

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 10, July 2003

A Message from the Chairman –

This edition of our Newsletter comes immediately after our second successful Conference held at the Gordon Club, Chatswood on Saturday, July 5. The conference commemorated the 140th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Surrender of Vicksburg.

I would want to take this opportunity to thank those members and the various invited speakers whose contributions to the Conference made it the resounding success it was. In particular, to Mr David Gilmour from the US Consulate General, Sydney, who gave generously of his time to give a present day view of the significance of these events for Americans, thank you. For members who were unable to get to the Conference, bound copies of the papers presented are available at cost (\$20:00 per copy). Please speak to our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell, if you wish to purchase these papers.

Members' subscriptions for the financial year 2003 – 2004 are now due and remain at the \$25:00 pa, as they have been for the past two years. An invoice is enclosed with this Newsletter for your subscriptions. With the raffle monies taken at our meetings, these subs cover all costs associated with our regular meetings and the production and dissemination of our Newsletters.

Finally, the election of your Committee for the next two years is to be held at our next meeting in August. The positions that will be decided at that time are:

Chairman
Secretary / Treasurer
Program Director
Publicity Officer
Committee Members (4)

I trust that you will give consideration to contributing to the Chapter by nominating to one of these executive positions. We are always looking for "new blood" to continue with and expand on the initiatives of our Chapter that have been introduced over the past four years. A form to record any nominations you might have for these positions is enclosed with this Newsletter.

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, August 13**, commencing at 7pm. Members will be able to meet at the Club from 6pm for a bistro style meal and it is hoped that as many as possible will take advantage of this facility. It has been necessary to change the presentation for this meeting from that previously advertised because of work commitments of the scheduled speaker. At this meeting **Terry Cartwright** is to speak on the subject of:

"Patrick R Cleburne – The Stonewall Jackson of the West"

Terry's presentation is the result of detailed research over many months and will trace Cleburne's life from his boyhood in Ireland, his time in the British army, his migration to America where he worked, first, as a pharmacist before taking up a successful career in law in 1856. His Civil War service is then examined from his appointment as a brigade commander in the Confederate Army of Central Kentucky up to his untimely death leading his division in the Battle of Franklin in 1864. Regarded by many as the most able divisional commander on either side during the Civil War, it was said of Cleburne;

"...Where his division defended, no odds broke its lines, where it attacked, no numbers resisted its onslaught, save only once, and there's the grave of Cleburne and his heroic division"

As is our practice, a written paper of Terry's presentation will be available at the conclusion of the meeting and later, on request.

Position Vacant – Webmaster

It is our intention in the near future to establish a website for the Chapter and your Committee is seeking one of our members to undertake the task of developing and maintaining it. All you have to be is enthusiastic and competent! Anyone interested in this should speak with Paul, John or Brendan.

What Happened in July?

Hatches and Dispatches

- July 5, 1801 – David Glasgow Farragut, the first person in US history to hold the rank of Admiral is born in Knoxville, Tenn;
- July 13, 1821 – Nathan Bedford Forrest is born in Chapel Hill, Tenn;
- July 22, 1864 – Major General James B McPherson (USA), is killed during the Battle of Atlanta;
- July 29, 1820 – Clement Laird Vallandigham, leader of the Peace Democrats (Copperheads) during the Civil War, is born in New Lisbon, Ohio;
- July 31, 1839 – William Clarke Quantrill, the Confederate guerrilla and outlaw is born in Canal Dover, Tenn;

Command Changes

- July 17, 1864 – Jefferson Davis relieves Joseph E Johnston of the Confederate Army and Department of Tennessee and replaces him with John Bell Hood;
- July 18, 1863 – Major General John G Foster assumes command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina;
- July 23, 1862 – Major General Henry Halleck assumes command of the armies of the United States;
- July 27, 1861 – Major General George B McClellan assumes command of the Federal Division of the Potomac;

Battles etc.

- July 1 – 3, 1863 – The Battle of Gettysburg ending in a significant Confederate defeat;
- July 4, 1863 – Vicksburg surrenders to Union forces under Grant, thus giving the Union control of the Mississippi River;
- July 6, 1863 – Fighting occurs at Boonsborough, Hagerstown and Williamsport, Md, as Lee withdraws from Gettysburg;
- July 8, 1863 – Confederate forces unconditionally surrender Port Hudson, La., the last Confederate garrison on the Mississippi River;

Battles etc (continued)

- July 9, 1864 – The Battle of Monocacy, Md., where 7000 Federals under General Lew Wallace delay Jubal Early's 15000 Confederates approaching Washington;
- July 10, 1863 – Federal Forces land on Morris Island near Charleston, S. C., and begin the siege of Fort Wagner that will last until September;
- July 11, 1864 – Confederates under Jubal Early reach the suburbs of Washington;
- July 12, 1864 – Federal reinforcements arrive in Washington and Early begins to withdraw;
- July 16, 1864 – Confederates under Johnston abandon Jackson, Miss., to Sherman's Federal forces;
- July 20, 1864 – Hood fails his first big test of command of an army as his forces are defeated at the Battle of Peachtree Creek, Ga;
- July 21, 1861 – Union General Irvin McDowell is defeated at the First Battle of Bull Run, Manassas, Va;
- July 24, 1864 – Confederate forces under Jubal Early inflict heavy casualties at the Second Battle of Kernstown, Va;
- July 26, 1863 – Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan surrenders his exhausted force of 364 men at Salineville, Ohio. Morgan and his officers are sent to Ohio State Penitentiary;
- July 30, 1864 – Despite a huge mine explosion, Confederates fend off the second major frontal assault on Petersburg, Va.

Famous Last Words:

"Go back, go back and do your duty as I have done mine and our country will be safe...I had rather die than be whipped"

- A mortally wounded JEB Stuart exhorting his troops to fight on without him – Yellow Tavern, Virginia on May 12, 1864

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

A Victory for Political Correctness!

Some months ago the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a report from the Reuters Service by Alan Eisner titled "Gettysburg Addresses its Attitude to History". This newspaper report provides an outline of proposed changes to the Visitors' Centre and Museum at Gettysburg and is presented, in full, below:

The United States National Park Service has moved to change its interpretive materials at Civil War battlefields to get rid of a Southern bias and emphasise the horrors of slavery.

Nowhere is the project more striking than at Gettysburg, site of the largest battle fought on American soil, where plans are going ahead to build a new visitors' centre and museum at a cost of \$US95 million that will completely change the way the conflict is presented to visitors.

"For the past 100 years, we've been presenting this battlefield as the high watermark of the Confederacy and focusing on the personal valour of the soldiers who fought here," the Superintendent of Gettysburg Park, John Latschar, said.

"We want to change the perception so that Gettysburg becomes known internationally as the place of a 'new rebirth of freedom'," he said, quoting Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered on November 19, 1863, five months after the battle.

"We want to get away from the traditional descriptions of who shot whom, where and into discussions of why they were shooting one another," Dr Latschar said

The project seems particularly relevant following the furore over recent remarks by senator Trent Lott that seemed to endorse racial segregation and forced many Americans to revisit one of the uglier chapters of their history.

When it opens in 2006, the new museum will offer visitors of the entire Civil War, putting the battle into its larger context. Dr Latschar said he was inspired by the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, which sets out to tell a story rather than display historical artefacts in glass cases.

"Our current museum is absolutely abysmal. It tells no story. It's a curator's museum with no rhyme or reason," Dr Latschar said. It is also failing to preserve the 700,000 items in its collection, including 350,000 maps, documents & photographs many of which were rotting away or crumbling into dust until they were put into temporary storage.

About 1.8 million people visit Gettysburg each year. Dr Latschar said a disproportionate number were men and the park attracts very few black visitors. In 1998 he invited three prominent historians to examine the site. They concluded that Gettysburg's interpretive programs had a "pervasive Southern sympathy".

The same was true at most, if not all, of the 28 Civil War sites operated by the National Parks Service. A report to Congress in March 2000 found that only nine did an adequate job of addressing slavery in their exhibits. Another six, including Gettysburg, gave it cursory mention. The rest did not mention it at all. Most parks are now trying to correct the situation.

Park rangers and licensed guide sat Gettysburg and other sites have changed their presentations in line with the new policy. Now park authorities are taking a look at Brochures, handouts and roadside signs.

Dwight Pitcaithley, chief historian of the National Park Service, said the South had had tremendous success in promoting its "lost cause" theory. The theory rested on three propositions that the Civil War was fought over "states' rights" rather than over slavery; that there was no dishonour in defeat since the Confederacy lost only because it was overwhelmed by the far richer North; and that slavery was a benign institution and most slaves were content with their lot and faithful to their masters.

"Much of the public conversation today about the Civil War and its meaning for contemporary society is shaped by structural forgetting and wishful thinking," he said.

Whilst there is little doubt that for over a century the "Lost Cause" writings tainted much of American historiography relating to the Civil War, a persuasive argument can be presented that these present initiatives represent little more than an exercise in political correctness. Surely it is not beyond the NPS to present both the traditional "who shot whom and where" and the "why they were shooting" aspects of the battles together with a picture of the individual battle in a total military, political and social context?

To be completely fair to those developing this new approach to the museum exhibits, we need to wait until 2006 to make a definitive judgment about the National Park Service's new approach to its charter. The present changes to the focus of the NPS Civil War battlefield presentations, brochures and other interpretive materials is worrying, however, as it appears to seek to expunge some of the less palatable aspects of the War. In doing so it seems to do for the 'slavery' issue what the "Lost Cause" advocates did for the South following the War.

Such revisionism has little place in proper and ethical historical scholarship and study. It is a great victory, however, for the political correctness that is so important these days!

Answer to the Trivia Question

In the last Newsletter (No.9, May 2003) the following question was posed:

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

Despite the advice that it was not Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, a number of members submitted his name as their answer to the question.

The correct answer to the question is:

Major General Joseph J Bartlett

General Bartlett commanded the 1st Division of the Union's V Corps and Chamberlain was in command of one of the three brigades of this division. Indeed, it was Chamberlain's brigade that the Confederates first encountered as they marched to the surrender ceremony.

The fact that Chamberlain's claim of commanding the Union forces at the surrender ceremony has wide currency (even James M McPherson repeats the claim in his authoritative book *Battle Cry of Freedom*), suggested further research was required.

The "Bartlett answer" was first heard in a series of lectures presented by the leading Civil War scholar Gary W Gallagher from the University of Virginia. Dr Gallagher was contacted and has responded. Extracts of this correspondence follow:

"Dear Dr Gallagher,

....

I do have a query with which I hope you might be able to assist me. In Lecture 46 – "Petersburg to Appomattox" - of your Civil War lectures you state that at the official surrender of the ANV on April 12, Joseph J Bartlett, commanding the 1st Division of the V Corps commanded the Union forces. You also state that Chamberlain had said he commanded the Union troops but this was not so.

I have checked a number of references, all of which had Chamberlain in command and made reference to the compliments paid by Chamberlain's troops and Gordon's salute. I was quite happy to accept that these references were incorrect until I checked McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom" where, on page 850, he repeats the Chamberlain in command story. I note that McPherson's reference to the Chamberlain/Gordon incident is taken from the Southern Historical Society's Papers, which might be the reason for the error. Are you able, however, to give an authoritative reference on this matter that I might inform our Civil War Round Table members that the Commander of the Union troops was, in fact, Bartlett?"

Dr Gallagher's response was prompt and most informative:

"...The best student of the Appomattox campaign and the events of April 9-12, is William Marvel, who has written two very deeply researched books about the subject. His most recent book, published last year and titled "Lee's Last Retreat: The Flight to Appomattox", discusses Chamberlain's claims to have commanded the Federals who received Lee's formal surrender on April 12 and concludes that Chamberlain who commanded just one brigade in Bartlett's division, later magnified his role –

"Henceforth he (Chamberlain) would have it that he commanded the receiving troops in that illustrious ceremony – even that Ulysses Grant had personally chosen him for that honor (sic) – and from that inflated perspective he would remember offering the defeated foe a salute that banished sectional antagonism and launched the spirit of national reunion"

Marvel points out that Chamberlain's earliest descriptions of the ceremony make no mention of the salute or Gordon's response. Neither did any Confederates mention a salute. See pp. 193-95 of the book for the full discussion.

Again, thank you for taking the time to send me your kind note.

Best regards,

Gary W Gallagher"

For all the ardent Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans out there, this response by Dr Gallagher holds little comfort. It does show, however, that even the greatest of men can have their faults. Simply put, they are still human!

Where to Now?

For Jennifer Kirkby and other diehard Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fans, who will find the answer presented in the previous article akin to blasphemy, our Chairman, Paul Kensey, has come up with a great idea.

No doubt these Chamberlain fans will want to cling to McPherson's version of the official surrender story in his *"Battle Cry of Freedom"*. Paul has suggested, therefore, that we write to James M McPherson in the same way that we wrote to Gary Gallagher, seeking references to support his "Chamberlain in command" version of the surrender story.

This contact with McPherson, as suggested by Paul, has been actioned so...

Watch this space!