

Sumter to Appomattox

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

Patron: Professor the Hon Bob Carr

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Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message from Our Chairman

At our last meeting, Rod Cooke gave a talk on the coastal operations that were the manifestation of the Anaconda Strategy, designed to prevent the Confederacy from sourcing goods and munitions from Europe. I have since been privileged to be part of a group of eight that gathered in Atlanta and spent two weeks travelling through Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The trip was wonderful and the participants are all grateful to David Cooper for his planning and organisation skills and his light touch style of tour leadership. We were particularly impressed by the number of sites along the coasts of all three states that were important parts of the story from 1861 to 1865. Rod's presentation came to mind repeatedly throughout the adventure. Thank you Rod.

John Morrison has undertaken to pass on some of the things we discovered and experienced at our next meeting. I am sure it will be interesting as he has much from which to select.

Jannette Greenwood has been doing an excellent job with the newsletter and I encourage all members to assist her by offering contributions likely to be of interest to fellow members.

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

Dan McIntyre

Our Next Meeting

Monday, 22 July 2019 at The Roseville Club

Topic: *Members' Tour: 2019: Atlanta to the Sea and a few interesting sidelines*

The recent tour of Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas represented the finale of a voyage of discovery begun three years ago by members of our chapter. It also provided us with the counter position in relation to the Civil War – the Southern viewpoint – which I think several of us found strangely compelling.

Beginning with our cruise of the Mississippi – guided and instructed by the great grandson of Jefferson Davis – we proceeded to Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Vicksburg, eventually reaching Memphis TN. We were escorted around La Grange, Shiloh and Corinth by none other than U. S. Grant himself (actually Kurt Fields, a re-enactor and civil war historian). From Atlanta we headed through Georgia to Savannah, following the route of Sherman's March to the Sea, Sherman's Christmas present to Abraham Lincoln in 1864. Andersonville, on the route, was of course the most notorious prisoner of war camp of the entire war.

Then on to the Carolinas, birthplace of the Confederacy. Fort Sumter in Charleston SC is the place where the first shots were fired and the war began. One of the highlights of the tour was a visit to the Hunley restoration museum. The Confederate submarine *Hunley* was the first successful combat submarine in history, sinking the Union ship *Housatonic*. Then on to Wilmington, Raleigh and Charlotte NC. Having seen where the first shots were fired, we proceeded to Bennett Place near Charlotte, where Johnson surrendered to Sherman. We thus had the two "bookends" to the Civil War and the conclusion to an amazing journey.

Our Last Meeting

Coastal Operations

Rod Cooke

Our member, Rod Cooke gave a thorough and engaging presentation on Coastal Operations in the American Civil War, a large but generally unfamiliar topic. Rod provided a run-down of the preparations made before the war and then described the Anaconda Plan, which aimed to bring the Confederacy to its knees by blockading the coast and controlling the Mississippi River over a large area. During this period a Naval Board, set up under Captain S.F. Du Pont, studied the effectiveness of the blockade. A second naval strategy considered ways harbours could be seized to obviate the need for a blockade and enable Army involvement.



Rod also considered the expansion of the US Navy over the course of the war. Pre-1861, the US Navy had 90 listed ships, none capable of riverine duties. It also had a rigid hierarchy promotion system and no rank higher than Captain. There was also no Army-Navy cooperation, joint operations or command structure and no specialized equipment or troops for amphibious operations. Cooperation depended on the Commanders involved.

At the end of the war there were 671 warships carrying 4,610 guns, all but 112 being steamships (including 71 ironclads). A significant development was the advances in ships and guns, including steam engines with propellers, iron armour, innovative designs, submarines, torpedos (mines) and torpedo boats. There were also innovations in fort structure versus ships, for example, fortifications re-built to counter smooth bore cannon fired from wooden sailing ships and earthworks with rifled cannon to defeat ironclad steamers.

Rod outlined the main battles and campaigns of the war. These included the Atlantic Campaign, which involved the seizure of various inlets and ports and forts, and the Burnside Expedition, where a force of 15,000 men and 80 ships was raised (and in which Army-Navy cooperation was involved). Another was the Gulf Campaign, where harbours and ports in the Southern US, including New Orleans, were captured.

Rod discussed the impact of these coastal operations and, after open discussion, observed that, in order to succeed, there had to be close cooperation between Army and Navy. Also, the Army did not see coastal operations as a priority compared to land operations. In contrast, naval operations were transformed by the revolution in steam power, iron cladding and cannon.

Where the coastal operations were successful was in the reduction of farming and coastal commerce in the South, and in Southern troops and equipment being tied down protecting local communities from coastal incursions. They also allowed the Union Army to strike easily.

Civil War Firsts

Showman Thaddeus S C Lowe had been born in New Hampshire in 1832. In the late 1850s he had built a huge airship which he hoped to use to catch the prevailing winds across the Atlantic. Sadly on a trial flight it crashed and was irreparably damaged on sand flats in New Jersey.

Undeterred, he was advised that a journey over land might be safer – less chance of being lost at sea. So, with a smaller balloon called the “*Enterprise*”, he arrived in Cincinnati in April 1861 ready for another trial. On 20 April he launched, taking with him a copy of a Cincinnati newspaper to prove where he had come from. In the thin wicker basket he attained a height of 12,000 feet - on his journey east - arriving 900 miles (1,440 km) away in Louisville, South Carolina nine hours later.

His timing was not good, for the publicity of his achievement, as the **Battle of Fort Sumter** had just taken place in South Carolina. He also found it hard to get back North. But he had done enough for the War Office to allocate him funds for a trial just outside Washington. To make the experiment special, he carried with him a small Morse telegraph apparatus and connected it, by a long wire, to the ground. Once in the air, he sent a message to President Lincoln:

“This point of observation commands an area nearly fifty miles in diameter. The city, with its girdle of encampments, presents a superb scene. I take great pleasure in sending you this first dispatch ever telegraphed from an aerial station, and in acknowledging my indebtedness to your encouragement for the opportunity of demonstrating the availability of the science of aeronautics in the military service of the country.”

This publication is the official newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter). All inquiries regarding the Newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary of the Chapter by phone on 0411 745 704 or by e-mail at:

secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

Civil War Profile



Judah Philip Benjamin, QC (1811-1884)

Judah Benjamin's parents were Jewish shopkeepers who had left London to set up in the Danish West Indies (now US Virgin Islands). He was the third of their seven children. Soon after he was born, the British occupied the islands and the family had to move on to Fayetteville in North Carolina and, in about 1821, his parents moved again, this time to Charleston SC. But Benjamin stayed on to attend the Fayetteville Academy. His talent was recognised and, in 1825, aged only 14, Benjamin entered Yale, where he experienced success but left prematurely in 1827. He soon moved to New Orleans "with no visible assets other than the wit, charm, omnivorous mind and boundless energy with which he would find his place in the sun". He became a clerk in a law firm where his knowledge of French helped with the law, which was still partly based on French and Spanish law. In 1832 he was admitted as a lawyer.

New Orleans was one of the busiest ports in the country, and Judah Benjamin specialised in commercial law – much in demand. He had supported the Whig party and in 1844 was a delegate to a State constitutional convention. He successfully opposed counting a slave as three-fifths of a human being for purposes of representation in state elections (as was the case in federal elections). His case held, and slaves thereafter were not counted at all for electoral purposes in Louisiana state elections. According to one commentator, his "tact, courtesy, and ability to find compromises impressed the political elders in all corners of the state". In the early 1840s he had bought a run-down sugar plantation on the west bank of the river only about 20 km south of the city. He threw his energy into building it up again and becoming a planter – a necessary part of rising up in Louisiana society.

In 1848, Judah, as a Whig member of the Electoral College, voted for fellow Louisiana planter General Zachary Taylor, who became US President elect. He and others from Louisiana went with Taylor's party to Washington for his inauguration where he attended a state dinner given by outgoing president James K Polk.

In 1853 Benjamin was elected Senator for Louisiana – the first practising Jewish Senator in US history. About

the same time he had offers to sit on the Supreme Court but declined, probably so he could continue his law practice.

The bitterness over the Compromise on 1850 had seen many of his fellow Whigs from the North leave to join the new Republican Party. In 1854 he himself left the Whigs to join the Democrats, telling his constituents that the Northern Whigs had failed to vote to uphold the rights granted to the Southern States by the Constitution. His speeches in the Senate put the view that the Union was a compact between the states from which any of them could secede.

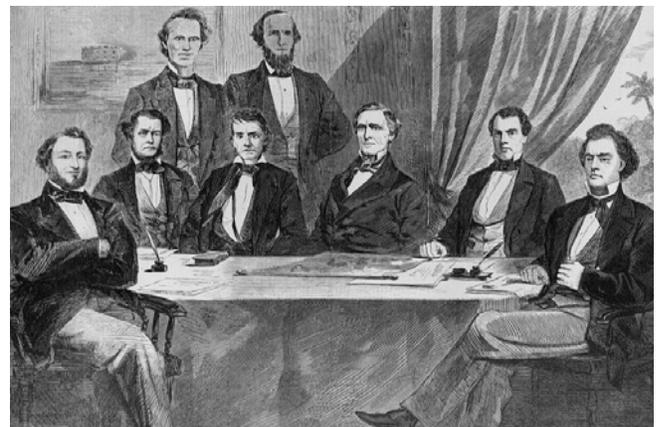
Although Judah did not always see eye to eye with fellow Senator Jefferson Davis, the two combined against the nomination of Stephen A. Douglas to become the Democratic candidate for President in 1860, thus splitting the party into South and North and giving the Republican candidate Lincoln a better opportunity.



Judah P Benjamin on the \$2 note

Soon after Louisiana seceded from the North, Judah Benjamin was appointed Attorney General of the Confederate States of America. Hardly had he taken up that position than he was appointed Secretary of War and then, in May 1862, Secretary of State. It was his job to persuade Britain and France to recognise the separate Confederate States. Communication with his agents in Paris and London was made difficult with the Blockade. Napoleon, though supportive, seemed unwilling to move without Britain. James Mason in London felt dishonoured by ministers there refusing to see him and Benjamin had to soothe Mason's disappointment.

At the end of the War Judah escaped to Britain where he again became a successful barrister. He retired in 1883 and died in Paris the following year.



Original Confederate Cabinet – J P Benjamin on left

His life is a remarkable story that deserves broader reading.

A Preview of our Next Meeting's Presentation

A selection of photos taken from the trip. Come along to our next meeting to find out more.



Tour members with "General Grant" at Emmanuel Episcopal Church (established in 1832) in La Grange



Tour members at La Grange TN. Grierson's Raid commenced from here on 17th April 1863 and contributed to the fall of Vicksburg down river in July 1863



Confederate locomotive *120 Texas*, which participated in the Great Locomotive Chase in 1862 to capture the locomotive *The General*



Part of the Civil War exhibit in the Atlanta History Center



Typical crew of an ironclad ship

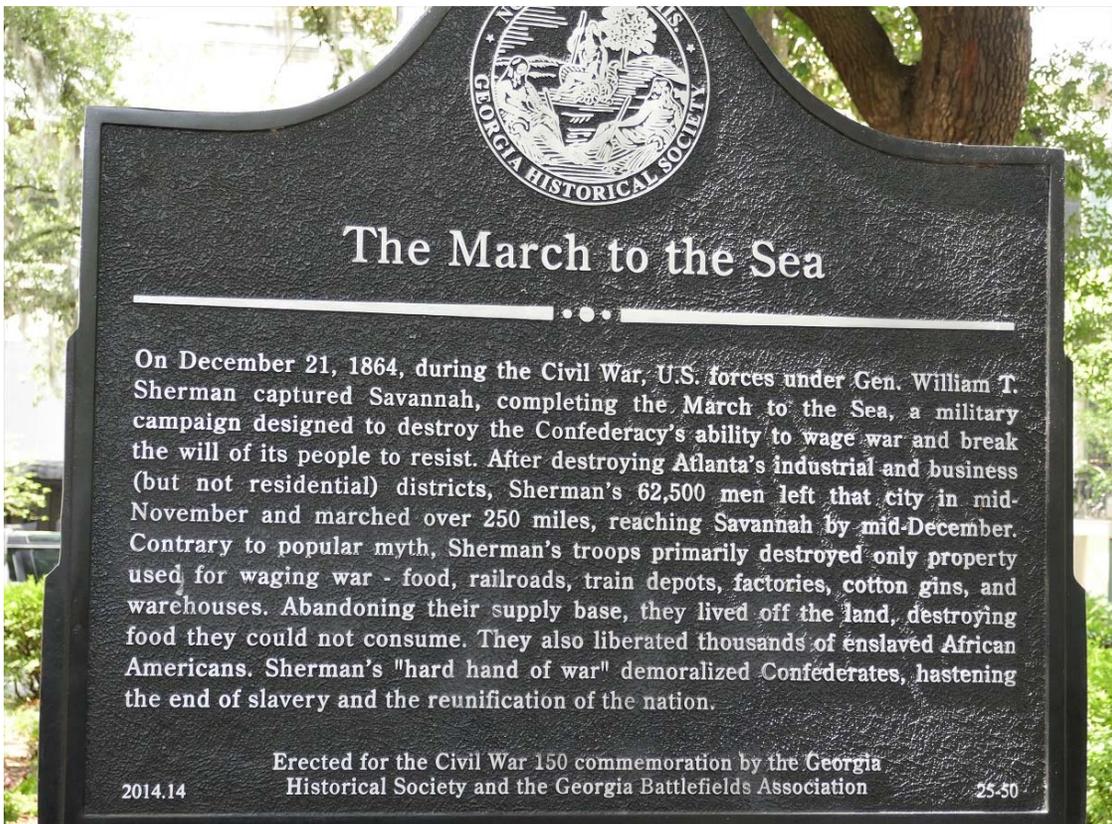


Image taken in Savannah GA. General Sherman wintered here in 1864 having telegraphed President Lincoln on 22nd December that "I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, and also about 25,000 bales of cotton".



General Sherman wintered at this residence in Savannah GA in 1864-65.



The Confederate prison at Andersonville, the most notorious prison operated during the War. Of the 45,000 Union soldiers held there in 1864 and 1865, nearly 13,000 died in the 14 months of its operation, mainly of disease, exposure and starvation.



The city of Charleston and Charleston Harbour were protected from sea invasion by a number of forts including Castle Pinckney.



Tour members at Fort Moultrie SC



The Harper House was used as a hospital during the Battle of Bentonville in North Carolina. It treated 600 patients, both in the house and outside in the grounds, over a three-day period.



North Carolina Confederate Reenactors at Bennett Place NC



John Verhoeven at Bennett Place NC, where the tour finished. It is the place where the final surrender of Confederate Armies took place. Although Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, he only surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia.



At Bennett Place – the end of the tour.

Photos courtesy John Verhoeve