



# Sumter to Appomattox

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

Patron: Professor the Hon Bob Carr

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Please visit our website [www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

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## A Message from Our Chairman

Our Christmas Function was another wonderful opportunity to enjoy each other's company. In the lead up to the evening I had the pleasure of speaking with many members about our group. I was reminded of the fellowship we get from membership.

Dr Frances Clark, eminent historian of North America at Sydney University, kept us enthralled with the depth of her recent research on under-age soldiers in the Civil War. We are greatly indebted to Frances for her insightful presentation. Jannette has prepared a report on the presentation in this newsletter.

Our AGM ushered in a new Secretary, Dan Howard, and a new editor, Jannette Greenwood. Our last committee meeting, and the AGM, recognised the achievements of the previous position-holders – especially John Cook who produced 85 newsletters for our group over almost twenty years. We are fortunate to have John Morrison continuing in the role of Programme Director, ably assisted by Ian McIntyre. Brendan continues as Treasurer. Peter Zacharatos is doing a wonderful job as Facebook editor.

I urge you all to go to our [Facebook](#) page and click "Going" to this "Event". By doing this, you will help publicise our event and attract new members for our group. On our **Website** you will always find the date of our next meeting. Our Facebook page is also easily accessed from our website [www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

*Bruce McLennan*

## Our Next Meeting

The next meeting of our NSW Chapter of the ACWRTA will held at

**The Roseville Memorial Club  
Pacific Highway, Roseville,  
on Monday February 19<sup>th</sup>**

This meeting will involve a presentation from our member, Ian McIntyre:

### Astonishing Purpose-built River Ironclads

A delightful surprise at Vicksburg has nothing to do with the land battles around that city. It is the restored *USS Cairo* under a purpose-built tent and its associated museum which gives a remarkable insight into the life and times of the river gunboat sailors of the day.

These ironclad gunboats were substantial and novel in their design, displacing 880 tons, and had a crew of 215. The notion that they built seven of these complex city class gun boats in 100 days is nothing short of astonishing.

Ian McIntyre (undoubtedly assisted by the other Western Theatre travellers) will take you on a guided tour of the *USS Cairo* and the mementos of everyday life aboard as recovered from the Mississippi mud. It is a fascinating story.

# It Happened in January

## HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

January 8, 1821 – James Longstreet, CSA, is born near Edgefield, South Carolina;

January 19, 1807 – Robert E Lee is born in Stratford, Virginia;

January 21, 1824 – Thomas J (Stonewall) Jackson is born in Clarksburg, Virginia;

January 25, 1825 – George Pickett, CSA, is born in Richmond, Virginia;

January 30, 1816 - Nathaniel Banks, USA, is born in Waltham, Massachusetts;

## COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

January 6, 1865 – Grant asks Lincoln to remove Butler from command of the Army of the James;

January 8, 1861 – Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, the last Southerner in Cabinet, resigns;

January 15, 1862 – The US Senate confirms Edwin M Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War;

January 22, 1864 – Major General William Rosecrans is named Commander of the Federal Department of Missouri;

January 23, 1865 – General Richard Taylor assumes command of the Army of Tennessee, which now has fewer than 18 000 troops;

January 25, 1863 – The removal of General Burnside as Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

January 26, 1863 – Joseph Hooker is appointed Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

January 31, 1865 – General Robert E Lee is appointed General-in-Chief of the Confederate Armies;

## BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

January 2, 1861 – South Carolina troops seize Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbour;

January 2, 1863 – Confederates defeated at the Battle of Murfreesboro (Stones River), Tennessee;

January 3, 1861 – Georgia state troops seize Fort Pulaski before Federal troops can occupy it;

January 4, 1861 – Alabama takes over the US arsenal at Mount Vernon;

## BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont'd

**January 14, 1861** – Louisiana state troops seize Fort Pike near New Orleans;

**January 19, 1865** – Sherman begins his march and destruction of the Carolinas;

**January 19, 1862** – Federals push back Confederates in the Battle of Mill Springs (Logan's Cross Roads), Kentucky;

**January 23, 1863** – Burnside's Federal army pulls back to Fredericksburg ending its famed "mud march";

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

**January 1, 1863** – President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation takes effect;

**January 9, 1861** – Mississippi secedes from the Union;

**January 10, 1861** – Florida secedes from the Union;

**January 11, 1861** – Alabama secedes from the Union;

**January 13, 1863** – Federal officials formally authorise the raising of black units for the South Carolina volunteer Infantry;

**January 16, 1861** – Arkansas completes a bill calling for a referendum on secession;

**January 17, 1861** – The Crittenden Compromise, proposing several amendments to the Constitution in order to save the Union, is "killed" in the US Senate;

**January 18, 1862** – The Confederate Territory of Arizona is formed;

**January 26, 1861** – Louisiana secedes from the Union;

**January 28, 1863** – A mass rally in St Louis ratifies the Emancipation Proclamation;

**January 29, 1861** - Kansas is admitted as the 34<sup>th</sup> state of the Union.

## Truly Wise Words ...

*"The essential Idea of secession is anarchy"*

- Abraham Lincoln

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 of the Chapter by telephone on 0407 195 112 or by e-mail at:  
[secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au](mailto:secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au)

# 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, 16<sup>th</sup> US President is born in Hardin County, Kentucky.

## COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

**February 9, 1861** – the Confederate Provisional Congress elects Jefferson Davis as Provisional President of the Confederacy;

**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 13<sup>th</sup> 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

**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.



*Our members with the 'USS Cairo' Ironclad gunboat at Vicksburg, in 2017*

## Dr. Frances Clarke - Debates over Underage Enlistment in Civil War America

The ACWRT NSW branch Christmas meeting was privileged to have as its guest speaker Dr. Frances Clarke of the University of Sydney, who is a specialist in 19th century American History, especially the Civil War. Her topic was "Debates over Underage Enlistment in Civil War America".

Dr Clarke began her talk by explaining how she became interested in the issue of boy soldiers in the Civil War. In doing research on possible topics for a book, she focussed on the wealth of data available in boxes held by NARA (the National Archives) containing a quarter of a million letters written to the American government by citizens during the war.

By extracting a sample of letters taken from the 1000 stored boxes, she noticed that 1/3 were written by parents requesting their underage sons be released from the units they'd joined illegally (at the beginning of the war conscription was 21, later reduced to 18). Her focus became: "Why were there so many letters on this subject?" and "Why didn't the government release them?" Her answers to these questions are being answered in a book she is currently writing on the subject.



*Private Edwin Francis Jemison*

The reason the government did not return these minors was related to Habeas Corpus (literally "Show me the body"), where the requested minors needed to be physically presented at court and where they could be released by judges. This meant that the courts were clogged with Habeas Corpus cases, causing inconvenience to the government. As a result, in February 1862, new laws were enacted allowing those over 18 to enlist without parental permission and if under 18, to be assumed to be 18. As well, for most of the war because the government would not release minors, this was effectively the suspension of Habeas Corpus, leading to future ramifications.

Another interesting area discussed by Dr Clarke related to the two tiers of the military enlistment system: the regular army and the militia. It was considered highly unsuitable for minors to be enlisted into the regular army, not because of concern about violence they would be exposed to, but rather the dissipation and the hierarchical nature of the standing army. In contrast, in the militia, they could stay with relatives and engage in duties more suitable for underage soldiers. They were often in jobs such as hairdressers and go-betweens or in informal apprenticeships.

How boy soldiers were considered varied greatly between the Union and the Confederacy. Whereas they were rarely evoked in the Confederacy, they were a very popular symbol in the Union and appeared often in photos. However, these photos were unrealistic depictions because most minors were in fact, black, migrants or had been coerced. Even so, the experience of joining the army was a very liberating experience for many boy soldiers.

An interesting sequel to this story is that these boys were the final survivors of the Civil War and were able to re-cast their experiences.



*Dr Frances Clarke with Dan Howard*

In relation to the first question, Dr Clarke spoke about the motives of the parents to have their young sons returned. In contrast to contemporary and possibly romantic views of childhood, parents in that period were more concerned about the loss of the labour and related income suffered because of the minor's absence. Their view was that their child was property that needed to be returned.