

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 9, May 2003

A Message from the Chairman –

Your feedback on the “forum” format of our last meeting was most positive and we will endeavour to use this format again. Enclosed with this newsletter is a summary paper of the forum. The full set of papers for the forum comprises a document of 34 pages that will be available at our next meeting, on request. I would be interested, also, in your views of the adequacy of the enclosed summary paper. Essentially, we would like to know if the effort and cost of preparing the 34-page paper is worthwhile or does the short summary of the evening suffice?

It is with regret that, for personal reasons, Frank Featherstone has tendered his resignation from the Chapter’s Committee. We will miss his contribution to our deliberations and, particularly, his work as Public Relations Officer of the Chapter. I would want to extend my personal appreciation to Frank for his initiatives over the past two years with the Committee and trust that his continuing membership to the Chapter will see him again in some significant role.

The program for our Conference to be held on Saturday, July 5 has been finalised and you may be assured of a most interesting and informative set of presentations. A registration form for the Conference is enclosed with this Newsletter, which I ask you to complete and return to our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O’Connell, as soon as possible, but no later than c.o.b. Friday, June 20. Your early attention to completing this registration will enable timely attention to be given to the various administrative and logistical arrangements for the Conference, including the printing of the Conference papers for distribution at the conclusion of the Conference.

Finally, I would want to remind members of the Memorial Day Ceremony that is held each year at Waverley Cemetery. This year, the service is to be held on Sunday, May 25, commencing at 1:00pm. This ceremony is conducted at the gravesite of a number of Civil War veterans and it has been our custom for a number of our members to attend to pay our respects. I hope that you will be able to join us.

Paul Kensey

Next Month’s Meeting

Our next scheduled meeting for this year is to be held as usual at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Wednesday, June 11**, commencing at 7pm.

Please note that because of the Club’s arrangements, this meeting (and the following two meetings) is being held on the second Wednesday of the month.

As for our previous meetings this year, members will be able to meet at the Club from 6pm for a bistro style meal.

At this meeting our own **Jennifer Kirkby** is to regale us on the subject of her special Civil War hero, the title of her presentation being:

“Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain – More Than Just the Hero at Little Round Top”

Jennifer’s presentation will provide some “snapshots” of Chamberlain’s life prior to and throughout the Civil War together with details of his extensive academic and political careers for nearly fifty years after the surrender in 1865. In her inimitable style, Jennifer will demonstrate how this quiet but determined college professor rose to meet the challenges that the Civil War placed before him as a leader of men. She will recount how he battled with the continuing pain of his Civil War battle wounds for the rest of his life and how he triumphed to become one of the great men of the latter part of the 19th and the early part of the 20th Centuries. You can be guaranteed of a most informative and passionate presentation.

As is our practice, a written paper of Jennifer’s presentation will be available at the conclusion of the meeting and later, on request. Members living outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have the paper mailed to them automatically.

What 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

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;

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, Va;

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

Battles continued

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;

March 4, 1865 – Lincoln is inaugurated for a second term as President;

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.

Who Am I?

On June 30, 1862, near Glendale, Virginia, I saw General Robert E Lee and President Jefferson Davis observing the start of the Battle of Glendale.

As Federal artillery fire began to fall on the area, I rode up to them and said:

“ As Commander of this part of the field, I order you both to the rear! A single Yankee shell could deprive the Confederacy of its President and the Army of Northern Virginia of its Commander”

General Lee and President Davis then rode beyond the range of the Federal guns and away from the front line.

Who am I?

(Answer on the last page of this Newsletter)

What's in a Name?

Although the term "Civil War" is now most often used, not so long ago the name of the great conflict differed markedly in different parts of the country. Somewhat oddly, "Civil War" was used in the early years of the War, though "War of Southern Independence" was popular, whilst the North favoured "The Rebellion". Indeed, "The War of Rebellion" is the formal name given by Congressional fiat, which only gradually gave way to "Civil War" in the North. In contrast, the South gradually came to favour "War Between the States" in the years after Appomattox.

Other names for the conflict have been numerous with one researcher enumerating 120 such names and he clearly missed a few. Some of the more popular names have been:

- The War of Separation
- The War of Constitutional Liberty
- The Confederate War
- Mr Davis's War
- Mr Lincoln's War
- The Southern Rebellion
- The War of Southern Rights
- The War of Northern Aggression
- The Late Unpleasantness
- The War for Abolition
- The War of Southern Liberty
- The Second American Revolution
- The War of Yankee Arrogance
- The War of Southern Arrogance

None of these terms was completely satisfactory and, in common usage, "War Between the States" and "Civil War" for nearly a century despite the fact that they both refer to the same set of events and that neither is particularly accurate. A civil war is a dispute over control of the state, which was not at all the issue, since, aside from a few extreme fanatics, the South did not wish to take control of the United States but merely to secede from it. Similarly, "The War Between the States", aside from being grammatically poor, presupposes the Confederate political agenda.

The "War of Southern Independence" is accurate, whether one agrees or disagrees with the instigators of the War. The "War of the Slaveholders' Rebellion" is also accurate given the leadership of the secession, although neither of these would be satisfactory to all.

There is, of course, a perfectly accurate and politically neutral name that has never found much favour – the War of Secession!

- Source: *North and South, Volume 5, No.7*

The Answer to the 'Who am I?'

The officer referred to in the "Who am I?" question on the second page of this Newsletter is:

Major General A P Hill (CSA)

At this time, General Hill was a divisional commander involved in heavy fighting as part of the Seven Days Campaign. The Confederates did not have a tactical victory in this battle, due, at least in part, to their assaults being uncoordinated. The Federals fought as valiantly as their Confederate enemies, but McClellan continued his retreat to the south.

A Meteoric Rise

Edmund Kirby, West Point Class of May 1861, had the most meteoric jump in rank in the Union army. By direct order of Abraham Lincoln, he jumped from the rank of First Lieutenant to Brigadier General as he lay dying from a mortal wound incurred whilst commanding a battery at Chancellorsville with "...undaunting courage".

Not only did he beat Custer to the rank of Brigadier General by a couple of months but did it in one jump!

(Source: North and South, Volume 5, No. 6)

An Interesting Trivia Question...

With Jennifer Kirkby speaking next month on the subject of her hero, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, it might be worthwhile posing a Civil War trivia question and offering a bottle of fine wine to the first correct answer forwarded to our Secretary, Brendan O'Connell. The question is:

Who commanded the Union forces that received the official surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox on April 12, 1865?

The significance of the reference to Chamberlain is that many Civil War books indicate that he was this commander. He wasn't! Chamberlain did, in fact, command the first of the three Union brigades that the Confederates encountered as they marched to the surrender ceremony. There is, also, the much publicised compliments paid by Chamberlain's brigade to the Confederates and the salute returned by General John Brown Gordon (CSA), but the overall command of the Union forces was someone else.

(The answer to this question will be published in our next Newsletter in July)

Some Nice “Wordsmithing”!

Members will note that, in our last Newsletter, (No. 8, March 2003), reference was made to James M McPherson's new book – *“Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam: The Battle That Changed the Course of the Civil War”*.

In the preface of this book is a summary description of the consequences of the Battle of Antietam that is one of the neatest pieces of writing seen for a long time and something that should be shared with members. This description is:

“...Union victory at Antietam, limited though it was, arrested Southern military momentum, forestalled foreign recognition of the Confederacy, reversed the disastrous decline in the morale of Northern soldiers and civilians and offered Lincoln the opportunity to issue a proclamation of emancipation. In a war with several crucial turning points, the battle of Antietam was the pivotal moment for the most crucial of them all.”

Is it any wonder that when he writes like this, that McPherson is regarded as such an eminent Civil War author?

Another McPherson Book

A recently published book by James M McPherson does for children what the author's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom* did for adults.

This new book *Fields of Fury: The American Civil War* is well-organised, well-written child-friendly history of the Civil War that breaks down the complex, interrelated series of events into compelling and easily-digestible “chunks”. Except for a handful of longer entries each major battle and section receives a concise 2-page spread that includes McPherson's analysis and summary, a few “quick facts” and carefully chosen maps. There is a glossary, index, a list of related web-sites, a bibliography and a time-line in the end papers of the book,

It has been suggested that adult Civil War enthusiasts who didn't have time or found his *Battle Cry of Freedom* heavy going, will find this latest book by McPherson a great read.

The list price for *Fields of Fury* is \$US 22:95 but amazon.com is offering it for a generous 40% discount at \$13:77.

Is My Reference Better Than Your's?

Following receipt of the January issue of our Newsletter, a letter was received from Jenny Holder from South Australia advising that we had an error with George Pickett's birthday in *It Happened in January - Hatches and Dispatches*. Jenny claimed that Pickett was born on January 28, 1825 not January 25, as was recorded in the Newsletter.

A check of the reference used in compiling the Newsletter, the Library of Congress Civil War Diary, revealed that it wasn't a “typo” and that January 25 had been accessed accurately from this reference. Jenny's reference was Mort Kunstler's 2003 Union and Confederate Calendar.

This looks like a simple case of whose reference is the more authoritative or did one or other of these sources get it wrong? Any further claims on this matter will be acknowledged in subsequent issues of our Newsletter.

The 20th Maine's National Colour

The national colour carried by the 20th Maine during its famous action on Little Round Top on July 2, 1863 was found recently rolled up in a small wooden box.

The colour has been restored involving some 140 hours of work and is now displayed in the Maine State Museum.

(Source: North and South, Volume 5, No. 6)

Famous Last Words:

“He is now at rest and we who are left are the ones to suffer”

- Robert E Lee on the death of
A P Hill, Petersburg, 1865

This publication is the official newsletter of the New South Wales Chapter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia. All inquiries regarding the Newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary/Treasurer of the Chapter by telephone on 9449 3720 or at PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to bpoconn@bigpond.com