

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 31, November / December 2006
Special Christmas / End-of-Year Edition

Please visit our website at www.americancivilwar.asn.au

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A Message from the Chairman –

In my message to members in the last edition of this Newsletter, I reflected on our activities this year and, in particular the success of our Conference in April where we assembled a galaxy of excellent speakers who took the conference theme, *Appomattox and Beyond*, to a level not matched before in any of our activities. I noted that this conference was one that exceeded all of my expectations and it will be hard for us to maintain the standard achieved as we move to plan and implement our program for 2007.

Your Committee has not been “sitting on its hands”, however, and has put in place a most exciting structure for our 2007 program of activities. From the beginning of 2007, our regular meetings will be held monthly with a change to the second Monday of each month, February to November inclusive. By necessity, the meetings will take a more varied format with at least some meetings having a less formal and more interactive format. It is my hope that these modifications to our program of activities will be well received by members and the decline in attendance we have seen during 2006 will be turned around!

In the adjoining column to this page you will see the details regarding our Annual General Meeting which will involve the election of your Executive and Committee for 2007 -2008. This AGM will be held for a short time at the beginning of our Christmas / End-of-Year function on Friday, November 24. I would wish to encourage all members to make every effort to be with us on this night not only to attend the AGM but to participate in our final social activity for the Chapter for 2006. Please note that this function is for wives and partners as well as members, with the social aspects of the evening being the major part of the function.

To our “country” and interstate members who cannot join us for this function, may I wish you and your family the compliments of the season – a happy and holy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Paul Kensey

Our Christmas /End-of-Year Party

The next function is our 2006 Christmas /End-of-Year party to be held at our normal meeting venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Friday, November 24**, commencing with our AGM at 6:15pm followed by pre-dinner drinks at 6:30 pm.

A special sit-down dinner with a Christmas theme is scheduled from 7:15 – 7:30pm following which our first Honorary Member, Len Traynor, will provide a short commentary on aspects of the Civil War during the Christmas periods during the War.

This will be followed by the drawing of our G-I-A-N-T Christmas raffle with its large number of prizes. The remainder of the evening will be given over to convivial conversation, hopefully properly lubricated with Xmas cheer.

As noted by our Chairman this function is one for the wives and partners as well as members of the Chapter, so please bring along your “better half”, if only to show that there are others who do not share with us a passion for matters Civil War.

The cost for the evening is \$35:00 per person (all inclusive) with the evening being subsidised to a significant extent by our raffle and from Chapter funds. Please let Brendan O’Connell know if you are coming as soon as possible but no later than Friday, November 17. Brendan can be contacted either by ‘phone on (02) 9449 3720 or by e-mail at secretay@americancivilwar.asn.au

We are looking forward to see you at this Party in the coming weeks.

It Happened in November

HATCHES AND DISPATCHES

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 CHANGES

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, Ga., 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, Tenn, 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 – 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 stateto 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.

Inescapable Logic...

"I have just heard that one of my brothers was killed in the war. Since he chose to be our deadly enemy, I see no reason why I should bitterly mourn his death. Why should I sympathise with the Rebels? They would hang my husband tomorrow if it was (sic) in their power!"

- Mary Todd Lincoln, 1862.

"A battery of field artillery is worth a thousand muskets"

- William Tecumseh Sherman

"The shot that struck me down is the very best that has been fired for the Southern cause. While (I do not have) the confidence of the government, now they have in my place one who does possess it"

- Joseph E Johnston commenting on Lee's promotion to command the Confederate Army, June 1862

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.

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 Brendan O'Connell, Secretary/Treasurer of the Chapter, by telephone on (02) 9449 3720, by post to PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

Some DVD Ideas for Xmas Presents

Presented below, are some ideas for Christmas presents for the Civil War enthusiast in your family or circle of friends. As it is likely that none of your family friends share your interest in the American Civil War, this listing can be used also to provide them with "hints" or suggestions on what you might like them to get you for Christmas. If this is the case, it is suggested that this Newsletter be left, suitably annotated with a "highlighter" pen, in a prominent position for your family/friends to see and hopefully act on.

The DVD of the Civil War classic "**Gone With The Wind**", is presently available "on special" at various outlets for \$12:99, although you will see it for sale prices at anything from \$24:99 up to \$39:00. The sale price is available at any K-Mart or Big-W stores. Originally released in 1939, this movie captures both the grandeur of the "Old South" and its devastation in the latter stages of the War. Although in its DVD format it loses some of its impact, it still is a great buy for anyone with an interest in Antebellum America and its Civil war era.

At the risk of upsetting those of us who purchased Ken Burns' 3- DVD **The Civil War** series for the original price of \$150, the 3-disk set is now available for \$30:00 at any of the ABC shops. This wonderful series provides for a number of us a catalyst for our interest in the Civil War and for nostalgic reasons alone is a "must" for any DVD collection.

While on the topic of movies that started our interest in the Civil War, the movie "**Gettysburg**" is also available at a good price in various DVD/video outlets. You may have to go to a number of outlets to get this DVD at a reasonable price but any Big-W store is worth trying.

If you have a multi-region DVD player, Amazon.com offers some really good DVDs that would not normally be available in local outlets. Some of our members are not likely to be interested in a "Civil War" movie where the story is a fictionalised account of events that actually occurred but the following three reviewed here are certainly worth considering and will have a wider appeal than Civil War enthusiasts and historians.

One such movie is "**Pharaoh's Army**" that chronicles a private civil war set during the time of the American Civil War. In this movie a Union Army captain leads his rag-tag cavalry troop up a creek to a remote farm to steal enemy (Confederate) livestock. The farm is worked by a woman, Sarah Anders, whose husband is away fighting for the Confederate Army. Far from the great armies and battlefields, a very private civil war erupts. The Captain and Sarah are pulled apart by the war's undertow into choices they can not fully control or understand. Each character in this drama must decide whether loyalty will be paid in blood. Armies are not filled with murdering psychopaths. Good people can be driven to do bad things. The story chronicles the pathology of war, how escalating events can trigger unasked-for tragedy. This movie is based on a true story about a southern child who shot and killed a union soldier during the Civil War. This movie is available from Amazon.com for **\$US 9:98** plus postage.

Another movie of this genre is "**Wicked Spring**" which is set against the backdrop of the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864. Three Union soldiers and three Confederate Soldiers are separated from their units as twilight engulfs the ravaged battlefield. The men wander alone through the dangerous woods, separate of each other, until they meet by chance on the banks of a quiet creek. The men meet and spend the night around a campfire, not realising they are enemies until the next morning when the sun rises and a new day sets the scene for a deadly confrontation. With stunning authenticity and heartfelt emotion this saga of fate and friendship under extraordinary circumstances puts a uniquely personal stamp on the War that divided the American nation. Also available through Amazon.com it sells for **\$US 9:98** plus postage and is highly recommended.

The purchase of these two DVDs together minimizes postage costs, with a recent purchase of the "**Pharaoh's Army**" and "**Wicked Spring**" attracting postage of only \$US 8:98. Thus, for a total cost of \$US 28:94 two great DVDs can be delivered to your door in 2 – 3 weeks.

The last DVD recommended for purchase is the 1999 thriller directed by award winning Ang Lee, "**Ride with the Devil**". Great period movies make you feel as if you've stepped into another era, heard its language, breathed its spirit, and come away with a fresh perspective on that time as well as your own. *Ride with the Devil* is one of those special films and it is a little surprising that it wasn't more widely embraced by reviewers and filmgoers when first released. It is smart and tenderly awed by how individual lives get ambushed by history and is ripe for rediscovery.

The Civil War of battlefields and plantation houses is nowhere to be seen here. Instead we see the war as an improvised and largely blundering but very bloody feud among neighbours in the border state of Missouri. The Taiwanese-born director Ang Lee (*Sense and Sensibility*) traces the destinies of several young Southern bushwhackers (guerrilla fighters) as they experience violence, the seasons, and different kinds of love. Skeet Ulrich draws the aristocratic glamour role (and top billing), but he's overshadowed by Tobey Maguire (of Spiderman fame) as a first-generation American and with Jeffrey Wright as a freed slave fighting beside his former master, and singer Jewel in a very natural acting debut as the young widow who graces all their lives. The title *The Birth of a Nation* was already taken, but by the end of this movie you may feel that it would have applied here.

Ride with the Devil is available through Amazon.com costing **\$US11:88** with a purchase combined with others from Amazon minimising the postage costs but the best deal appears to be locally through EZDVD at Westfield in Chatswood where it sells for **\$14:92**.

This DVD is one of the best Civil War movies I have watched and is highly recommended to all.