

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 74, November 2015

Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message to Members –

As you will see from the detail in the adjoining column, our next meeting will be our End-of-Year/Christmas function. Let me encourage you to make a special effort to join on this special night. I am prevailing on my wife, Helen, to make her special Christmas cake again, but must advise members to take into account its alcoholic content in judging how much Christmas cheer the consume on the night.

At this function we will be having a short Annual General Meeting, where you will elect your Executive and Committee for the forthcoming year. I ask all members to give some consideration to nominating for the various positions, noting that none of the present incumbents are emotionally tied to their position.

Some of the long-term members of the Chapter will be aware of my admiration of U S Grant and my view that he had received a “raw deal” from both historians and the American populace following the War. In recent times, this has changed and included in this Newsletter, is an article that highlights this change. The article has been provided by Jenny Holder, one of our members from South Australia, and is subtitled:

Why everything your teacher told you about the Union general and U.S. president was wrong.

Lastly, I would like to commend again the initiative of David Cooper, one of our relatively new committee members. In putting together a Civil War Battlefields tour for 2016. This initiative involves a a 14–day tour of key Civil War battlefields from June 4-17, 2016. David has put together a comprehensive program starting in Washington D.C. and ending in Richmond.

The costs associated with the tour can be obtained from David and is based on a minimum of 10 participants and covers the services of tour guides for all battlefields and a professional tour manager. David's costs do not include the return airfare.

Thank you David for a magnificent effort in putting this tour together!

John Cook

Our Next Meeting

Our Chapter's next meeting will be our End-of-Year/Christmas function to be held on **Monday evening, November 30**, at the **Roseville Memorial Club, Pacific Highway Roseville**.

In contrast to our regular meetings, an **all-inclusive charge for the dinner of \$40 p.p.** will be levied. Payment of this should be made to Brendan O'Connell on arrival. This payment will include servings of hors d'oeuvres on arrival, a two-course meal (main course and dessert) and wine during the dinner with tea/coffee and Christmas cake at the conclusion of the meal.

Members and their guests will be catered for from 6pm with the dinner to be served at 7:30pm following the short Annual General Meeting. Pre-dinner drinks may be ordered and paid for at the bar as normally applies at our regular meetings.

If you are will be attending this function, we would appreciate your **e-mailing Brendan O'Connell** at secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au or telephone him on 9449 3720 and indicate if there are any guests coming with you. Please leave a message if the 'phone is unanswered.

The after-dinner speaker will be **John Cook**, whose theme will focus on:

Christmas Traditions During the Civil War

John's presentation might be considered as his valedictory one and will differ from the usual type of lectures at our regular meetings in that it will seek to be informative but not too “heavy”. In essence, it will be appropriate to the celebratory nature of our end-of-year function.

In addition to this after-dinner speech, Your Committee has planned a number of “surprises” that will definitely entertain you and add to the fun of the night. It is hoped that a most of our members will be able to participate in this function and that the opportunity will be taken to invite your wife/partner/spouse, many of whom do not share our enthusiasm for Civil War history, to show we can enjoy ourselves in a “normal party” manner

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, ware-houses 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...

"... 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

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

Ulysses S. Grant Died 130 Years Ago. Racists Hate Him, But Historians No Longer Do ...

After Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th president of the United States, died 130 years ago today, a million and a half Americans watched his funeral procession. His mausoleum was a popular tourist attraction in New York City for decades, but for most of the 20th Century, historians and non-historians alike believed Grant was corrupt, drunken and incompetent, that he was one of the country's worst presidents, and that as a general, he was more lucky than good.

A generation of historians, led by Columbia's William A. Dunning, criticised Grant for backing Reconstruction, the federal government's attempt to protect the rights of black southerners in the 1860s and early 1870s. Black people, some Dunning school historians suggested, were unsuited for education, the vote, or holding office. Grant's critics were "determined the Civil War would be interpreted from the point of view of the Confederacy," said John F. Marszalek, a historian and executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association. "The idea that Grant would do things that would ensure citizenship rights for blacks was just awful and so he had to be knocked down."

Grant's "presidency was basically seen as corrupt, and it took place during Reconstruction, which was seen as basically the lowest point of American history," said Eric Foner, a civil war historian at Columbia University. "Whatever Grant did to protect former slaves was naïveté or worse."

recent decades, that's all changed. The Grant you learned about in school isn't the one your kids will read about in their textbooks. And that's because historians are in the midst of a broad reassessment of Grant's legacy. In just nine years, between 2000 and 2009, Grant jumped 10 spots in a C-SPAN survey of historians' presidential rankings, from 33rd to 23rd, a bigger jump than any other president. Furthermore, his reputation as a military leader has risen, too. As Marszalek states:

"Public opinion is behind what historians are saying about Grant, too many people in the public hold the old Lost Cause view that Grant was this butcher and incompetent and corrupt and a drunkard, which wasn't true."

One of the reasons for the change in Grant's reputation is an increasing acceptance among historians that Reconstruction pursued worthy goals. As Brooks Simpson, a historian at Arizona State University, states:

"We now view Reconstruction as something that should have succeeded in securing equality for African-Americans, and we see Grant as supportive of that effort and doing as much as any person could do to try to secure that within realm of political reality ...and we see him as on the right side of history."

Many historians now point to Grant's decision to send U.S. troops into South Carolina to crush the Ku Klux Klan as particularly praiseworthy.

As Marszalek has said:

"You have to go almost to Lyndon Johnson to find a president who tried to do as much to ensure black people found freedom,"

Grant also suffered because of inevitable comparisons with Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general. He was accused of running a "war of attrition" that required "no real military talent," Foner explained. But ...

"as those older views have abandoned, Grant's reputation has risen, especially among military historians."

Grant is now praised for having a strategic view of the war, rather than focusing solely on the area around Virginia, as Lee so often did. He gets credit for believing in civilian control of the military. When some of his officers were upset about black soldiers serving in the Union Army, Grant said,

"Look, this is the policy of the government, and the Army has to carry it out. ... If there's anyone who can't deal with it, resign right now"

Foner thinks increased praise for Grant's memoirs has boosted the president's reputation. Simpson doesn't buy that, noting that famed literary critic Edmund Wilson was praising Grant's memoirs as a "unique expression of the national character" in the 1960s, when Grant's reputation as a president was at its nadir. The big question now is whether public opinion will follow that of historians. Simpson thinks the shift is starting, noting that Grant is now portrayed more favorably in high school and college textbooks and television documentaries. His memorial in Washington and his tomb in New York have been repaired since the 1980s. Rick Perry, the governor of a state that fought against Grant in the Civil War praised the Union general in a speech, saying he had "come to symbolize the healing of our nation campaigning under the banner, 'let us have peace.'" Simpson has said:

"We're always re-evaluating past historical figures in light of present events, and those changes take a lot of time to fix themselves in the public mind,"

Perhaps the best way to track Grant's popularity will be monitoring the image of his foes. "As the Confederacy's reputation rises or falls, Grant's rises or falls in the opposite direction," Foner has said.

"As we get more critical of Robert E. Lee and the Confederacy, Grant's reputation is going to go up,"

Simpson agreed. "Grant's reputation says as much about us as it does about his time, because it's about what we value."

(This article is an edited version of an article provided by our South Australian member, Jenny Holder.)

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 from **7pm on Monday, November 30** at the **Roseville RSL Memorial Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**. The business to be considered at the AGM is:

- To receive the report from the Secretary of activities throughout 2015 and proposed program for 2016;
- To receive and if thought fit adopt the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2015;
- To elect office-bearers of the Chapter and the ordinary members of the committee for 2016;
- To transact any other business in accordance with the rules of the Round Table.

Brendan O'Connell
Secretary/Treasurer

Please Note: *The financial statements for this Annual General Meeting are presented as an insert to this Newsletter*

What's in a Name?

Although the term "Civil War" is now most often used, not so long ago, the name of the great conflict differed markedly in different parts of the country. Somewhat oddly, "Civil War" was used in the early years of the War, though "War of Southern Independence" was popular, whilst the North favoured "The Rebellion". Indeed, "The War of Rebellion" is the formal name given by Congressional fiat, which only gradually gave way to "Civil War" in the North. In contrast, the South gradually came to favour "War Between the States" in the years after Appomattox.

Other names for the conflict have been numerous with one researcher enumerating 120 such names and he clearly missed a few.

None of these terms was completely satisfactory and, in common usage, "War Between the States" and "Civil War" for nearly a century despite the fact that they both refer to the same set of events and that neither is particularly accurate. A civil war is a dispute over control of the state, which was not at all the issue, since, aside from a few extreme fanatics, the South did not wish to take control of the United States but merely to secede from it. Similarly, "The War Between the States", aside from being grammatically poor, presupposes the Confederate political agenda.

The "War of Southern Independence" is accurate, whether one agrees or disagrees with the instigators of the War. The "War of the Slaveholders' Rebellion" is also accurate given the leadership of the secession, although neither of these would be satisfactory to all.

There is, of course, a perfectly accurate and politically neutral name that has never found much favour – the War of Secession!

- Source: *North and South, Volume 5, No.7*

Some Quotable Quotes

The following quotes relating to the beginnings of America's Civil War have been gleaned from a number of sources:

"As a nation we began by declaring that all men were created equal. We now practically read it, all men are created equal, except negroes"

- Abraham Lincoln, 1855

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I expect it to cease to be divided"

- Abraham Lincoln, opening statement of the Lincoln-Douglas debates 1858

"The time for compromise has now passed. The South is determined to maintain her position and make all who oppose her smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel"

- Confederate President Jefferson Davis
February 16, 1861

"South Carolina is too small for a republic and too large for an insane asylum"

- James L Petigru, on hearing of its secession from the Union

"I am with him"

- Stephen A Douglas, following Lincoln's inaugural address

"If the Union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native state and share the miseries of my people and, save in defense (sic), draw my sword on none"

- Robert E Lee, 1861

"War means fighting, and fighting means killing"

- Nathan Bedford Forrest

"We will fight you to the death. Better to die a thousand deaths than to submit to live under you"

- John Bell Hood, CSA

"The time for war has not yet come, but it will come, and that soon; and when it does come, my advice is to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard"

- Thomas J Jackson to VMI cadets, April 13, 1861