

West Point Classmates – Civil War Enemies

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INTRODUCTION

In 1909, just eight years after Federation, the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia invited Field Marshall Lord Kitchener to inspect and advise on the military forces required for our newly created nation. One of Kitchener's early recommendations was the establishment of a military college to train young men as officers for the newly formed army. He recommended, also, the appointment of Colonel W T Bridges to be the College's first Commandant.

Bridges, a British officer, had attended the Royal Military College of Canada before being commissioned into the British Army. Before taking up his appointment as Commandant of Australia's new military college, Bridges visited military colleges in Berlin, St Cyr in France, The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and The Royal Military College, Woolwich, both in Britain, The Royal Military College, Kingston in Canada and the United States Military Academy, West Point. Following these visits, Colonel Bridges made a number of observations and recommendations that he presented to the Australian Government. One of these recommendations was that the Military College of Australia should be based on principles and philosophies of West Point. The reasons that underpinned this conclusion and recommendation were numerous but may be summarised as:

- Unlike other military colleges of that era, West Point was not elitist, opening its doors to all, irrespective of class or socio-economic background; and
- The quality and international standing of the men the Academy had produced throughout the nineteenth century was most impressive.

SOME WEST POINT GRADUATES

Just who were these men that so impressed Colonel Bridges and, as a consequence, the Australian Government? They were officers who had served in America's Civil War, both Federal and Confederate officers, including some who had fought, also, in the earlier Mexican War and the later Spanish-American War. They were men like:

Edward Porter Alexander, the Confederate artillery commander at Gettysburg;

Robert Anderson, the Federal commander during the first attack on Fort Sumter;

Pierre Gustav Toutant Beauregard, Anderson's opposing commander at Fort Sumter;

John Buford, the Union Cavalry commander who held up a superior Confederate force on Day One of Gettysburg gaining much needed time for the Federals;

Ambrose Burnside, sometime Commander of the Army of the Potomac following McClellan's "sacking" by Lincoln;

George Armstrong Custer, later to achieve notoriety¹ at the Battle of Little Big Horn;

Jefferson Davis, the Confederacy's President;

Jubal Early, the Confederate general whose post-war writings surpassed his military achievements during the Civil War;

Richard Ewell, commander of the Confederate II Corps at Gettysburg;

Ulysses S Grant, the victorious Union Commander and later US President;

Winfield Scott Hancock, one of the Union's most competent corps commanders throughout the War;

Henry Heth, the Confederate commander of the division that first encountered the Federals at Gettysburg; an able field commander throughout the War who was known as the only officer that Lee called by his Christian Name;

John Bell Hood, a fighting divisional commander who really "lost it" in higher command, particularly as the Confederate Army Commander at the Battle of Franklin in late 1864;

Joseph Hooker, the Commander of the Army of the Potomac after Burnside but was forced to resign after he lost Lincoln's confidence following the Union defeat at Chancellorsville;

Albert Sidney Johnston, considered the best Confederate field commander until his service was cut short with his untimely death at the Battle of Shiloh;

Robert Edward Lee, the Confederate's inspirational commander from early in 1862 until the end of the War;

James Longstreet, described by Lee on more than one occasion as "My Old Warhorse". He was Lee's trusted lieutenant and corps commander up until the surrender in 1865;

George Meade, the newly appointed Commander of the Army of the Potomac in the days before the Battle of Gettysburg, replacing Joseph Hooker;

George McClellan, the brilliant organiser and trainer who formed the Army of the Potomac into a viable force, but was unable to lead it effectively in battle and was ultimately relieved of command by Lincoln;

George Pickett, the commander of one of the divisions in the unsuccessful Confederate charge that bears his name on Day 3 of the Battle of Gettysburg;

Philip Sheridan, the Union's outstanding cavalry commander who provided Grant with considerable support in the latter parts of the War;

¹ It must be remembered that irrespective of what we may think of Custer now, he was regarded in his time as not only a national hero but was internationally admired as well.

William Tecumseh Sherman, who with Grant was the most successful of the Union commanders but hated by the South for his “total war” policy in his March to the Sea and through the Carolinas;

James Ewell Brown (JEB) Stuart, the Confederacy’s outstanding cavalry commander until his death at Yellow Tavern in 1864.

And there were many, many more!

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE ACADEMY

In the nineteenth century, West Point had become the pinnacle of the concept of military professionalism. It was regarded as the leading School of Engineering on the continent and had a world-wide reputation for excellence in engineering studies. It transformed boys into the kind of men who would become, one day, military and political leaders and Civil War enemies.

‘West Point’ may be considered in two senses: First, there is the Academy itself, established by one of the founding fathers of the Republic, Thomas Jefferson, in 1802 on the banks of the Hudson River 50 miles north of New York. The other is the “spiritual” West Point – a mystique, a feeling of belonging, of male bonding and something very powerful.

It is often said, albeit incorrectly, that a disproportionate number of young men of the South attended West Point. Just as there is in Australia, the United States had a policy of State quotas with selection based on the male population of the States and this was scrutinised very closely by politicians. It is true, however, that the desire to become a soldier was greater in the South.

ADMISSION TO WEST POINT

To attend West Point one needed to be first nominated by the local Congressman or Senator. One enterprising young Virginian considered the competition from his home State would be far too great for him to be successful, so he moved to Illinois where he had a friend introduce him to the local Congressman who was only too pleased to support the young man’s nomination. The young man was George Pickett and the Congressman Abraham Lincoln. One can only wonder what must have gone through their minds over the four years of the War!

Following nomination, the prospective cadet sat for an entrance examination. The standards for this examination were straightforward and simple with the examination designed to give the “unlearned” an opportunity for admission to the Academy. Possibly one of the least educated candidates to gain entry to West Point was a young lad from the backwoods of Virginia who had not had the opportunity for any formal school education. This was Thomas Jonathon Jackson, who was later, during the Civil War, to earn the nickname of “Stonewall”, and only secured entry to West Point by his sheer determination and absolute sincerity.

Both of Jackson’s parents had died before he was seven and his father’s stepbrother raised him and, having no time for this “book learning”, put young Thomas to work in any job he could find. Writers describe Jackson in such terms as eccentric, friendless, depressive and determined. Throughout his life Jackson believed that he had to work harder than anyone just to achieve and his entry into West Point was just one example of this. At the Academy Jackson had no time for the frivolity shown by other cadets. He believed he needed to devote all his time to study – to achieve – particularly as he

had as a classmate the brilliant George Brinton McClellan. Jackson's study and determination paid off and he was happy when he graduated 17th out of 56 in the Class of 1846². His classmate, the brilliant McClellan could never accept the fact that he graduated only second in this Class of '46. Jackson's tenacity and determination was to be proven many times during his military service but possibly no more so than on Henry House Hill during the First Battle of Manassas as he turned certain defeat into victory and the legend of "Stonewall" Jackson was born. Stonewall Jackson is still considered one of the greatest field commanders of all time.

Jackson's life and service greatly impressed Colonel Bridges and his acceptance to the Academy demonstrated beyond doubt the egalitarianism underpinning the selection to West Point. The fact that a "hillbilly" from Clarksburg in what is now the State of West Virginia could gain admission to the Academy showed that it was not elitist and that this feature should be the model for the proposed Military College of Australia.

THE WEST POINT CURRICULUM

The aim of West Point was to produce officers of character and skill and, to this end, the Academy's curriculum was demanding and rigorous over the four years of its program. The curriculum was designed to produce competent engineers³ and sub-unit commanders. The studies in the first two years were devoted entirely to Mathematics and French, whilst the major course in the third year was what we now call Physics. The senior year focused on military engineering with some brief coverage of infantry and artillery tactics. Tactics at this time were based on Napoleonic principles and was taught at the Academy for many years by Professor Dennis Hart Mahan.

Character building at West Point was enforced by a strict code of honesty and obedience with breaches of discipline resulting in the award of 'Demerits' – 200 demerits in any one year resulted in the cadet being expelled from the Academy. Of the officers mentioned previously in this paper there were considerable variations in the number of demerits awarded:

- Custer lost count of the number of demerits he received;
- U S Grant received 8 demerits for not attending church;
- The feisty JEB Stuart, Jefferson Davis and George Pickett were constantly in trouble;
- On the other hand, George McClellan received very few demerits; and
- Robert E Lee received no demerits at all – and was known to the other cadets as the 'Marble Model'

'Benny Havens' was the local tavern that was strictly out of bounds to West Point cadets but was a popular 'watering hole' for many who managed to sneak away for a dram or two. Custer, U S Grant and Jefferson Davis were among the many that received demerits for visiting these premises. In fact, visits to 'Benny Havens' were considered to be the favourite pastime of the future President of the Confederacy. At one time Davis nearly killed himself when he fell into a ditch returning from the tavern, drunk. On another occasion he faced a Court-Martial for being absent from duty and found drinking at 'Benny Havens. Four other cadets caught there that night were dismissed from the Academy but

² There has been no other Class from West Point or, possibly any other military college, that has gone down in history as did the Class of '46. Its graduates fought in three major wars and a number of other campaigns, produced 20 generals and left a lasting legacy on 19th Century American society.

³ In this regard, West Point was regarded as one of the leading engineering schools of the 19th Century.

Davis's "silver tongue" or, more properly, his "...touching eloquence" saved him – truly, a politician in the making! Davis accumulated so many demerits during his four years at the Academy, however, that he almost failed to graduate. Only his academic results saved him!

GRADUATING FROM WEST POINT

Position in class on graduation was of utmost importance to the future career prospects of a young officer. The highly ranked in the graduating class could choose their corps allocation and it had a significant impact on career advancement opportunities throughout their service. Having said this, however, it seems that not only at West Point but in military colleges, worldwide, it is the middle ranked officers that eventually rose to the most senior ranks and performed the most outstanding service.

There are always exceptions to every rule:

- Lee graduated second in his Class of 1829;
- McClellan was second in his Class of 1846; and
- Beauregard graduated second in his Class of 1838.

There are those, also, who gained some notoriety with a relatively poor performance at graduation. George Pickett (1846), Henry Heth (1847) and George Custer (1861) each finished last in their respective graduating classes.

PRE-WAR TENSIONS AT THE ACADEMY

When Robert E Lee was appointed Superintendent of West Point in 1852, the nation was tearing itself apart. Lee frequently reminded the cadets that they were a 'Band of Brothers' and to remember first and foremost that they were all Americans. The 1850s were to place severe strains on this notion of 'Band of Brothers' and, with the outbreak of the War in April 1861, to change it completely.

Throughout the 1850s divisions in American society escalated to a point that the political differences between the North and South sub-cultures could not be controlled. The genocide in the Kansas territory labelled "Bloody Kansas", abolitionist John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry and his subsequent execution and, finally, Lincoln's election in 1860 set the scene for a complete breakdown of the social, cultural and political institutions. Words turned into actions! At West Point, the most noteworthy altercation was a fistfight between Cadet Emery Upton of New York and Cadet Wade Hampton Gibbs of South Carolina with the whole Corps of Cadets looking on and barracking for their man.

Perhaps no other group reflected the nation's divisions more starkly than West Point's graduating classes of May 1861 and June 1861. Due to the outbreak of war, the class that was to graduate in June 1861 graduated six weeks earlier in May 1861 and the class that was to graduate the following year in June 1862, graduated 12 months early in June 1861. At this time, secession became a tortuous decision for many of the cadets. Secession demanded loyalty to one's State but the Academy taught loyalty to the United States and emphasised the notion of 'Duty' But 'Duty' to Whom? -

Duty to the Country / Duty to the Army / Duty to your State / Duty to your family / Duty to the Flag? But which of these? – An extremely difficult decision for any young man to have to make!

The first recorded resignation from the Academy was the South Carolinian Henry Farley followed four days later by James Hamilton, also from South Carolina.

In January 1861, Colonel P G T Beauregard from Louisiana was appointed as West Point's Superintendent and cadets from the South sought his counsel on the question of secession and resignation from the Academy. His advice was:

"Don't jump too soon ... When you see me go, you go"

On hearing of that Beauregard had declared his intent to follow his home State should it secede, the Secretary of War immediately relieved him of his position as Superintendent, thus giving Beauregard the dubious distinction of the officer having the shortest tenure in the posting⁴.

The problems came to a head on George Washington's birthday on February 22, 1861. The incumbent "lame-duck" President, James Buchanan, trying to prevent a mass resignation of cadets from the Academy before Lincoln's inauguration, directed the cadets be read:

*"The Friendly Counsel and Prophetic Warnings Contained
in Washington's Farewell Address to His Troops"*

The cadets were marched into the chapel, as was the tradition on Washington's birthday and listened to one of the staff read the address. The address stresses throughout the need for union much to the annoyance of cadets from the South. All classes had been cancelled for the day because of the holiday and, after the chapel service, the cadets spent the rest of the day discussing politics and the impending war. At the end of the day, the band marched across the parade ground playing *Washington's March* then swung into *The Star Spangled Banner*. Suddenly, all hell broke loose! Cadets rushed to every window. Tom Rosser of Virginia, Custer's room mate called out:

"Secession, Secession – Dixie, Play Dixie!"

The Southerners broke into singing 'Dixie' whilst on the other side of the quadrangle, Custer led the singing of '*The Star Spangled Banner*'. Was the Academy divided? Now, there was no doubt!

THE WAR BEGINS

At 4:20am on April 12, 1861, the former West Point cadet, Henry Farley now a Lieutenant in the Provisional Army of South Carolina and under command of the now Brigadier General P G T Beauregard, CSA, sent the first shell over Charleston Harbor to explode above Fort Sumter. The War had begun!

The recipient of these shells and commander of the Fort Sumter defences was Major Robert Anderson, Class of 1825. Anderson had been an Artillery Instructor at West Point for many years and had retained Beauregard (Class of 1838) on his graduation from the Academy as his Assistant Instructor in Gunnery. Anderson's own classmate at the Academy, Jefferson Davis, now President of the Confederate States of America, was the man who ordered the firing on Fort Sumter.

The day after the firing on Fort Sumter, the US Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, directed that all West Point cadets should take a new oath of allegiance. Previously, they had taken an oath as a citizen of an individual State. Now, they were required to swear feilthy⁵ (*sic*) to the United States paramount to any other state, county or political entity. The new oath was administered in the chapel in the presence of the Academy staff in full uniform. Ten cadets from the Southern States refused to take the oath.

⁴ Depending on what reference is used, Beauregard was Superintendent of West Point for "five days", "less than a week", 13 days" or "14 days" before he was dismissed from the post.

⁵ 'feilty' is an old English word that is not in all dictionaries but is best equated to the modern word 'fidelity'.

The first of these was John Pelham of Alabama. Some applauded, some hissed at his action – never before had a cadet refused to take an oath!

Of the 278 cadets at the Academy at the beginning of 1861, 86 were from the South and of these, 65 resigned and “went South”. Before they marched out of the Academy, all cadets, Union and Rebel, gathered in the chapel where they sang the song “*When Shall We Meet Again*”, an old West Point tradition normally practised on the Sunday before graduation.

During the crisis months following the secession of South Carolina in December 1860, 313 officers⁶ left the Army leaving the total strength of the officer corps on active duty on the eve of the Civil War at 767. Of these 767 officers, 637 (77.6%) were West Point graduates and of these 767 officers, 475 had their origins in the North with the remainder (162) being of Southern origin. There were 168 West Point graduates in the 297 officers of Southern origin who separated from the Army and these joined the Confederacy. Other interesting statistics to emerge are:

- There were 16 Northerners who chose to “go south”. All of these were West Point graduates who had married Southern women;
- The 162 Southern men who remained loyal to the Union were all West Pointers, although their marital situation is less clear;
- The traditional view that most Southern officers with West Point credentials “went south” is not supported by the Statistics. Of a total of 330 officers of Southern origin serving in the Army in December 1860, 162 (49.1%) remained loyal to the Union while 168 (50.9%) joined the Confederacy; and
- Only one directly commissioned officer remained loyal to the Union compared with 129 who “went south”.

Robert E Lee rejected the offer to command the Union forces on the grounds that he could not draw his sword against his beloved State of Virginia and, after much agonising, joined the Confederate cause.

There were many clashes of loyalty amongst West Pointers even within the one family. One of the more confused cases was that of Philip St George Cooke, Class of 1827, from Virginia, who remained loyal to the Union whilst his son, John Rogers Cooke, and his son-in-law, JEB Stuart, Class of 1854, both went south to fight for the Confederacy.

The loss of officers to the Confederacy troubled the Federal Administration in Washington. Lincoln’s Secretary turned the resignations into an attack on West Point itself. Although not supported by any “hard data”, the Academy was portrayed by many Radical Republicans as a bastion of “Southernism”. Lincoln did not help the situation when he said:

“...Not one soldier has deserted the Flag”

Here, Lincoln appeared to overlook an important fact that applied in this situation – An officer could resign from the Army whereas a soldier would be shot for desertion!

In the Confederacy, where the President himself was a West Pointer, Academy graduates were appointed to command as fast as they volunteered. In the North, however, the situation was quite different. In the initial days of the War, West Point graduates tended to be overlooked for senior appointments in favour of political appointees. Ulysses S Grant offered his services to the Union and

⁶ Of these 313 officers who separated from the Army during the secession crisis, 184 were West Point graduates and 130 were directly commissioned. Also, of the 313 separating, 16 had Northern origins and 297 were from the South.

did not even receive a reply! It was only after he started to “play the political game” that the Governor of Illinois finally appointed him Colonel of Volunteers in one of the State Regiments.

The West Point officers did provide a nucleus for the expansion of the now depleted Federal Army, however, as it was at least an established entity. In the South there was no established army and the Confederacy had to begin to raise an army “from scratch” based on a system of State militia. They needed to train this army of over a million men (1,064,193 in 1861) many of them farm boys and turn these farm boys into fighting soldiers.

It is not clear why the North imposed so much animosity on West Point at the beginning of the War. Of its graduates serving in the “Old Army” 637 (77.6%) remained to fight for the Union. Of these 637 officers 162 or 49.1% had Southern origins but remained loyal to the Union. In contrast, Southerners departed *en masse* from the Northern universities of Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Princeton and there is no record of any Southerner studying at these universities remaining loyal to the Union.

THE FIRST MAJOR BATTLE

Manassas or Bull Run, depending on which was their side of allegiance, was the battlefield debut for many of the West Point graduates. Their West Point training was directed to their fulfilling the role of a Lieutenant and many believed they were competent to command companies or, possibly, battalions. Now they found they were commanding brigades, divisions or even corps! Neither the Federal’s McDowell nor the Confederacy’s Beauregard, both classmates in the graduating Class of 1838, had experience or ever thought that, one-day, they would be commanding and manoeuvring a force of the size they had at First Manassas⁷.

It was a less than auspicious debut for the men of West Point. The First Battle of Manassas is often described as a brawl between two armed mobs and the Officers quickly learned the difference between knowing the ‘Principles of War’ and being able and competent to apply them. They found they had a lot to learn, but learn they did and, in time, they would adapt and manifest a spirit and distinguish themselves and their Academy.

WEST POINT CADETS /CIVILWAR VETERANS

When reading or studying the battles of the Civil War, it should be noted that those prosecuting the War knew or knew of one another. Many who found themselves on opposing sides of the conflict had been close friends and often had been part of each other’s wedding celebrations. Possibly in no other war in history has this occurred and, too often, authors of books and articles fail to recognise this.

When **George McClellan**, Class of 1846, was appointed to command the Army of the Potomac after the dismissal of McDowell, most, if not all, senior Confederate officers knew McClellan for what he was. McClellan could be described accurately as a “child prodigy”. He required special approval to enter West Point at age 15, a genius, he could prepare written orders while others were still thinking about it. He had been chosen by the US Government as a very young officer to observe the British fighting in the Crimean Campaign in the 1850s. An excellent administrator and brilliant organiser, as instanced by his efforts in developing the Army of the Potomac into a viable force. An outstanding training officer, but a field commander – Never! The Confederate commanders, particularly Lee, were to use this personal knowledge of McClellan over and over again while he commanded the Army of the Potomac,

⁷ Estimates of strengths of these forces are 35 000 Federals divided into five divisions and 22 000 Confederates who were inexperienced and ill equipped.

first, in the Shenandoah, again in the move against Richmond during the Peninsular Campaign and finally, at Antietam.

When **John Bell Hood**, Class of 1853, replaced Joseph Johnston as Commander of the Confederate forces defending Atlanta, Sherman, who did not know Hood well, called up three of his officers who had been Hood's classmates. He asked them what they thought Hood would do. Hood, he was told, graduated at the bottom of his class and was known for his fixed belief that courage and spirit were all that was needed to win battles. They all agreed that the impetuous Southerner would attack immediately. Hood attacked exactly as predicted and suffered the consequences.

Sherman once said of **Braxton Bragg**: "...I think I knew Bragg as well as any living man. His heart was never in the Rebel cause. This may be at least a partial excuse for Bragg's poor performance as a general."

Exactly what part their West Point training contributed to the success of its graduates in the Civil War is a thorny subject. Prior to the Civil War, the teaching of tactics was a semester course presented by Engineering **Professor Dennis Hart Mahan** titled "The Art of War". The lessons he taught were understood by some but not by all. Celerity (speed) he taught is the secret of success:

"Generals should be daring and be prepared to abandon a portion of their own territory and maneuver (sic) so that his entire moveable army strikes at the enemy in the very heart of his own country"

"Stonewall" Jackson, Class of 1846, certainly understood this message when he baffled three Union Armies in the Shenandoah, but Braxton Bragg failed to grasp what Mahan was saying.

Both sides reprinted and used the training manuals written by Mahan. As with all textbooks, however, much depends on the reader. **George Meade**, Class of 1835, may have demonstrated his lack of understanding of the classical pursuit in being slow to pursue Lee in the Confederate withdrawal to the Potomac after Gettysburg. In fairness to Meade, his troops were exhausted after the battle and in justice to Mahan, he once remarked in discussion on the pursuit:

"...This is a part of generalship no theory can teach to one whom nature has not given the faculty of generalship"

In simple terms, West Point could present a program of training but its application is in the hands and minds of its students.

Probably the most evocative expressions of the spirit of West Point during the War were the bonds of friendship that transcended all the hatreds engendered by the War. There are many such stories that highlight this and the following are considered to be exemplars of the West Point ethos.

At Regular Army posts around the country the news of Fort Sumter came with shock and dismay. There was always talk of war but few believed it would happen. No more was the shock felt than at the isolated post of Los Angeles, California. It was there that Captain **Winfield Scott Hancock**, Class of 1844, and his wife Almira invited their Southern friends to a farewell party. Their guests included Hancock's old friends from West Point, **George Pickett**, Class of 1846, and **Richard (Dick) Garnett**, Class of 1841. Also present at the party was Lewis Armistead of Virginia. Armistead was expelled from the Class of 1837 after breaking a plate over the head of fellow cadet, Jubal Early. He then joined the Army as an Other Rank and was commissioned into the Corps of Infantry in 1839 and served with distinction in the Mexican War. Late in the evening, Armistead gave Mrs Hancock a small satchel of personal mementos asking her not to open it unless he was killed in action. The mementoes were to be given to her husband but the prayer book he wanted her to keep himself.

A little over two years later, on July 3, 1863, the now Major General George Pickett, CSA, had his division charge the Union position on Cemetery Ridge held by the now Major General Winfield Scott's US II Corps. In an almost simultaneous action tragedy struck! A stray round struck Hancock in the

groin and he fell from his horse seriously wounded. At this time Brigadier General Dick Garnett, too sick to walk and leading his brigade on horseback, was cut down dead in a hail of fire. Brigadier General Armistead strode ahead of his brigade with his black hat on the point of his sword. As he reached the stone wall on Cemetery Ridge, the brigade executed a "left oblique". Immediately, the Union Artillery Officer, **Lieutenant Aillanzo H Cushing**, Class of 1861, ignoring his own mortal wounds, fired the last round of canister shot from his only remaining gun⁸. This blast caught the company behind Armistead in an enfilade fire, taking them all out. Armistead turned to summon his men only to find he was alone and seconds later he was cut down mortally wounded just five paces from the dying Cushing. Pickett, who had been directing the attack from a nearby hill moved forward on horseback to rally his troops but a shell exploded nearby knocking him from his horse and rendering him unconscious.

All four officers who were at the party two years before were either killed or wounded in a space of just a few minutes. Four days later, Almira Hancock opened the satchel and removed a beautiful leather bound prayer book. Inscribed inside was the soldier's motto:

"Trust in God and fear no one"

George Pickett once wrote to his wife, Sally, about his former classmate George McClellan and, now, his enemy:

"He was, he is and always will be, even with his pistol pointed at my heart, my closest friend. You my dear may never understand this "Entante Cordiale" between us old fellows"

Before the War, when Grant had resigned from the Army and was unemployed and having financial difficulties, his friend and classmate from West Point, **Simon Buckner**, Class of 1844, stepped in and guaranteed payment of Grant's debts. Grant certainly remembered this gesture when on February 16, 1862, he demanded from Buckner the "...immediate and unconditional surrender" following the siege at Fort Donelson and after the surrender said to Buckner:

"Buckner, you and I know, separated from your people and, perhaps in need of funds, my purse is at your disposal"

Ambrose Burnside, Class of 1847, was a tall likeable Union officer, but a hopeless incompetent general! His personality was such that everyone liked him and enjoyed his company. When he was humiliated at Fredericksburg, the Confederate officers mourned for him and his troops and feeling sorry for him, sent him messages of condolence.

The stories abound of **George Custer's** impudent rivalry with his old room mate from West Point, **Tom Rosser**, both of whom were cavalymen. Custer, who was commissioned into the Second US Cavalry in mid-1861, enjoyed meteoric promotion reaching the rank of Brigadier General of Volunteers by June 1863. He frequently found himself charging cavalry units commanded by his old friend Rosser. On one occasion, however, Rosser raided Custer's camp, took one of Custer's flamboyant uniforms and left a note for Custer to lose weight. Sometime later, Custer's troops broke through Rosser's lines and chased him and his cavalry for over ten miles for no tactical or operational reason at all in an action that became known as the "Woodstock Races". The next day Custer could be seen strutting around in Rosser's grey but very drab uniform. Custer then sent Rosser a note suggesting he acquire a new tailor.

⁸ For his actions at Gettysburg, Cushing was recommended for the Medal of Honor posthumously.

It is known that Custer, on occasion, crossed the lines to be the best man/groomsman at the wedding of one his Confederate friends. He is also known to rejoice in any success or victory of his rebel friend, John Pelham, a former classmate but his enemy in the War.

THE WAR'S END

On Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865 at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, almost four years to the day the War effectively ended. Just as the War began with a battle involving West Point officers, so it ended with West Pointers coming together again to work out the peace. By early April Lee accepted finally it was hopeless to continue the conflict. His troops without shoes, starving and with their uniforms in tatters the time for surrender had come. He was encouraged by Porter Alexander, Class of 1857, and others to continue with a guerilla war but refused because he believed it was not in the best interests of the nation. He knew, also that Grant would offer honourable terms based on West Point ethics that taught that:

A foe is a foe during a fight but after the fight he is a foe no more.

Lee knew that Grant understood this more clearly than most and that Grant would not force them to surrender unconditionally but give the Army the terms it deserves. Grant's terms of surrender were generous and never mentioned "unconditional surrender".

As they gathered in the parlour of Wilmer McLean's house at Appomattox Court House for the surrender it was almost like a West Point reunion. One of the few generals not from West Point was Medal of Honor winner Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of Little Round Top fame during the Battle of Gettysburg. Chamberlain provides a contemporaneous record the events of the day in the following terms:

"Grant approached slouch hat without cord, common soldier's blouse unbuttoned, high boots, mud splashed to the top, trousers tucked in. No sword, sword hand deep in his pocket... When Lee appeared he startled them. He was dressed in a suit of new uniform, sword and sash, a handsomely embroidered belt, shining boots and a pair of gold spurs. Mounted on Traveler, the big handsome iron grey horse with black points that had carried him safely through battles since 1862... Seeing the surprise on their faces Lee stated quietly "I'll probably have to be General Grant's prisoner and I thought I must make my best appearance."

At the signing Grant welcomed Lee with a warm handshake they talked about old times and their families. After the signing Grant asked Lee if it would be acceptable for some of his officers could visit friends in his ranks. Lee was only too pleased to oblige. Afterwards, Grant moved outside and saw his old friend "Pete" Longstreet standing under a nearby tree, he went over to him embraced him, shook hands and spoke of old times.

When George Meade called on Lee in his headquarters the day after the surrender, Lee remarked how grey Meade's beard had become to which Meade replied:

"You have to answer for most of that".

As directed by Grant, 3 days rations for 25,000 men were immediately delivered to the almost starving Confederates.

By the time that Grant had returned to his field headquarters, the news of the surrender had spread like wildfire through the Union ranks, bands played shouting, firing and singing broke out through out the army. When Grant heard the cannon salutes, however, he ordered it all stopped stating:

“The War is over he said the rebels are our countrymen again”

It is claimed, also, that in a spontaneous expression of reconciliation Grant, turning to the band, then ordered:

“Bandmaster, Play Dixie”

In Chamberlain’s words:

“The most stupendous of struggles was ended in the most compassionate manner. The old world had never seen a conqueror dismissing thousands whom he had beaten sending them to their homes and vocations bearing with them such articles as might contribute to their future well being”

IN CONCLUSION

The Civil War proved that West Point had achieved its aim in educating and training young men to be officers. The War also proved that further education was needed in command, administration and logistics at a senior level. As a direct result of the lessons learned, armies throughout the world began to introduce Command and Staff Training Colleges, with the first such institution established by the German (Prussian) Army.

It can be said that the West Point graduates who were officers in the Union Army during Civil War and “filtered to the top” were responsible for the organisation, administration and generally leading the army that was victorious. On the other hand, the 306 West Point graduates that joined the Confederate cause were mostly responsible for the War being turned into the costliest conflict in which the United States has ever been involved. Without their contribution the Confederacy could never have fielded a force of the calibre of the Army of Northern Virginia.

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