

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 25, January 2006

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

A Message from the Chairman –

In my first message to members for 2006, I would wish to welcome you to another year of our meetings and trust that the high interest and productive activity of our earlier times will continue.

Firstly, I would wish to place on record again my personal appreciation and that of the Committee to Angus Hordern for developing the concept of last year's End-of Year/ Christmas function and making available the venue and facilities for us to hold our function. The concept of the evening was brilliant and was only matched by the execution of activity. Thank you Angus!

Planning for our 2006 Conference is proceeding with the outline program finalised, key-note speakers are presently being confirmed and publicity involving notices in some academic journals have resulted in considerable interest for our activity. The conference is scheduled for April 8, 2006 and will be held in the Gordon Club at Chatswood. Please pencil this conference into your diaries as it will be the major event in our activities calendar for this year.

I would like to pay tribute to Bruce McLennan for his great work in the establishment and subsequent development of our Chapter's web-site. Over the past year Bruce has been "beavering" away to bring the web-site to a standard of which all members can be proud. If you haven't seen the site for some time, I suggest you go to www.americancivilwar.asn.au - you will not be disappointed. Bruce, thank you for a job well done and I look forward to the continued development of our web-site in the future.

Lastly, I would wish to report that Roger and Elaine Dixon are back in Sydney during January and we are seeking to arrange an informal function with them to enable them to share with us their experiences over the past year. We will be contacting you if something can be arranged.

Paul Kensey

Our Next Meeting

The first meeting for 2006 is to be held at our normal venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Wednesday, February 22, 2006**, with members, as usual, members being able to meet at the Club **from 6pm for a bistro style meal**. The return to a Wednesday night meeting was a decision taken by your Committee with a view to enabling a wider selection of food to be available than is presently available with the "Roast Night" on Mondays. For those of us who enjoy their food this decision is greatly appreciated!

The speakers at this meeting will be Paul Kensey and John Cook, who together will speak on the topic:

'Taps' – The Fascinating Story Behind the Bugle Call

This haunting tune played at all American military funerals, wreath layings and memorial services to honour fallen comrades has its origin in the Civil War and is surrounded with myths of its beginnings although the true story is just as fascinating.

As an alternative to our normal practice of providing a paper of the presentation to our members at the conclusion of the meeting, the content of the presentation will comprise a major article in the next edition of our Newsletter in March

Dates for Your Diary

The following are our meeting dates for this year:

Wednesday, February 22
Saturday, April 8 – our Conference
Wednesday, June 28
Wednesday, August 23
Wednesday, October 25

What Happened in February

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

February 3, 1807 – Joseph E Johnston (CSA) is born at “Cherry Grove”, Prince Edward County, Virginia;

February 6, 1833 – JEB Stuart (CSA) is born in Patrick County, Virginia;

February 8, 1820 – William Tecumseh Sherman (USA) is born in Lancaster, Ohio;

February 11, 1812 – Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy is born in Wilkes (Taliaferro) County, Georgia;

February 12, 1809 – Abraham Lincoln, 16th US President is born in Hardin County, Kentucky.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

February 9, 1861 – Jefferson Davis is elected as provisional President of the Confederacy by the Confederate Provisional Congress;

February 9, 1865 – Lee appointed General-in-Chief of Confederate Armies;

February 18, 1861 – Davis is inaugurated as President of the Confederacy;

February 22, 1862 – Davis is sworn in as President of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

February 5, 1864 – Sherman’s Federals march into Jackson Mississippi en route to Meridian;

February 10, 1862 – The remainder of the “Mosquito” fleet is destroyed at Elizabeth City, NC;

February 14, 1864 – Sherman’s Union troops capture Meridian, Mississippi;

February 16, 1862 – Confederates surrender Fort Donelson, Tennessee, to Ulysses S Grant

February 17, 1865 – Columbia, SC, is captured and Charleston, SC, is evacuated;

February 18, 1865 – Charleston, SC, surrenders to Union troops under Brigadier General Alexander Schimmelfennig;

February 24, 1862 – Federal troops under General Nathaniel Banks occupy Harpers Ferry, Virginia;

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

February 1, 1865 – Illinois is the first State to ratify the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery;

February 4, 1861 – First session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America is held in Montgomery, Alabama;

February 7, 1865 - Lincoln meets with the Confederate peace commissioners aboard the *River Queen* at Hampton Roads, Virginia;

February 19, 1862 - New Confederate Congress orders the release of 2,000 Federal POWs;

February 20, 1865 – The Confederate House of Representatives authorises use of slaves as soldiers;

February 23, 1861 – Texas voters approve secession by a wide margin;

February 25, 1862 – Federal War Department takes control of all telegraph lines to facilitate military movements;

February 26, 1863 – The Cherokee Indian National Council repeals the ordinance of secession, proclaims for the Union;

February 27, 1864 – Near Americus in Georgia, Federal Prisoners of War begin arriving at the unfinished Camp Sumter (Andersonville) prison camp.

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

Did you Know?

Did you know that Abraham Lincoln was born on the same day as Charles Darwin of *The Origin of Species* fame? It was February 12, 1809.

Books on US Presidents

Roger Dixon has provided an interesting list of the ten US Presidents who have the most books still in print written about them. This list is:

Abraham Lincoln	...	1,191
George Washington	...	805
Thomas Jefferson	...	613
John F Kennedy	...	534
Bill Clinton	...	404
George W Bush	...	337
Theodore Roosevelt	...	317
Franklin D Roosevelt	...	308
Ronald Reagan	...	288
Ulysses S Grant	...	256

Source: *Books in Print* compiled by Andrew Grabois

New Book – “*Team of Rivals*”

One of the 1,191 books on Lincoln is the recently published and highly original to prevail over multiple biography by acclaimed historian and Pulitzer Prize winner, Doris Kearns Goodwin that illuminates Lincoln's political genius as the one term congressman and prairie lawyer rises from obscurity to prevail over three talented rivals of national reputation to become president.

This book, *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, centres on Lincoln's mastery of men and how it shaped the most significant presidency in US history. The book views Lincoln in comparison with and through the perspective of his three rivals for the Republican nomination in 1860 election. That Lincoln succeeded, Goodwin demonstrates, was the result of a character that had been forged by experiences that had raised him above his more privileged and accomplished rivals and helped by the common mistake by each of these rivals of seriously underestimating the self-taught lawyer from Illinois.

Goodwin shows Lincoln was able to bring these three disgruntled opponents together winning their respect and, in the case of Seward, find a loyal and crucial friend to support him in the task of preserving the Union and winning the War. Goodwin enables the reader to view the long and horrifying struggle from the vantage of the White House as Lincoln copes with and ultimately overcomes the obstacles of incompetent generals, hostile congressmen and his unusual and often raucous Cabinet. She has drawn on a wealth of diaries and letters, some previously unpublished, particularly from the wives and daughters of Lincoln's Cabinet members and this has shed light on their private lives.

This book is presently available as a hard-back edition through 'amazon.com' for \$US 22:41 with shipping and handling a further \$US 11:98. Nevertheless, this is a “must read” book for any serious Civil War scholar or enthusiast and is highly recommended.

“Sexy” Abe?

For the past 30 years Doris Kearns Goodwin has been married to Richard Goodwin, a former aide to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. For the last decade, however, she has been living with another man, or, at least, that's how she puts it. “I've been living with Abraham Lincoln” and to her it's an emotional love affair.

“Sexy” is not an adjective very often attributed to Abraham Lincoln and it certainly does not appear in Goodwin's recently published biography *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (see the review in the previous column). It is, however, a word that Goodwin uses to describe the 16th President. She uses it when talking about her favourite photograph (see overleaf) taken in 1857, before Lincoln grew his beard and became an “austere marble monument”. At this time he was 48, a rising political star in Illinois and about to run (and lose) again for the US Senate. He appears to be in need of a haircut but looks vital, alive, even sexy. Goodwin says:

“I don't want to sound embarrassing, but he looks sensual. It is the Lincoln I came to know and to love”

As noted previously, no US President has been written about more and the books just keep coming with everything from his battles with depression to his sexuality. Interestingly, unlike several other authors, Goodwin finds no evidence that Lincoln was gay. Asked the hypothetical question of what she would ask if she could have interviewed Lincoln himself, Goodwin says:

“... rather than ask the heavier questions, I would simply ask him to tell me some of his humorous stories so that I can remember him laughing and smiling instead of the long, sad face that peers out from the latter war-time photographs”

Goodwin notes in her book that history provided Lincoln with the opportunity to manifest his greatness. As a practising historian for over thirty years and living with Lincoln for the past decade, reading what he himself wrote and the myriad of writings by others of him, she finds that:

“... after two centuries, the uniquely American story of Abraham Lincoln has unequalled power to captivate the imagination and inspire emotion.”

Maybe in this sense Abraham Lincoln is “sexy”!

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

New Books on Lincoln

Besides the recently published *Team of Rivals* book there are a number of other books on Lincoln that have been published in the US in the latter part of 2005 and in January 2006. These books include:

Lincoln's Melancholy (Joshua Wolf Shenk) (**\$US16:50**): In this book Shenk examines how depression challenged Lincoln as President and fuelled his greatness.

The Lincolns in the White House (Jerrold Packard) (**\$US17:79**): Packard provides a realistic and sympathetic domestic history about four years that shattered a family.

Lincoln in the Times (edited by David Herbert Donald and Harold Holtzer) (**\$US19:77**): Two prominent Lincoln scholars collect and analyse coverage of Lincoln in *The New York Times* which both underestimated and criticised him.

Lincoln's Wrath (Neil Dahlstrom and Jeffrey Manber) (**\$US15:61**): A critique of Lincoln as the first "media" president who manipulated, suppressed and shut down newspapers that opposed him and the Civil War.

Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power (Richard Carwardine) (**\$US18:15**): This Lincoln Prize winning study is not only analytical and incisive but easily readable. The book focuses on Lincoln's election to and years in the White House and concludes by reflecting on how post-bellum politics might have been different except for the fateful gunshot on April 14, 1865. This book could well emerge as one of the most important Lincoln books to be published this decade.

All of these books are presently available as hardcover editions at the prices shown through 'amazon.com' with delivery now by air-mail within two weeks.

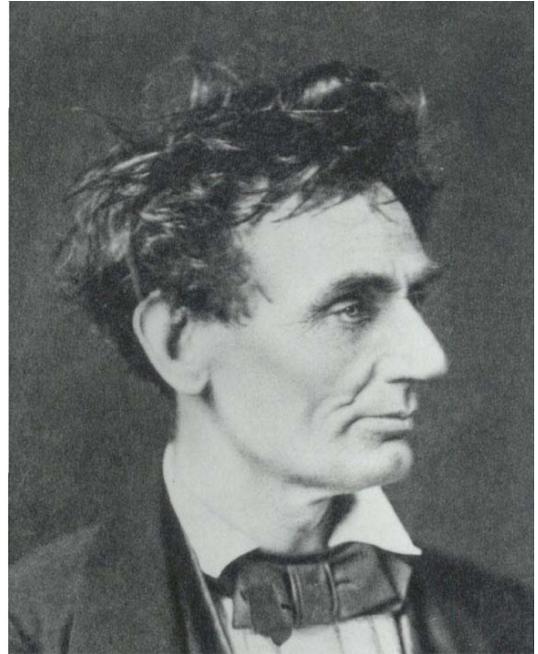
This Year's Program of Meetings

To date we have finalised the February, June and August meetings, together with the Conference in April, but still need a speaker for the October meeting. 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 ASAP (telephone 9412 3214 or 043 777 000 6) and put forward your name and the subject on which you would wish to speak. In this regard, anyone wishing to give a presentation on Jubal Early, Nathan Bedford Forrest, Thomas or possibly Sheridan will be welcomed with open arms!

"Sexy" Abe: You Be the Judge -

Presented below is a copy of the photograph of Lincoln that Doris Kearns Goodwin so admires and where she suggests that he "... looks vital, alive and even sexy":



Lincoln photographed at age 48 in Chicago on February 28, 1857. The lawyer's star had begun to rise at last.

Whilst able to understand what Goodwin sees in this photograph, one might question if her close study of the man over the past decade has coloured her views a little.

What do you think?

A Great Civil War Web-site

For those who use the internet as a resource for their Civil War studies, there is a most comprehensive web-site that provides a reference to a myriad of other sites relating to America's Civil War. This web-site is known as the *Civil War Hotline* and a printout of the contents of this web-site spans 17 pages! *Civil War Hotline* may be accessed at:

<http://www.gohotline.com/civilwar/>

Members who access the *Go Hotline* web-site for their research or a simply an inquiry about any aspect of the Civil War will not be disappointed. It provides a set of references on most aspects of the War and, as such, is an essential tool for Civil War scholars and enthusiasts alike who wish to know more about America's seminal conflict.