

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 24, November 2005

Please note, our new website www.americancivilwar.asn.au is now up and running

A Message from the Chairman –

In my message to members in the last issue of this Newsletter, I raised the matters of our program of activities for the remainder of this year and invited suggestions on the format of our End-of-Year/Xmas Function. The response to this invitation was most heartening and your Committee has agreed to hold this function on Friday evening, November 25 from 6pm.

The format of the evening will involve meeting for drinks and “nibbles” at Angus Hordern’s offices, 20/12 Tryon Road, Lindfield, where there will be a short presentation on an original Civil War letter recounting a Union Officer’s experiences at the Battle of Chancellorsville. This will be followed by dinner at a local restaurant, adjacent to Angus’s office.

The cost for the evening will involve only what you order for yourself and partner at dinner. The restaurant is BYO with some charge for corkage. There will be, of course, our mandatory Christmas raffle, which I hope you will give your usual generous support.

During the first part of this function we plan to have our Annual General Meeting where your Executive and Committee for the next two years will be elected. Please be assured that the AGM will be extremely brief but I wish to point out that **all** Executive and Committee positions are open for nomination. I wish to encourage all members to give consideration to serving in one of these positions in 2006 – 2007. Nomination forms for the positions together with the Chapter’s financial statement for 2004-05 and your invitation to the Xmas function are enclosed with this Newsletter.

I would wish to place on record my personal appreciation and that of the Committee to Angus Hordern for developing the concept of this year’s function and for making available the venue and facilities for us to hold our function. Thank you Angus!

Because of the format of this End-of-Year/Christmas function, the last meeting for the year, scheduled for Monday, December 5, has been cancelled.

Looking to next year, your Committee has decided to change the night of our meetings back to Wednesday. This decision was taken after much discussion and was influenced by the expanded dinner menu available at the Club on Wednesdays over the limited “roast night” of a Monday. Please be assured your Committee will be closely monitoring this change to ensure it meets your needs.

The big event for 2006 is our full-day Conference scheduled for Saturday, April 8, 2006 with the theme of the conference being:

APPOMATTOX AND BEYOND

A selection of distinguished speakers has been assembled for this conference, so make sure it has been pencilled into your 2006 diary. The venue for this conference is the Gordon Club, Mandarin Centre, Chatswood.

Lastly, I would like to thank all members for their continued support of the Chapter this year and look forward to your being with us again for a great year in 2006. May I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones the compliments of the season – A merry and festive Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Paul Kensey

What Happened in November?

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

November 3, 1816 – Jubal Early, (CSA), is born in Franklin County, Virginia;

November 5, 1818 – Soldier-politician, Benjamin Franklin Butler, (USA), is born in Deerfield, NH;

November 9, 1825 – A P (Ambrose Powell) Hill, (CSA), is born in Culpepper, Virginia;

November 13, 1814 – Joseph (Fighting Joe) Hooker is born in Hadley, Mass:

COMMAND APPOINTMENTS

November 1, 1861 – Major General George B McClellan succeeds retiring Lieutenant General Winfield Scott as general-in-chief of the Union armies;

November 2, 1861 – Major General John C Frémont is relieved of command of the Union's Western Department;

November 5, 1862 – President Lincoln relieves General McClellan of command of the Army of the Potomac replacing him with Ambrose Burnside;

November 10, 1862 – McClellan takes an emotional, spectacular farewell of the Army of the Potomac;

November 24, 1862 – Confederate General Joseph E Johnston is assigned to the major command in the West comprising six states;

November 30, 1863 – Gathering his defeated army in north-west Georgia, Braxton Bragg learns that his resignation has been accepted by President Davis.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

November 11, 1864 – Federals in Rome, Georgia, destroy bridges, foundries, warehouses of use to the enemy and proceed towards Atlanta;

November 16, 1864 – General Sherman and 60,000 Union troops leave a burned out Atlanta and begin their march to the Sea;

November 17, 1863 – The Confederate siege of Knoxville, Tennessee, gets underway and the partial siege of Chattanooga continues;

November 29, 1864 – The Federal army under command of John Schofield withdraws under Hood's nose without suffering attack in the "Spring Hill Affair" (in Tennessee).

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

November 6, 1860 – Lincoln is elected President of the United States;

November 8, 1864 – Lincoln is re-elected as US President with Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as his Vice President;

November 12, 1861 – The Confederate blockade runner *Fingal*, purchased in England, arrives in Savannah with military supplies;

November 15, 1861 – The YMCA organises the US Christian Commission for support to Federal soldiers;

November 19, 1863 – President Lincoln delivers the *Gettysburg Address* at the dedication ceremony for the new national cemetery at Gettysburg;

November 25, 1864 – Confederate agents set fire to a number of New York hotels and Barnum's Museum without causing significant damage;

November 26, 1861 – A convention at Wheeling adopts a constitution for a new state to be called West Virginia, created by secession from Virginia;

November 27, 1863 – General John Hunt Morgan and a number of his officers escape from the Ohio State Penitentiary and manage to reach Confederate territory;

November 28, 1861 – Southern Congress officially admits Missouri to the Confederate States of America.

Famous Last Words...

"I don't know if I am standing on my head or feet"

- Union General Joseph E Hooker,
June 1863

"... In my latest writing and utterance, I repeat my unmitigated hatred to ... the vile Yankee race."

- Edmund Ruffin, June 17, 1865
prior to his committing suicide.

"Were the thing done over again, I would do as I did. Disappointments have not changed my convictions"

- Jefferson Davis, in his
post-war memoirs

Our Annual General Meeting...

As a small part of our end-of-year/Christmas function on Friday, November 25, it is proposed to hold the Annual General meeting for the Chapter. At this meeting the Chairman will summarise in a short report this year's activities, Brendan O'Connell, our Secretary/Treasurer will present the report of our financial position for the FY 2004 – 2005 and, most importantly, we will have the elections for the Executive and Committee for the next two years. The positions that are vacant are:

Chairman
Secretary/Treasurer
Program Director
Public Officer
Publicity Officer
Web Master
Committee Members (6 positions)

All of these positions will be declared vacant at the AGM and members are asked to give serious consideration to serving a term in one or other of these positions.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a nomination form for the various positions which you are asked to complete and return to our Returning Officer, Brendan O'Connell, prior to the meeting. In this regard, self nomination is encouraged and is considered to be more than acceptable.

Also enclosed with this Newsletter is the agenda for the AGM, the 2004 – 2005 financial statement prepared by Brendan O'Connell and an invitation to our End-of-Year/Christmas function.

Please make a real effort to attend the AGM, the drinks before and the dinner after will certainly make it a memorable evening.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would RSVP for both the AGM and the Christmas function as soon as possible but no later than Friday, November 18, by e-mail to Angus at angushordern@jahordern.com.au or by telephone on (02) 9415 6066.

Roger and Elaine Back in Sydney

We have received an e-mail from Roger Dixon that he and Elaine will be returning from US from January 2 until January 20 and is hoping to catch up with us during this time. Roger tells us he has some terrific CD-Roms with animated battles, including Gettysburg, Fredericksburg and Second Manassas.

We are looking at the possibility of meeting with Roger and Elaine sometime during the time they are in Sydney with a view to sharing their American experiences and setting up a computer to show the CD-Roms that Roger has acquired. We will contact you as soon as the details for this meeting are finalised so stay tuned.

An Interesting New Book...

"We were as brothers", said William Tecumseh Sherman, describing his relationship with Ulysses S Grant. These two generals were unquestionably two of the most important figures in the Civil War but until now no book has been written about this victorious partnership and the deep friendship it made possible.

Charles Bracelen Flood has recently authored the book, *"Grant and Sherman – The Friendship that Won the Civil War"* published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005. This book has received wide acclaim from Civil War historians and authors, for example:

"... Flood's Grant and Sherman is the story of two remarkable men, an extraordinary friendship and a partnership that won the War. Shedding fresh light on these two men, it is by turns evocative, charming and often absorbing"

- Jay Winik, author of April 1865,
The Month That Saved America

"Ulysses S Grant and William T Sherman forged a superb partnership ... a team of opposites drawn together to end a horrendous conflict without excessive bloodshed. Ironically, they rendered war too terrible for the South to continue. Both Grant and Sherman have attracted more than their fair share of biographers but never before an author audacious enough to tackle both at once. Their subtle and complex relationship deserves attention from a sophisticated and experienced writer ... Flood is up to the task"

- John V Simon, Editor of The
Papers of Ulysses S Grant

"This book describes with force, clarity and admirable terseness the forging in the field of the historic leadership team that was essential to Union victory. Civil War scholars and general readers alike will profit from its insights"

- Charles P Roland, author of
An American Iliad: The Story
of the Civil War.

This book is presently available as a hard-back edition through 'amazon.com' at a special price of \$US 17:82, which with express postage works out to be \$40 in Australian currency. Nevertheless it is considered to be a "must read" book for any serious Civil War scholar or enthusiast and is highly recommended.

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 secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

Next Year's Program

Your Committee has been giving some consideration to the theme or themes that we might have for next year's meetings. It was considered that for 2006 we might focus on the performances commanders, both Union and Confederate, who served as the lieutenants to the Army commanders, Lee and Grant or who were given smaller independent commands. In this regard, we hope to have presentations on Jubal Early, Mosby, Nathan Bedford Forrest, Thomas and possibly Sheridan.

To date we have finalised the August meeting with a presentation on John Mosby but need speakers for the other meetings – February, June, and October. You should note that our full-day Conference in April replaces the normal meeting in that month.

If you feel moved to volunteer to do one of these presentations, please speak with John Cook (or whoever is elected as Program Director at the AGM) and put your name and the general you would wish to speak forward.

How Good Was "Stonewall"?

There is little doubt that next to Robert E Lee himself, Thomas J "Stonewall" Jackson was the most revered of Confederate commanders. He was certainly regarded by Lee as a commander in whom he could place great trust. Indeed, when Jackson was the victim of a "friendly fire" incident during the Battle of Chancellorsville, sustaining what was to be a fatal wound, Lee is reported to have said "... He has lost his left arm but I have lost my right". Jackson's death in May 1863 was regarded by the South as a most serious blow to the Confederate cause and to this day is one of the commonly quoted (but pointless) "what ifs" of the Civil War. In this article, Jackson's performance is analysed over the first part of the War.

It has been suggested that there were many things that Lee did not know about Jackson or which he chose to overlook in the light of his positive qualities. In the first place, Jackson was very strong-willed, self-righteous, bigot (too harsh a judgment?) who regarded fighting on a Sunday as a sin. He was eccentric to the point that some of his colleagues thought him quite mad. On one occasion before the War, as a junior officer, he wore his greatcoat throughout the long, sweltering summer because 'he had received no order to change it! Whilst at VMI, he marched outside the Superintendent's office in a pelting hailstorm because he refused to deliver his report before the appointed time. Such obsessive behaviour clearly indicates a disturbed personality. Importantly, he was somewhat "delicate" physically and was slow to recover from a sustained period of strain encountered in operations. It may well be that Jackson himself was unaware of his physical limitations for he did not raise them with Lee when called on to play a vital role immediately in subsequent campaigns.

In the Battle of First Manassas, Jackson and his brigade so distinguished themselves that both the brigade and its commander were dubbed "Stonewall" by General Barnard Bee and the 1st Brigade was the only formation to have its nickname become its official designation.

Promoted major general in the fall of 1861, Jackson was given command of the Valley District, Department of Northern Virginia. Jackson's so-called "Valley Campaign" in early 1862, where he manoeuvred his "foot cavalry" up and down the Shenandoah Valley for over six weeks, was a brilliantly planned and executed campaign. He defeated, in turn, three Union armies and prevented McClellan being reinforced. The effort in conducting this campaign so exhausted Jackson that he was at the point of collapse from "stress fatigue".

Thus, when he subsequently joined Lee to support the defence of Richmond and the Confederate efforts in driving McClellan from the Peninsula during the Seven Days Battles, he was less than effective. Lee had made his plans on the basis of Jackson having his expected vital role, but the decisive help Lee was expecting never materialised. Jackson had collapsed from what was called a "... depletion of the adrenal cortex".

On June 26, Lee had arranged for Jackson's Corps at Mechanicsville, just after dawn on the second day of the Seven Days Battles, but by mid-day Jackson had not appeared. In frustration, A P Hill attacked instead, although his forces were heavily outnumbered. If Jackson had joined Hill at this crucial moment, McClellan's forces faced collapse. But Jackson did not come! As the fighting raged, just 3 miles away, Jackson's forces sat on the ground smoking while their commander stood praying on a nearby hill and refusing to speak to anyone all afternoon.

At Savage's Station on June 29, Jackson failed to bring his troops into action as planned, preferring to spend the day rebuilding a bridge instead of crossing the James River to attack the Union rearguard. The next day at White Oak Swamp, Jackson kept 25,000 Confederate troops inactive while he slept with the A P Hill being left in the lurch for the third time in a week and had suffered unnecessary casualties.

Jackson's behaviour at this time has been called "...disastrous and unredeemable". Indeed, in some armies he would have been court-martialled and shot!

Has this evaluation of Jackson been too harsh? If you would care to comment, all responses will be published unedited in a forthcoming Newsletter.