

# *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)

## **A Message from our Chairman**

We have had positive feedback about the format of our last meeting – the room layout being more conducive to a “round table” discussion. Thank you to all those members who contributed to the discussion at our last meeting and to John Morrison for his crafted facilitation skills. The change of activities during the evening was well received. We plan to use this format again at our next meeting.

Our next meeting on 4 June deals with a part of the Western Theatre operations. Our speakers Rod and John were at Kennesaw Mountain last year as part of the tour arranged by David Cooper. Some notes will be circulated for reading before the meeting and John Morrison will facilitate a discussion around the topic. Please feel you can read more broadly around this subject before the meeting and come along prepared to put in your thoughts.

Jannette has again provided a summary of the main points made during John’s presentation at the last meeting. Thank you Jannette.

I urge you all to go to our [Facebook](#) page and click “Going” to this “Event”. 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  
64 Pacific Highway, Roseville,  
on Monday June 4<sup>th</sup> June**

Please join us for a bistro-style meal from 6.00pm. To assist with starting our meeting promptly at 7.00, please order your meal before 6.20.

This meeting will involve a presentation and discussion on:

### **Kennesaw Mountain**

Ask most people what the most visited Civil War site in the United States is and they will probably reply “Gettysburg”, or “Antietam”. The answer actually is Kennesaw Mountain – a battle nowhere near as well-known as many others.

The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain was an exception to the tactics Sherman had thus far employed against Johnston of avoiding frontal attack by flanking maneuvers. There is disagreement as to why this occurred; it seems Sherman believed that Johnston’s line on Kennesaw Mountain was stretched too thin. Sherman decided to attack frontally with diversions on the flanks. Despite early gains the overall result was a disaster with 3,000 Union casualties versus less than 1,000 Confederates.

## *Happenings*

### **It Happened in May**

#### **Hatches and Dispatches**

**May 10, 1863** – Thomas J (Stonewall) Jackson dies at Guinea Station, Virginia, aged 39 years;

**May 11, 1864** – JEB Stuart is mortally wounded at the Battle of Yellow Tavern, Virginia;

**May 23, 1824** – Ambrose Burnside (USA) is born in Liberty, Indiana;

**May 28, 1818** – Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (CSA) is born in St Bernard, Louisiana;

#### **Command Changes**

**May 2, 1863** – JEB Stuart assumes command of the Confederate cavalry after “Stonewall” Jackson is mortally wounded in the Battle of Chancellorsville;

**Battles<sup>SEP</sup> May 1, 1863** – Battle of Port Gibson, MS, which begins Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign;

**May 1 - 4, 1863** – Battle of Chancellorsville, that results in stunning Confederate victory for Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia;

**May 5, 1864** – Battle of the Wilderness begins<sup>SEP</sup>;

**May 8, 1864** – Fighting begins at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia;

**May 12, 1864** – Battle of Bloody Angle, Spotsylvania;

**May 12, 1865** – The last land battle between large forces resulting in a Confederate victory takes place at Palmito Ranch, Texas;

**May 16, 1863** – Battle of Champion Hill, Mississippi;

**May 17, 1863** – Battle of Big Black River Bridge, MS;

**May 18, 1863** – Siege of Vicksburg, MS, begins;

**May 19, 1863** – Grant launches his first unsuccessful attack against the besieged Vicksburg;

**May 23 – 26, 1864** – Battle of North Anna, Virginia;

**May 25, 1862** – Jackson attacks the Federals in the First Battle of Winchester, VA and captures the town two days later;

**May 27, 1862** – Battle of Slash Church (Hanover Court House);

**May 31, 1862** – Battle of Seven Pines (Fair Oaks) where General Joseph Johnston (CSA) is severely wounded.

### **Other Significant Events**

**May 4, 1865** – Lincoln is buried in Springfield, Illinois;

**May 9, 1865** – The trial of the 8 accused Lincoln assassination conspirators begins;

**May 10, 1865** – Jefferson Davis is captured near Irwinville, Georgia;

**May 16, 1861** – Tennessee is officially admitted to the Confederacy;

**May 20, 1861** – North Carolina becomes the 11th state to join the Confederacy whilst Kentucky issues a proclamation of neutrality;

**May 29, 1865** – President Johnson grants amnesty and pardon to all who participated in “the existing rebellion”, with a few exceptions.

### **It Happened in June**

#### **Hatches and Dispatches**

**June 1, 1831** – John Bell Hood (CSA) is born in Owingsville, Bath County, Kentucky;

**June 3, 1808** – Confederate President Jefferson Davis is born in Christian County, Kentucky;

**June 5, 1864** – On Matagorda Island, Texas, 13 black members of the Union’s Corps de Afrique are hanged by Federal military authorities after convictions for mutiny;

**June 5, 1864** – Brigadier General William E (Grumble) Jones (CSA) is killed in action in the Shenandoah Valley;

**June 14, 1811** – Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is born in Litchfield, Conn;

**June 14, 1864** – General Leonidas Polk, (CSA) is killed at Pine Mountain, Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign.

#### **Command and Political Appointments**

**June 17, 1862** – Braxton Bragg succeeds General Beauregard as Commander of the Western Department of the Confederate Army

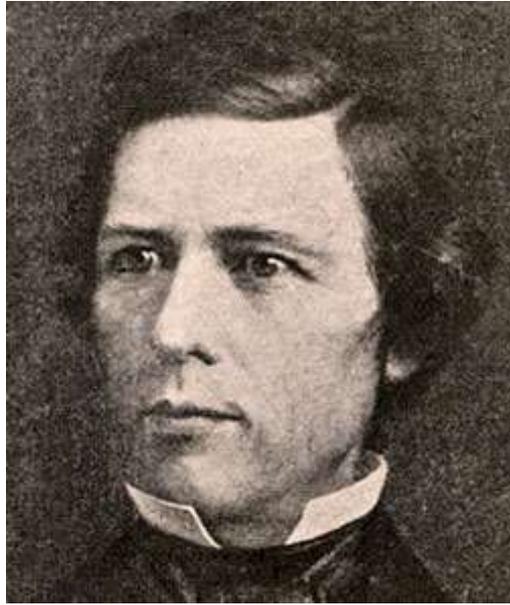
**June 22, 1861** – Robert E Lee is named commander of the forces of Virginia.

## New Segment:

### *Civil War Profiles*

Thanks to Dan Howard

DAVID WILMOTT



#### **Why the 'Wilmott Proviso' should arguably be called the 'Brinkerhoff Proviso' – Wilmott's 10 minutes of fame - and a fast clock in the Congressional Chamber**

One singular event on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1846, more than almost any other, transformed Whig versus Democrat *partisanship* in the Congress into North versus South *sectionalism*, hardening attitudes and making lasting compromises impossible. The event in question was David Wilmott, a 32 year-old freshman Democrat congressman from Pennsylvania, being recognised by the Speaker of the House. This was during the debate over Democrat President Polk's request that Congress approve appropriations of \$2 million to facilitate treaty negotiations with Mexico at the end of the Mexican War. The debate was held two days before Polk's first congress was due to lapse - time was very short and speakers were strictly limited to ten minutes on their feet. Wilmott's past record of voting suggested he was inclined to support the administration's policies and so the Speaker probably thought it a safe bet to give him the floor – but on this crucial occasion, Wilmott broke ranks.

Although known as the 'Wilmot Proviso', this proviso was quite possibly drafted by Ohio Democrat Jacob Brinkerhoff, or perhaps another member of a planning group of 'free soilers' of which Wilmott was also a member.

Evidence for this comes from historian Eric Foner which indicates that each of the members of this group wrote out his own copy of the draft proviso (much of the language of which was drawn from Jefferson's North-West Ordinance) and each then

tried to get the Speaker's attention during the crucial debate. As fate would have it, it was Wilmott whom the Speaker called upon.

The proviso stipulated that President Polk's requested appropriations should only be granted on condition that slavery be forbidden in any new territory acquired as a result of the treaty settlement with Mexico. Whereas the Representatives of the slave states had initially been supporters of Polk's request, with this amendment it was no longer acceptable to them. Nevertheless, the amendment was passed by the Congress by 80 votes to 64 votes, with all but three of the 'no' votes coming from the slave states.

The southern members then moved to table the bill, and (in the words of historian David Potter in his Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Impending Crisis*) this motion ominously "produced a division, not between Whigs and Democrats, but between northerners and southerners. Seventy-four southerners and four northerners voted to table; ninety-one northerners and three southerners voted against tabling. The bill itself, as amended, was then carried by a vote of 85 to 80, with the two sides again dividing almost wholly on sectional lines and was sent to the Senate".

Potter also describes the fate of the bill when it then came before the Senate on the last day of the session, with one hour left before the session would expire:

"Senator John Davis of Massachusetts, a Whig and a friend of the amendment, apparently conceived of the idea of talking until it would be too late to return the bill [to the House] whereupon the senators would be forced to take it as the House offered it – with the amendment. But if this was indeed his purpose, he miscalculated, and taking the floor on the motion to strike out the House's amendment, he kept talking until the clock showed eight minutes left in the session. At that point he was interrupted by the information that the House, whose clock was faster, had already adjourned and the session had expired."

The Wilmott proviso thus lapsed in the Senate, and although it was put forward numerous times subsequently, it was never passed.

Regrettably (and not uncommonly for the times) Wilmott's anti-slavery stance appears to have been as much the product of racist attitudes toward the negro as of any desire to confine the expansion of slavery (which Wilmott believed would eventually die out). In a speech in Albany, New York in 1847, Wilmott said of his proviso: "While its success would insure the redemption, at an earlier date, of the negro from his bondage and his chains, I deny that it was especially for him, that the Proviso was offered; or that he is the party most deeply interested in its result. It has, with justice and propriety, been called 'The White Man's Proviso'; and the Free White Labourer, has by far the deepest stake in its failure or success".

In a later speech in the House in 1848, Wilmott showed his hand even more emphatically, stating: "I plead the cause and the rights of white freemen

[and] I would preserve to free white labour a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and own colour, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labour”.

In due course Wilmott became a Republican party supporter and was a key figure at the convention that nominated Lincoln as the Republican party's candidate for president. He was a member of the unsuccessful 1861 Peace Convention. He was a Pennsylvania senator from 1861-3 and although he declined being considered for a position in Lincoln's cabinet, he was appointed by Lincoln as a Judge of the Court of Claims in 1863, a position he held until his death in 1868 at the age of 54.

Although a significant footnote in history, Wilmott's legacy remains just that – a footnote. Perhaps this reflects the incontrovertible fact that the proviso that bears his name was underpinned by racist motivations, combined with the likelihood that he may not have been the originator of the proviso (which, in fairness, he obviously agreed with), but merely the 'mouthpiece' of what may well have been the draftsmanship of another, possibly Brinkerhoff, although it was Wilmott who happened to catch the Speaker's eye.

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## *Snippets*

Thanks to Len Traynor

**GENERAL ORDERS No. 247 WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE** *Washington, August 25, 1864*

The uniform for Chaplains in the Army, prescribed in General Orders, No. 102, of November 25, 1861, is hereby republished with modifications as follows: Plain black frock-coat, with standing collar, one row of nine black buttons on the breast, with "herring bone" of black braid around the buttons and button holes.

Plain black pantaloons.

Black felt hat, or army forage cap, with gold embroidered wreath in front, on black velvet ground, encircling the letters U.S. in silver, old English characters.

On occasions of ceremony, a plain chapeau de bras may be worn.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:  
E.D. TOWNSEND,  
*Assistant Adjutant General.*

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**HEAD QUARTERS 66<sup>th</sup> U.S.C.I.**

**BIG BLACK BRIDGE, MISS., June 4<sup>th</sup> 1865.**

The following CIRCULAR is issued for the guidance of Company Officers at Inspections:

**MEN** – Bodies, clean. Hair, short (shingled). Caps, well fitted, clean and in good order. Cravats and Collars to be destroyed, except in Drum Corps. Handkerchiefs, not to be worn on the head or around the neck. Coats, nice and clean and free from grease spots.

## *Snippets cont'd*

**CLOTHING** – Vests, must not be worn. Pants, kept up properly with suspenders; of proper length; clean; well mended; pockets unchanged. Shirts, clean and well mended. Socks, clean and well mended. Shoes or boots, in good condition and nicely blacked. Best Clothes, always to be worn at inspections. Trimmings, fancy, not to be worn on any article of clothing. Buttons, kept sewed on. Brass, nicely polished. Letters, nicely polished; kept on caps. Figures, nicely polished; kept on caps.

**ACCOUTREMENTS** – Waist belts nicely polished with blackening, and plates right side up. Cartridge Box Belts, nicely polished with blacking, and plates on a line with coat buttons. Cartridge Cap Boxes, nicely polished with blacking, and plates in centre of flaps. Cap Pouches, nicely blacked, and next to the waist belt plates. Bayonet Scabbards, nicely blacked. Knapsack Straps, nicely blacked, small straps properly buckled or rolled, or both.

### MUSTERING OUT

Thousands of civil war soldiers didn't complete their full enlistment terms for a variety of reasons: killed in action, died of wounds or disease were the main causes. But bullets and microbes were not the only cause of their demise. When they were discharged it was termed "Mustered Out", and their name was removed from the Company Rolls, and the reason recorded. Here are some of the more unusual ones:

Lorenzo Brown, Company A, 112<sup>th</sup> Illinois Volunteers. Kicked to death by an army mule.

Charles D. Fuller, Company D, Forty Sixth Pennsylvania Volunteers. Detected as a female.

John Hoffman, Company F, Fifty Sixth New York Volunteers. Killed by lightning at Cashtown, Maryland.

George W. Ide, Company G, Twenty Fifth Wisconsin Regiment. Died of sunstroke, at Dallas, Georgia, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1864.

Jacob Thomas, Company K, Twenty Fifth Ohio Regiment. Killed by a falling tree at Wild Cat, Kentucky, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1861.

A. Lipman, Company A, Eighth New York Volunteers. Died of poison while on picket drinking from a bottle found in an empty house.

Charles Clements, Company #, One Hundred and Seventy Ninth New York Volunteers. Killed falling from a train while on furlough, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1864.

# Report on our last meeting:

## Prisoners of War in the Civil War



Member John Morrison gave an informative and lively PowerPoint presentation as background to the issue and this was followed by a short video, which expanded on themes presented by John.

John began by referring to the treatment of POWs as being a sign of civilized behavior as expressed through the Geneva Convention, quoting an old Sgt. Major: "This is what makes us the good guys".

The Civil War was the first war with large-scale prisoners of war. Previously there had been exchanges, ransoms or killing of captives but in the Civil War there were far greater numbers of prisoners to deal with than ever before.

John first provided overall statistics. Altogether 211,000 Northerners were captured. In the years 1861-63 most of these were immediately paroled. However, after the parole system broke down in 1863, approximately 195,000 went to prison camps. While some attempted escape, few succeeded. Compared with the number of Northern Prisoners, more Confederate combatants were captured. A total of 464,000 total were captured, many in the final days of the war, with 115,000 imprisoned. Over 30,000 Union and nearly 26,000 Confederate prisoners died in captivity, amounting to 12% of those in Northern prisons and 15.5% in Southern prisons. These statistics did not include later deaths.

In the early years of the war, prisoner exchanges were initiated after First Bull Run. Initially, the North was disinclined to participate for fear of appearing to "recognise" the Confederate government. However, in December, 1861, a joint resolution by US Congress called on President Lincoln to begin a system of prisoner exchanges. In February/March 1862, Union Major General John E. Wool and Confederate Brigadier General H. Cobb met to reach an agreement on prisoner exchanges. A formal exchange system, known as the Dix-Hill Cartel, developed a "scale of equivalencies" with, for example, 1 Colonel = 15 privates; equivalent ranks 1 = 1; it also included civilians considered disloyal.

However, the exchange system collapsed in 1863, officially because the Confederacy was refusing to

respect black prisoners but unofficially because Ulysses Grant had identified a "prisoner gap", where Union camps held more prisoners than Confederate camps, giving him a military advantage. As a consequence, a severe manpower shortage developed in the Confederacy by 1864.

The high mortality rates on both sides of the conflict were due to a number of factors. Southern prisons tended to be located in areas with high disease rates and were routinely short of doctors, medicines, food and ice. Because those in the North believed that their prisoners were being treated deliberately harshly, conditions for Southern prisoners in Northern prisons were tightened as retaliation. Overall, 56,000 prisoners died, accounting for 10% of all Civil War fatalities.

The most notorious of the prisons were:

- Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia, where 13,000 Union prisoners died in 14 months (28% of the prison total of 45,000).

- Camp Douglas, Chicago, Illinois, where 10% of Confederate prisoners died in one cold winter.

- Elmira Prison, New York, where the death rate was 25%, equal to Andersonville.

In 1863, the Leiber Code was enacted as response to actions being undertaken against civilians, enemy combatants and captured black soldiers. This Code, the basis of the later Hague Convention rulings in 1888 and 1907, insisted on the humane, ethical treatment of civilians in occupied territories and particularly forbade "no quarter to the enemy". It also prohibited discrimination on the basis of colour amongst combatants. Further prohibitions extended to captured POWs, but execution of spies, saboteurs and guerrilla forces was permitted.

Before closing, John referred to Captain Henry Wirz of Andersonville prison (pictured), who was tried and sentenced to death for deliberately causing the suffering in that prison. However, Confederates considered Wirz's trial to be a sham, in light of Grant's "inhumane" decision to halt prisoner exchanges and the resulting prison overcrowding.



At the conclusion of his presentation, John invited a response to several questions he posed:

1. Was the tragedy of POWs in the Civil War inevitable?
2. Are there examples on either side of great compassion towards prisoners?
3. Was the execution of Captain Wirz simply "victors' vengeance"?

The PowerPoint presentation was followed by a short video which developed the theme of the various prisons, which were equally bad on each side.