

Sumter to Appomattox

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

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Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message from the Chairman –

In the last Newsletter I indicated that we were to have historian Bruce Dennett speak to us again, this time on the somewhat controversial topic *In Defence of George McClellan*. Bruce provided us again with a stimulating and thought-provoking address. Those present at the meeting were treated to “vintage Dennett” and although we might not have agreed with all Bruce had to say, he did get us to think for ourselves! In my view the value of Bruce’s presentation aside from being particularly entertaining and informative is that he gets you to clarify your own position and views on significant but controversial issues. Thanks Bruce!

As will be seen from the adjoining column our next meeting will be our Christmas/End-of-Year function on Friday, December 10 at which we are able to invite our spouse/partner/special friend who may not share our passion and interest in matters Civil War, but who would enjoy a dinner meeting involving a great meal and some interesting conversation.

At this function we plan to honour Bruce Dennett for his scholarship in the field of history and for his contribution to our Chapter’s activities by conferring Honorary Membership to the NSW Chapter of the ACWRTA. We are hoping for this award to Bruce to be a surprise (and for this reason he won’t get this Newsletter until after the function).

At this function, also, we are intending to have a very short Annual General Meeting, which I hope will not in any way interfere with the evening’s proceedings. Let me assure members thinking of nominating for an Executive or Committee position, NONE of the present incumbents feel “emotionally attached” to their position! Details of the AGM are included as a later part of this Newsletter.

Please make every effort to come to our Christmas/End-of-Year function to top off what has been a most successful year for the Chapter.

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting for 2010 will be our Christmas/End-of Year function to be held at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, 64 Pacific Highway, Roseville** will be held on **Friday, December 10** starting at **7:30pm** but with pre-dinner drinks served from 7pm.

Prior to the dinner, details of which are enclosed in the attached “flyer”, we will be holding a very short Annual General Meeting, which is guaranteed NOT to intrude on the evening’s enjoyment

The cost for the dinner is \$40:00 per person, which will cover a two-course meal (entrée and main course), wine and/or soft drinks during the meal. In addition, Christmas cake will be served with tea and coffee after the meal. Members and their guests should note that this Christmas cake will contain a certain alcoholic component that must be taken into account when establishing the alcoholic intake for the evening.

At the function we propose to have a “lucky door” prize of some substance that has been donated to us. This prize is a 6-DVD box set titled “The American Civil War” and comprises a number of programs produced for and by The History Channel in the United States. A great prize!

Although it is possible to pay for this function on the night, Brendan would much prefer to receive all monies prior to the evening. We are required for catering purposes to advise the Club of numbers early in the week of December 10. Accordingly, we ask that you complete the enclosed function acceptance return with your cheque etc as soon as possible but certainly no later than c.o.b. Tuesday, December 7.

We look forward to seeing you and your spouse/partner for what will be a great evening to finish off what has been a successful year for the

John Cook

Robert E. Lee. Joseph Hooker and Military Justice

This article is the script of a presentation given by the well-known Civil War historian, Thomas Lowry to the Hagerstown Civil War Round Table at its meeting in June 2010. Our thanks go to Jenny Holder for this paper

It's Reconstruction time. A young woman brings a boyfriend home to meet her folks. Dad and boyfriend are both Confederate veterans. Dad looks to see if the young man has a brand on his face. If the relation blooms, dad takes the young man aside and examines his torso for brands or whip marks. If the boy proposes marriage, dad makes him drop his pants and examines the prospective son-in-law's buttocks for the 4-inch scar of a deserter brand. Military justice could leave a permanent record. The scars never lie.

Both Lee and Hooker, as army commanders, left records of their decisions in approving or disapproving court-martial verdicts. All students of the CW know of the Chancellorsville encounter of Lee and Hooker, but our subject here is their military justice decisions and the possible reflection of their moral values.

As to Robert E. Lee's moral character, there is little I can add to what you already know. He overcame the stigmata of his miscreant father and brothers to become pillar of honour. I am told that he passed four years at West Point without a demerit. He set high standards for himself.

Hooker's career had more peaks and valleys. His excellent behaviour in the Mexican War earned him three brevet promotions. From 1849 to 1853 he was assistant adjutant general for the entire Pacific Department. In 1853 he resigned his commission and went into business on the West Coast. In Sonoma, California, as old adobe building bears a bronze plaque noting that when it was the Blue Wing Inn, Hooker played cards there with men such as Kit Carson, Phil Sheridan, William T. Sherman, John Fremont, and Ulysses S. Grant. Hooker was unique – he played only for cash. His IOUs were no good. His business affairs were unsuccessful and sometimes shady. When the war came he was broke. A San Francisco saloon-keeper bought him a ticket to the East Coast and sent him off with a bottle of whiskey and a box of cigars. His rise and fall as a military commander is well known. (by the way, hookers are NOT named after Joe Hooker).

In their roles as army commanders, Lee and Hooker reviewed death sentences. Lee reviewed 365 and approved death for 83%. The few that were spared were very young teenagers or men noted for courage in battle, and a few men desperately sick. Hooker reviewed 134 death sentences and approved only 41%, exactly half as many as Lee. But the story doesn't end there. Hooker sent nearly every approved case to Lincoln for a final decision, and Lincoln mitigated nearly all of them. When it came down to being actually executed, 83% of the men reviewed by Lee died, while roughly 5% of the men reviewed by Hooker actually died. 83 vs. 5. A big difference.

A brief word about statistics. I beg forgiveness of any professional statisticians in the audience. I'll do my best to make sense of it. A statistical test can tell us if a difference is likely to be from random chance or is actually significant, and if so, to what degree.

If Lee shot 83% and Hooker shot 82%, stat analysis would show that the difference could just as well be from random chance. If it was 83% versus 65% it might be that the chances were 1 in 10 that random chance might account for the difference, and the difference would be somewhat significant.. If it were 83% versus 25% the figure might be one in a thousand, which would clearly be statistically significant. The differences in death mitigation, between Lee and Hooker, are enormous. Later, we'll look at some actual statistical outcomes.

But what is the origin of all these numbers? A little history of court-martial (c-m) records:

- Both high commands, north and south, went to West Point
- They used nearly identical Regulations and Articles of War
- They used nearly identical court proceedings and records.

The Union c-m records are in the National Archives. But the Confederates burned their records. The only useful source for Confederate data is a printed book of ANVA general orders.

Earlier we noted that Hooker referred many cases to Lincoln. Lee referred few to Jefferson Davis. The records show that 1.5% of Union c-ms came to Lincoln, but only 0.5% came to Davis. Three-to-one. The probability of this difference being due to random chance is roughly one in ten billion. Obviously, this is a significant difference. Confederate commanders were free to shoot as many men as they saw fit, with little or no input from Jeff Davis.

How about other commanders like Braxton Bragg and Joseph E. Johnston? Based on the extant photos, one might expect a big difference. Bragg with his dark eyes and wild eyebrows could be Rasputin and Vlad the Impaler. Johnston looks almost angelic, a soft, forgettable face. Yet the limited records available tell us that Johnston shot more men than Bragg! Well enough about death. What about other forms of corporal punishment?

At the beginning, we spoke of a former soldier who might have had the scars of being branded with a red-hot iron. Both armies used branding. On a per capita basis, a Confederate soldier was four times as likely to be branded as a Union soldier. Further, the usual Union brand was 1½ inches on each side. The Confederate brand was three inches. The total area covered by the scar was four times greater with a Confederate brand.

Both armies used tattooing. A typical Confederate tattoo was 3 inches square, a capital "D" made with a needle and indelible ink. Again, on a per capita basis, a Confederate soldier was four times as likely to be tattooed as a Union soldier.

Both sides used the whip, usually described in the c-m sentence as "a rawhide, well laid on." The Union army abolished flogging in 1862. In the ANVA it stayed in use until April 1865. A Confederate soldier was four times as likely to be flogged as a Union soldier. What are the chances of this being due to random chance? One in a trillion! A typical ANVA flogging sentence was 39 lashes, with 39 more lashes a few months later. With the vitamin deficiencies rampant in the Civil War, it is likely that the open wounds from the first flogging were not fully healed at the time of the second 39 lashes. Not to mention doing full duty with these oozing cuts sticking to the man's shirt.

Back now to the sentences of death. Comparing the ANVA to the Union army, on a per capita basis, the chances of the differences in executions carried out being due to random chance are one in ten quadrillion. TEN QUADRILLION!! When it came to shooting, hanging, flogging, branding, and tattooing, the North-South differences were profound, even astronomical, both by just "eye-balling" the data and by rigorous statistical analysis. How to explain the difference? Here I have no data, only thoughts and opinions. Here are some factors to consider:

- Even today there is a North-South difference in violence. The murder rate in Alabama is 50% higher than in Pennsylvania.
- The tradition of duelling held on much longer in the South.
- An inflated sense of honour was more prevalent in the South, where the romantic ideals of Sir Walter Scott were wildly popular, even more so than in the North.
- Finally, slaves were held in slavery by violence, both overt and implied.

Did these factors account for the differences, North and South? I'll leave that to the academics, to the anthropologists and to the sociologists.

But wait! There is rape. Here the difference goes in a different direction. 250 Union soldiers were tried for rape. But we have never found a court-martial of a Confederate soldier on charges of rape. There two possible explanations:

- The ANVA contained 250,000 perfect gentlemen.
- The letter from the Confederate Secretary of War, explaining that rape was a civil crime, not a military crime, and should be handled by the civil courts and never by court-martial.

Two Maryland researchers have spent a decade searching the Virginia and North Carolina civil records and found NO record of any Confederate soldier tried for rape.

This brings us to the end. Our understanding of the Civil War will never be complete. I hope these few observations might add something new to the unending dialogue.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

In accordance with the relevant legislation, notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia, NSW Chapter Incorporated will be held at 7pm on Friday, December 10, 2010 at the Roseville RSL Memorial Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville.

Business:

- To receive the report from the Secretary of activities throughout 2010 and proposed program for 2011;
- To receive and if thought fit adopt the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2010;
- To elect office-bearers of the Association and ordinary members of the committee;
- To transact any other business in accordance with the rules of the Round Table.

Brendan O'Connell
Secretary/Treasurer

Please Note:

1. The financial statements for this Annual General Meeting are enclosed as an attachment to this Newsletter.
2. Included as an attachment to this Newsletter, also, is a nomination form for the 2011 Executive and/or Committee, which should be returned to the Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell prior to the AGM.
3. The length of the meeting is to be very short and will not interfere with the festivities of the evening. Guaranteed!!

Books For Sale

Following our book sale of Civil War volumes last August, there are still a number of books that remain unsold. These are now available at truly rock bottom prices, viz., make us an offer and the books are yours!

A listing of these Civil War books that are currently available for you to purchase is presented on an enclosure to this Newsletter. If some title appeals, you just need to speak to John Cook, who holds the titles in his home and, also, Brendan O'Connell, with whom you have to negotiate a price. No need to be bashful, all offers will be accepted with the money going to purchase equipment for the Chapter's future meetings.

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, founders 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 endsas 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 t 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 as 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 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