history” to be written and published. The story that has emerged is a fascinating one, showing clearly that the Civil War practices represent the transition from traditional to modern warfare.

As is our normal practice, a paper of the presentation will be available to members at the conclusion of the meeting. Members living outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have the paper mailed out automatically with the next Newsletter in January 2005.

It Happened in December

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

December 3, 1826 – George Brinton McClellan is born in Philadelphia;

December 5, 1839 – George Armstrong Custer is born in New Rumley, Ohio;

December 6, 1833 – John Singleton Mosby, (CSA), is born in Edgemont, Virginia;

December 13, 1818 – Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of Abraham Lincoln, is born in Lexington, Kentucky;

December 19, 1814 – Edwin Stanton, US Secretary of War 1862 - 1868 is born Steubenville, Ohio;

December 29, 1808 – Andrew Johnson, 17th US President, 1865 – 1868, who succeeded Lincoln, is born in Raleigh, S.C.;

December 31, 1815 – George Gordon Meade is born in Cadiz, Spain.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

December 2, 1863 – General Braxton Bragg turns over command of the Army of Tennessee to Lieutenant General William Hardee at Dalton, Georgia;

December 4, 1862 – Confederate General Joseph E Johnston assumes command in the West;

December 14, 1861 – Brigadier General H H Sibley is assigned command of all Confederate forces on the upper Rio Grande and in the New Mexico and Arizona Territories;

December 15, 1863 – Major General Jubal Early, CSA is assigned to the Shenandoah District.

NAVAL ACTIONS

December 1, 1861 – US gunboat *Penguin* captures the blockade runner *Albion* off Nassau and confiscates its cargo;

December 12, 1862 – On the Yazoo River, Miss., the Federal ironclad *Cairo* strikes a mine and sinks;

December 17, 1861 – Federals sink a number of hulks loaded with stones in Savannah Harbour in an effort to halt shipping;

December 24, 1864 – Federal fleet bombards Fort Fisher, guarding Wilmington, NC, the last Confederate open port;

December 30, 1862 – The USS Monitor, hero of the battle with the Merrimack, flounders off Cape Hatteras in heavy seas, 16 officers and men are lost.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

December 7, 1862 – Confederate raider, John Hunt Morgan, with 1,400 men surprises a Federal garrison at Hartsville, Tenn., taking 1,800 prisoners;

December 16, 1864 – Battle of Nashville ends as Confederate army commanded by General John B Hood, is almost destroyed by Union troops under General George Thomas;

December 25, 1864 – Federals land troops to take Fort Fisher, N.C., but the assault fails and they are withdrawn;

December 26, 1862 – Federals attack a guerrilla camp in Powell County, Kentucky;

December 28, 1862 – Federal Army of the Frontier pushes back Confederates at Dripping Springs, Ark., capturing Van Buren.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

December 8, 1862 – Lincoln issues Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, pardoning participants in “the existing rebellion” if they take the oath to the Union;

December 9, 1863 – Black Federal troops at Fort Jackson, La., mutiny over alleged mistreatment of one white officer of his troops;

December 10, 1861 – An Act of the Confederate Congress in Richmond admits Kentucky to the Confederacy, thus completing the 13 states;

December 11, 1861 – Already suffering under the Federal blockade, Charleston, S.C., is struck by a disastrous fire sweeping through its business district;

December 18, 1865 – The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution abolishing slavery is declared in effect by Secretary of State Seward after approval by 27 states;

December 20, 1860 – The South Carolina Convention in Charleston passes a formal declaration of secession. The first state to secede;

December 22, 1864 – General Sherman sends President Lincoln: “I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah;

December 27, 1860 – The US flag is raised over Fort Sumter as South Carolina troops occupy Charleston forts.

Famous Last Words

“Yesterday we rode on the pinnacle of success – today, absolute ruin seems to be our portion. The Confederacy totters to its destruction.”

- Josiah Gorgas, Confederate Chief of Ordnance, July 1863

World Focus: A Notable Naval Battle

U.S. Civil War site dedicated in France Plaque marks sinking of Confederate raider off French coast in 1864

CHERBOURG, France American cannon blasts belted in the English Channel 140 years ago, and bloodied bodies lined the deck of a sinking Confederate ship. Teary onlookers watched in horror from the Normandy coast.

On June 19, 1864, far from battlefields at home, the *USS Kearsarge* hunted down and sank a dreaded Confederate raider in one of the most important naval battles of the U.S. Civil War off the coast of France.

The Confederate States Ship *Alabama* today lies where it sank under 198 feet of swirling currents about 7 nautical miles off the French town of Cherbourg.

Yesterday, the Civil War Preservation Trust, an American non-profit group, named this English Channel town a historic Civil War site the first outside the United States. Officials dedicated a plaque commemorating the battle at the Cite de la Mer museum, which is exhibiting a cannon recovered from the *Alabama*.

"This was one of the most notable naval battles of the Civil War, and one of the most unique in that it happened so far away from American shores," Robert Neyland, head of underwater archaeology at the U.S. Naval Historical Center, said from Washington.

The *Alabama*, built for the Confederacy by a company in Liverpool, England, was one of the most successful raiders ever. In 22 months, her crew boarded 447 vessels, including 65 Union merchant ships, and took 2,000 prisoners, according to the CSS *Alabama* Association.

"This ship caused a lot of panic in the United States," Neyland said, adding that its exploits made it known and at times celebrated in many parts of the world.

Five days before its last battle, the Confederate raider stopped for repairs in Cherbourg, where the *Kearsarge* tracked the ship after a long hunt. Capt. Raphael Semmes, who commanded the three-masted Confederate sloop, then challenged *Kearsarge* Capt. John Winslow to a one-on-one battle.

The historical center said 10 of the *Alabama's* 155 crew members were killed in the battle, four drowned and another 15 were missing in action and presumed dead.

Semmes' great-great grandson, Oliver Semmes, attended yesterday's ceremony.

A French naval minesweeper discovered the 234-foot-long, 30-foot-wide boat in 1984. Divers and robots have retrieved relics including the cannon, revolver bullets and coins in more than 1,000 dives.

After a two-year pause, explorations will resume next year. The ship belongs to the United States, but is in French territorial waters.

- From Associated Press, Sept 24, 2004

IMPORTANT NEWS –

Our Website is Launched!

It is with great pleasure that your Committee is able to announce that the Chapter's website is now up and running. This initiative has been made possible by some absolutely magnificent work by Bruce McLennan who has provided us with a product of which we can be extremely proud.

You can now access our website at:

www.americancivilwar.asn.au

We are in the process of including on the website all past issues of our Newsletter, *Sumter to Appomattox*, selected papers that had been the subject of a presentation at our regular meetings, the papers from our two full-day Conferences and some articles gleaned from various sources that are considered to be of particular interest to our members.

It may well be that in the future members who would wish to receive our Newsletter and papers from our meetings, can have them in this electronic form rather than as "hardcopy". In saying this, however, it must be stressed that it is our policy to always have paper versions of our publications available for those without computer access or would still want a hardcopy version.

Over the coming months we will be adding to the contents of our website so it is worth making regular "visits" to it to see what is new.

Your reaction to this initiative would be greatly appreciated and we would ask that you let your friends who have some interest in matters Civil War know that the website is operational.

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, 2075 or by e-mail to bpoconn@bigpond.com

Preservation News

UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP SAVES HALLOWED GROUND AT CHANCELLORSVILLE

(Chancellorsville, VA) - At a public hearing Tuesday night, the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors unveiled a proposal to preserve 140 acres of the historic Mullins Farm on Chancellorsville Battlefield. The deal is the result of an unique alliance between local homebuilder Tricord Homes; Spotsylvania County, Virginia; and the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT).

"Two years ago, few believed that the Mullins Farm could be saved," remarked CWPT President James Lighthizer. "Now, thanks to this unusual partnership, an irreplaceable part of Chancellorsville Battlefield will be protected for future generations of Americans. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the most significant battlefield preservation victory in a decade."

The linchpin of the deal is preservation of 140 acres of core battlefield land associated with the opening clash of Chancellorsville. Tricord Homes, a local family-owned development company, acquired the eastern half of the Mullins Farm – 227 acres in total – in July of this year. Soon thereafter, talks began that resulted in an agreement that permits Tricord to build age-restricted housing on 87 acres of the farm in exchange for the protection of the remaining 140 acres. CWPT is contributing \$3 million toward the purchase of the preserved land.

"This is a real partnership where everyone wins," Lighthizer noted. "Tricord is able to build quality housing for seniors, the county is getting open space for its citizens, and preservationists are getting a battlefield of enormous historic significance."

Since 2002, the Mullins Farm has been the focus of a national campaign to save this important part of the Chancellorsville Battlefield. In March 2003, a proposal to build a 2,000-house development on the Mullins Farm was rejected by the county Board of Supervisors. In January 2004 put a highway interchange on the property was turned down by the local transportation authority.

However, it was not until the Tricord proposal was announced Tuesday evening that any battlefield land on the Mullins Farm was set aside for preservation. "Tricord recognized early on that preserving the battlefield was the path, not the obstacle, to a deal at the Mullins Farm," Lighthizer stated.

Although pleased with the Tricord deal, CWPT remains concerned that the western segment of the Mullins Farm remains slated for development. Lighthizer hopes to begin talks with Toll Brothers, the owner of the 566-acre western portion of the Mullins Farm, in the coming weeks. "There is still much more work to be done at Chancellorsville," he observed.

With 60,000 members, the [Civil War Preservation Trust](#) is the largest non-profit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its goal is to preserve our nation's endangered Civil War sites and to promote appreciation of these hallowed grounds through education and heritage tourism.

**Source: Civil War Preservation Trust
Press Release – May 15, 2004**

THE BIG SELL – Our Giant Christmas Guessing Competition!

You will have read in our Chairman's message to members on page 1, our intention to have a giant Christmas raffle to raise money for a distinguished Civil War historian, John Quarstein, from the Virginia War Museum to come to Australia to speak at the forthcoming ACWRTA conference in Melbourne and, subsequently, at our February 2005 meeting.

What has been assembled for the prizes for this raffle is something quite special:

First Prize is a Christmas hamper containing a range of gourmet foods with a Xmas "flavour" including a leg of ham, plum puddings, a home-made Xmas cake, hand-made chocolates, etc; there will be a selection of fine wines including some dessert and fortified wines together with a collection of women's and men's toiletries of the highest quality. To add a Civil War flavour to the prize, a number of books and DVDs will be part of the prize including *Gone with the Wind* and *The Horse Soldiers* (Hollywood's version of Benjamin Grierson's ride in 1863, starring John Wayne and changing Grierson's pre-War occupation from musician to engineer to suit the Duke's image!) The value of this prize is in excess of \$1000!

Second Prize is a \$50:00 gift voucher for books from Dymocks, kindly donated by Jennifer Kirkby's father in what has been an annual donation to the Chapter. (This is greatly appreciated Mr Kirkby!)

Third, Fourth and Fifth Prizes are each three bottles of fine wines – one red, one white and one dessert.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a book of 10 tickets that sells for \$3 per ticket or \$25 if a person buys the whole book. There is a mystery prize, also, to the member selling the most tickets. Start selling these tickets and remember that additional books of tickets are available from our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell at telephone 9449 3720.

The prizes for the raffle are to be drawn at our Christmas function.