

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

A Message from Our Chairman

Those of us who were present for the last meeting truly appreciated Dan Howard's excellent talk on constitutional issues that unfolded in the lead up to, and during, the Civil War. Jannette has prepared a summary of the presentation – on page 4.

The discussion that followed, facilitated by John Morrison, was lively and insightful. We plan to continue the discussion-oriented format at future meetings.

At our next meeting we will be road-testing two modules of our course being developed for the WEA. The overall course title is "Origins of the American Civil War". A subtitle might be: "How did it come to this?"

Ten of our members have offered to research topics and prepare research notes for the course. Personally I have found this research very interesting.

We will present two topics and then seek feedback from you on the format and content of each. This feedback will allow us to modify the drafts and make up example modules for each of the researchers.

Bruce McLennan

Our Next Meeting

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

**The Roseville Club, 64 Pacific Highway
on Monday 8 October**

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 two trial model for our course

"Origins of the American Civil War":

- 1) First English settlers in North America**
- 2) Thomas Jefferson**

... to be followed by a discussion on the format and content of the presentations

Happenings

It Happened in September

HATCHES AND DESPACHES

September 4, 1864 – The Confederate raider and cavalry commander, John Hunt Morgan, is shot and killed in a Federal raid on Greenville, Tennessee;

September 6, 1819 – William S Rosecrans (USA) is born in Delaware County, Ohio;

September 10, 1836 – Joseph (Fighting Joe) Wheeler (CSA) is born in Augusta, Georgia;

September 12, 1818 – Richard J Gatling, inventor of the first machine gun (Gatling Gun) used in the Civil War, is born in Hertford County, NC – see page 6;

September 27, 1809 – Raphael Semmes, the Confederate naval commander responsible for the destruction or capture of 64 Union ships is born in Charles County, Maryland;

September 29, 1862 – Federal Brigadier General Jefferson Davis shoots and mortally wounds Brig. Gen. William (Bull) Nelson during a quarrel in a hotel in Louisville.

COMMAND CHANGES

September 28, 1863 – Federal Generals Alexander McCook and T L Crittenden are relieved of their commands and ordered to a court of inquiry following the Battle of Chickamauga.

BATTLES

September 11, 1861 – Lee begins the 5-day Cheat Mountain Campaign (VA.) which ends in a Confederate withdrawal;

September 14, 1862 – Union forces push the Confederates back at the Battles of South Mountain and Crampton's Gap, Va;

September 15, 1862 – Confederates capture Harpers Ferry, Va, taking about 12000 prisoners;

September 17, 1862 – The Union strategic victory at the Battle of Antietam halts the Confederate advance into the North;

September 19-20, 1863 – Battle of Chickamauga resulting in a Federal retreat to a defensive position in and around Chattanooga, Tennessee;

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

September 1, 1864 – Confederates begin to evacuate Atlanta;

September 2, 1864 – Union forces under General Sherman occupy Atlanta;

September 5, 1863 – Under pressure from the US Government, the British do not deliver two ironclads they had built for the Confederacy;

September 7, 1864 – General Sherman orders civilians to leave Atlanta so that he might more easily feed and supply his army;

September 22, 1862 – President Lincoln issues the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation declaring that all slaves in the rebel states to be free as of January 1, 1863;

September 24, 1862 – Fourteen Governors from Northern States meet at Altoona, PA, and endorse Emancipation Proclamation.

It Happened in October

HATCHES AND DESPACHES

October 1, 1864 – Famed Confederate spy, Mrs Rose Greenhow drowns as she tries to avoid capture;

October 2, 1800 – Nat Furner, slave and leader of the slave insurrection at Southampton, Virginia, in 1831, is born in Southampton County;

October 26, 1864 – Confederate guerrilla Bloody Bill Anderson is killed in an ambush near Richmond Missouri.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

October 8, 1864 – General William T Sherman is named to command the Union Department of the Cumberland with headquarters at Louisville;

October 11, 1861 – Brigadier General William R Rosecrans assumes command of the Federal Department of Western Virginia;

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

October 16, 1859 – The abolitionist John Brown leads an unsuccessful raid on the Government arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia;

October 19, 1861 – A small Confederate raiding party robs three Vermont banks of over \$200,000.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

October 4, 1862 – The Battle of Corinth, Miss., ends with a Confederate withdrawal from this important rail and road centre;

October 5, 1863 – Confederate torpedo boat *David* with a four-man crew, attacks the Federal ironclad *New Ironsides* outside Charleston Harbour;

October 6, 1861 – Confederate blockade runner, *Alert*, is captured by the Federal Navy off Charleston S.C.;

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October 7, 1864 – *USS Wachusett* captures the raider *CSS Florida* in a controversial action at Bahia, Brazil;

October 9, 1864 – Union cavalry under Custer and Merritt engage and rout Confederates at Tom's Brook (Round Top Mountain) Virginia;

October 14, 1863 – Confederates strike retreating Federals at Bristow Station, VA., in an inconclusive engagement;

October 18, 1862 – John Hunt Morgan and his Confederate raiders defeat Federal cavalry near Lexington, Kentucky;

October 21, 1861 – Federal forces suffer a dramatic defeat at the Battle of Ball's Bluff (Leesburg), Virginia;

October 22, 1862 – Confederate cavalry capture London, Kentucky;

October 23, 1864 – Last Confederate effort in Missouri ends in defeat at the Battle of Westport;

October 27, 1864 – In a daring raid, Union Lieut. William Cushing and a 15-man crew sink the Confederate ironclad *Albemarle* at Plymouth, N.C.;

October 29, 1861 – Largest combined land-sea expedition ever mounted by the United States leaves Hampton Roads, Va., for the Carolina coast and Port Royal.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

October 3, 1863 – Federal War Department orders the enlistment of Negro troops in the slave states of Maryland, Missouri and Tennessee;

October 10, 1862 – President Davis asks Virginia for a draft of 4500 Negroes to work on the completion of the fortification of Richmond;

October 13, 1864 – Maryland voters narrowly adopt a new state constitution abolishing slavery;

October 17, 1863 – President Lincoln issues a proclamation calling for 300,000 more volunteers for Federal armies;

October 20, 1864 – President Lincoln proclaims the last Thursday in November "...a day of Thanksgiving and Praise of Almighty God"

Snippets

Thanks again to Len Traynor

More Statistics ...

According to Official Records for the four years of war there were

29 Campaigns
76 Battles
310 Engagements
46 Combats
26 Sieges
64 Raids
727 Expeditions
252 Reconnaissances
1026 Actions
29 Assaults

6337 Skirmishes
229 Operations
434 Scouts
639 Affairs
82 Occupations
79 Captures

These figures do not include the thousands of naval engagements.

Reference: "Civil War Day by Day" E.B. Long

A point: How does an Occupation differ from a Capture?

True and Dubious Veterans

When Walter Washington Williams died on the 19th December 1959, flags around the United States were flown at half-mast in honour of a man who claimed to have been the last Civil War veteran. He claimed he had served as a foraging sergeant in Hood's Texas Brigade, part of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Subsequent research has clearly shown that Walter was an absolute fraud. US Census records for 1860 show that he was born in 1854, which made him much too young to have been a Civil War soldier. Also Muster Rolls for Hood's Texas Brigade have no Walter Williams serving as a forage sergeant. Old Walter was like many men of a similar age of that era who claimed to be Confederate Soldiers of the Civil War and basked in the attention and glory that their false claim gave them. They got away with it for so long because so many Confederate records were destroyed during the burning of Richmond in April 1865, which meant that their spurious claims could not be disproved. They also had the audacity to claim, and subsequently receive, a state pension for being a Confederate veteran.

A man with the unusual name of Pleasant Riggs Crump has been confirmed as the last genuine Confederate veteran. He was born in Alabama on the 23rd December 1847. In mid-1864 he enlisted in the 10th Alabama Infantry, saw action at Hatcher's Run and the Siege of Petersburg and was at Appomattox when General Lee surrendered there on 9th April 1865. After the war he returned to Alabama and outlived three wives before dying in 1951 at the ripe old age of 104.

The last genuine Union veteran was Albert Henry Woolson, who was born in 1850. In late 1864 he enlisted as a drummer boy in the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery, staying with the unit until he was mustered out at war's end. Although he never experienced combat, he still wore Union blue during the latter stages of the war, which qualifies him as a veteran. He died in 1956 at the grand age of 106 – the last true veteran of that terrible conflict.

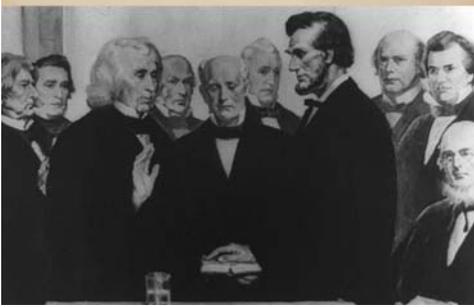
Incidental Snippets

The highest casualty rate of any Union regiment in a single engagement during the Civil War was in a counter attack on the 2nd day of Gettysburg, where the 1st Minnesota Regiment lost 82% of its 262 men.

At the battle of Antietam on the 17th September 1862, the 1st Texas Regiment, part of Hood's Texas Brigade, also suffered 82% casualties when fighting in a cornfield. Incidentally, Hood's Brigade were the only Texas troops attached to the Army of Northern Virginia.

Report on our last meeting: Lincoln and the Supreme Court Part 2

Lincoln sworn in by Taney - March 4th, 1861



At our August meeting members were privileged to hear the second part of Dan Howard's talk, which he termed "Lawyers at War – Lincoln and the Supreme Court Part 2". This considered the aftermath of the Dred Scott case as well as the suspension of Habeas Corpus and the Prize Cases. In a clear and detailed PowerPoint presentation Dan covered a range of topics in a coherent way, enabling a deeper understanding of the legal issues leading up to the secession by the Southern States and important issues during the War. The presentation was introduced by John Morrison, who referred to the personalities of the various Supreme Court Justices, reminding members that there was no appeal beyond that Court, and that the US Constitution was written and not based on Common Law.

Dan began with a sum-up of the Dred Scott case, which he stated was widely recognized as the worst decision in the history of the Supreme Court. A political decision, with the purpose of meeting the sectional interests of the South, it stated that blacks were "beings of an inferior order" and, whether free or slave, could not be citizens of the US. This decision infuriated the abolitionists and Republicans of the North but was hailed by the South as a vindication of how they viewed the constitution.

The *Dred Scott* case, and the role of Justice Taney, was extremely important in the lead up to the 1860 Presidential election and Lincoln's bid as the Republican candidate with his platform of the preserving of the Union while prohibiting the extension of slavery to the new territories. Lincoln was strongly critical of the *Dred Scott* decision in his debates with Stephen Douglas and in his famous Cooper Union address. Ironically, Lincoln was sworn in as President by Chief Justice Taney on March 4th 1861, against a backdrop of six Southern States having seceded between December 1860 and February 1861.

Dan moved on to discuss subsequent events, including the attack on Fort Sumter, and Lincoln's use of the President's War Powers as Commander in Chief to call up 75,000 militia on April 15th 1861. Subsequently, in response to the Baltimore Riots on 19th April (the events of which inspired James Randall's "Maryland, My Maryland" – still the state's song) and not wanting to risk Maryland seceding, Lincoln again, using his war powers, authorized the suspension of *Habeas Corpus* at a time when Congress was in recess. An appeal by the lawyers of Marylander John Merryman from Maryland to reinstate *Habeas Corpus* was put forward. This was

heard by Chief Justice Taney, who granted *Habeas Corpus*, stating that Congress only, not the president, could suspend the writ, but this ruling was simply ignored by Lincoln.

Dan discussed what he considered to be Taney's flawed reasoning, especially Taney's failure to make any acknowledgment of dramatic events unfolding at the time, namely, a major insurrection with 11 states having seceded – a situation that was not comparable with any other legal precedent.

In his famous Message to Congress on 4th July 1861, Lincoln outlined his reasons for exercising his war power under the constitution. Other cases of suspension and attempted suspension of *Habeas Corpus* by other Presidents were then discussed, including decisions by Ulysses S. Grant, Franklyn D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman and George W. Bush in 2006.

The third subject that Dan covered was the Prize Cases, which arose in consequence of Lincoln's use of his war powers to blockade the Southern Ports from 19th April 1861, just after Fort Sumter. Normally a blockade can only occur between recognized 'belligerents' and thus might be seen as recognition of the Confederacy. Four ships were involved, all running the blockade. At this point, Lincoln was on a tightrope, with the possibility that his action was unconstitutional because it could be argued that he was prosecuting a 'war' (as distinct from a 'rebellion') when only Congress can declare war. The cases that ensued were argued in February 1863. Taney was still Chief Justice at this time but fortuitously Lincoln had been able to appoint three new Supreme Court Justices who were sympathetic to the Republican cause and the Union, which meant that Taney no longer had a majority. The decision, a close one at 5 – 4 in Lincoln's favour, was delivered by Justice Robert Grier and supported the President's right to meet "the insurrection in the shape it presented itself, without waiting for Congress to baptize it with a name ...". The decision also referred to the Confederate enemies as 'insurgents' and 'traitors', rather than recognizing their sovereignty. Dan also discussed the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and subsequent Amendments to the Constitution, leading to the overturning of the *Dred Scott* case and prohibition of denial of the vote based on colour, race or 'previous servitude'.

Dan finished his excellent talk with reference to contemporary events regarding the President and Courts and then he and John Morrison led a lively discussion on such points as: 'Is our process of appointing judges in Australia political?' and "Should we have a Bill of Rights?"



Civil War Profile: John and Jessie Fremont

from Dan Howard



The marriage partnership of John Fremont (1813 -1890) and Jessie Ann Fremont (nee Benton) (1824 – 1902) was a remarkable one – they were the prototype, glamorous ‘power couple’ of their era. Living in extraordinary times, they achieved major successes, although true greatness eluded them through John’s political naivety, his questionable management skills as a Civil War general, and his markedly deficient entrepreneurial and business failures.

John Fremont was a skilled surveyor, navigator, and exceptional explorer of the West; he was nick-named ‘The Pathfinder’ for his pivotal role in opening up the way westward for Americans via the Oregon Trail and for his widely popular published accounts of his explorations, which acted as the ‘Lonely Planet’ of the day for settlers moving west. An illegitimate ‘love child’ of a French Royalist émigré and a wealthy married Virginia ‘belle’ who had abandoned her husband, Fremont was born poor in Georgia, but grew into a skilled outdoorsman and clever mathematician, and had one of his first major pieces of good luck by coming under the patronage of Joel Poinsett (who became Secretary of War under Van Buren) who obtained for Fremont a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Topographical Corp where he met the French scientist/explorer Nicholas Nicollet, who was leading an expedition to map the northwest between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, which Fremont joined. Fremont’s second major piece of good fortune was to marry Jessie Benton, the pair falling in love at first meeting and remaining so throughout their long marriage which produced five children. Jessie was Fremont’s closest confidant and championed his causes to the end.



Jessie was the brilliant daughter of the powerful ante-bellum senator from Missouri, Thomas Hart Benton. Benton was strongly pro the Union and, although he owned slaves, he was against the extension of slavery to the new territories. Jessie had a privileged upbringing in Washington where she acted as her father’s secretary, and where she had access to the corridors of political power. As a child, in company with her father, she had often visited President Andrew Jackson at White House (years before, Benton had shot Jackson in a famous duel but they had long since reconciled!). Jessie was highly educated and spoke five languages by the time she was a teen. She was well read in Greek and Latin as well as in history, geography, literature and science. Her father instilled in her Jeffersonian republican principles. She was strongly anti-slavery. She was also a renowned beauty of grace and bearing who had had several proposals of marriage (one of which was from President Martin Van Buren!) before eloping and marrying Fremont.

Although John kept excellent journals of his explorations, it was Jessie’s literary skills that helped him to compile these into the highly readable accounts that acquired vast popularity and guided migrants westward in the age of ‘manifest destiny’ – a movement of which Thomas Benton was a chief proponent. Indeed, Thomas Benton saw in Fremont an instrument for achieving American expansion, and financed some of Fremont’s expeditions.

In 1846 Fremont was involved in military actions and intrigues against Mexican interests in northern California; men under his command there were also responsible for some Indian massacres. On California’s admission to the Union (1850), Fremont became the first senator for the new state. He was invited to be the Democratic Party’s nominee for president in the 1856 elections, however he declined on principle and instead was chosen as the first presidential candidate of the

newly formed Republican Party, losing to James Buchanan in a fairly close contest. Fremont was a 'Free Soiler' and, like Jessie, was strongly opposed to the expansion of slavery.

In time, John and Jessie acquired much fame and, for a time at least, influence and wealth. A property that John had purchased in California unexpectedly contained a very rich seam of gold yielding him a vast fortune, although over time he lost this through poor management and unwise speculations.

When the Civil War came, Lincoln appointed Fremont a Major General to command the Union forces in the Department of the West headquartered in St Louis. There he not only had to contend with Confederate troops determined to invade and make Missouri a rebel state, but also with guerrilla actions by pro-rebel Missourians. His record in this role was very patchy, his best decision being to recognise the potential of Ulysses S Grant and placing him in command of south-eastern Missouri and southern Illinois with orders to seize any riverfront positions in Kentucky and Missouri that were threatened by the Confederates. Fremont's concentration of the limited resources in his Department on securing the Mississippi was a wise strategy, and Grant's subsequent successes there are legendary.

On August 30th, 1861, Fremont declared martial law in Missouri, ordering summary execution of any Confederate guerrillas caught behind Union lines. He also ordered the confiscation of the property of Confederate sympathisers, as well as the freeing of their slaves. Lincoln was highly vexed and displeased at Fremont's emancipation order as it undermined the political capital Lincoln needed to keep the border states in the Union. This led Lincoln to terminate Fremont's command, but not before Jessie, a woman ahead of her times, had hurried to Washington to plead her husband's cause. Arriving at the Willard Hotel in the evening after the exhausting journey from St Louis, she boldly sent a note to the White House requesting to see Lincoln. He insisted she come at once and, when she arrived, curtly rejected her pleas. According to Jessie's account, Lincoln told her that "It was a war for a great national idea, the Union, and... General Fremont should not have dragged the negro into it." Lincoln himself wrote that Jessie had "...tasked me so violently with so many things, that I had to exercise all the awkward tact I have to avoid quarrelling with her."

In due course Fremont was reassigned to command the Mountain Department in Western Virginia, eastern Kentucky and parts of Tennessee, and during the Shenandoah Valley Campaign his efforts were largely thwarted by Stonewall Jackson. His command was eventually subsumed in the Union's newly created Army of Virginia under General John Pope, whereupon Fremont resigned in protest.

After the War, the Fremonts experienced shifting fortunes, living in style for a number of years in high society New York, and travelling abroad for the 'grand tour', until they were undone by John's risky and naïve speculations, mostly in failed railroad enterprises, against a background of fraud and corruption.

Fremont was appointed Governor of Arizona for three years until October 1881. He died in 1890, with his military pension his only real income. Jessie, despite successes as an author of memoirs and articles about the west and her life with Fremont, died in relative poverty in 1902.

There is much more to say about the lives of this remarkable duo than we have space for here. They were at once brilliant, bold, dazzling and exciting, yet equally controversial, with John's legendary status as 'The Pathfinder' marred by frequently poor judgment, dubious speculations, some highly questionable conduct and lack of probity, particularly in his later years.

For further reading see Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Fremont and the Course of the American Empire*; and Sally Denton, *Passion and Principle: John and Jessie Fremont, the couple whose power, politics and love shaped nineteenth century America*.

Reminder - subs

Thank you to those who have sent subscriptions to our Treasurer and reminder to those yet to settle.

Historic Gatling gun

Colin Allerdice discovered this historic gun in the Singleton Infantry Museum, NSW Hunter Valley.



The Gatling Gun was developed by American Richard Gatling in the 1850s, a forerunner of the modern machine gun. The guns were first used in combat by Union forces in the American Civil War and were soon after adopted by the British. Several Australian Colonies bought Gatlings around this time. Unlike previous firearms which had to be re-loaded after each discharge, the Gatling Gun's multi-barrel design synchronised the firing/reloading sequence to produce a rapid and continuous rate of fire.

The gun on display at Singleton is a 0.45 inch Naval version. It is the only one of its type still known to exist in Australia, and one of only a few in the world. The type was used by South Australian and Victorian colonial navies before Federation.

Thank you Colin!