

Sumter to Appomattox

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

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Please visit our website at www.americancivilwar.asn.au

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A Message from the Chairman –

In my first message to members of our Chapter of the Round Table may I express my personal New Year's greetings you and trust that you have had a most restful break over the holidays.

2007 promises to be a most exciting year for our members. Your Committee has initiated a number of changes to our program, the most significant one being the increase in the number of meetings now to be on a monthly basis, February – November. This increase in the number of meetings means that there will be changes to the format of the meetings with a much more flexible format, including other than the lecture/presentations used in previous times. It is going to mean that more of our members will be asked to assist in the program of meetings.

It will be necessary, also, to make some decisions regarding the format and frequency of publication of this Newsletter. In this regard, I would be most interested in your views on what directions we might take, including the possibility of producing the Newsletter on a monthly basis, having an electronic form of the Newsletter, possibly with members having the option of receiving it as hardcopy or in e-format.

In the adjoining column to this page you will see the details regarding our first three meetings for this year. You will see from this schedule that the program of meetings for 2007 will be quite different from that of earlier times. The meetings for the remainder of 2007 are still in the planning stages and I would like any member who would want to undertake the conduct of one of these meetings to come forward with an offer of assistance. You may be assured that our Program Director, John Cook, and his Assistant and "Program Director in Training", Jennifer Kirkby, will welcome all such offers with "open arms" so, please consider.

I look forward to 2007 as an exciting challenge for us all and hope to see you all at our regular meetings throughout the year.

Paul Kensey

Our Forthcoming Meetings

The regular meetings of the NSW Chapter of ACWRTA will be held at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**. Each meeting will commence with a bistro-style dinner at the Club from 6pm with the proceeding of the meeting proper to start at 7:15pm.

The dates and speakers/topics for our first three meetings for 2007 are detailed below:

- **Monday, February 12.** At this meeting the presentation will be given by **Terry Cartwright** who is to speak on the topic: **"The Forgotten Hero: Major General George Thomas – The Rock of Chickamauga"**
- **Monday, March 12.** It is proposed to screen a painstakingly accurate and beautiful documentary: **Spotsylvania Courthouse The Clash of Grant & Lee at the Crossroads**
The commentary for this presentation is by the eminent historian, Ed Bearrs,
- **Monday, April 16.** A **Trivia Quiz** Night with a Civil War theme is planned for this meeting. Members present will form teams with the questions guaranteed not to be particularly hard. That is to say, no prior study for this meeting will be required! The questions (and answers) for this quiz are to be coordinated by **Jennifer Kirkby and Geoff Kay**.

As has been our practice in the past, where a presentation is in the form of a lecture, a paper on which the lecture is based will be available to members at the conclusion of the meeting. Members from outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have this paper mailed to them automatically with the next edition of the Newsletter, whilst other members can receive a copy, on request.

It Happened in January

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

January 8, 1821 – James Longstreet, CSA, is born near Edgefield, South Carolina;

January 19, 1807 – Robert E Lee is born in Stratford, Virginia;

January 21, 1824 – Thomas J (Stonewall) Jackson is born in Clarksburg, Virginia;

January 25, 1825 – George Pickett, CSA, is born in Richmond, Virginia;

January 30, 1816 - Nathaniel Banks, USA, is born in Waltham, Massachusetts;

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

January 6, 1865 – Grant asks Lincoln to remove Butler from command of the Army of the James;

January 8, 1861 – Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, the last Southerner in Cabinet, resigns;

January 15, 1862 – The US Senate confirms Edwin M Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War;

January 22, 1864 – Major General William Rosecrans is named Commander of the Federal Department of Missouri;

January 23, 1865 – General Richard Taylor assumes command of the Army of Tennessee which now has fewer than 18 000 troops;

January 25, 1863 – The removal of General Burnside as Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

January 26, 1863 – Joseph Hooker is appointed Commander of the Army of the Potomac;

January 31, 1865 – General Robert E Lee is appointed General-in-Chief of the Confederate Armies;

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

January 2, 1861 – South Carolina troops seize Fort Johnson in Charleston Harbour;

January 2, 1863 – Confederates defeated at the Battle of Murfreesboro (Stones River), Tennessee;

January 3, 1861 – Georgia state troops seize Fort Pulaski before Federal troops can occupy it;

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont'd

January 4, 1861 – Alabama takes over the US arsenal at Mount Vernon;

January 14, 1861 – Louisiana state troops seize Fort Pike near New Orleans;

January 19, 1865 – Sherman begins his march and destruction of the Carolinas;

January 19, 1862 – Federals push back Confederates in the Battle of Mill Springs (Logan's Cross Roads), Kentucky;

January 23, 1863 – Burnside's Federal army pulls back to Fredericksburg ending its famed "mud march";

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

January 1, 1863 – President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation takes effect;

January 9, 1861 – Mississippi secedes from the Union;

January 10, 1861 – Florida secedes from the Union;

January 11, 1861 – Alabama secedes from the Union;

January 13, 1863 – Federal officials formally authorise the raising of black units for the South Carolina volunteer Infantry;

January 16, 1861 – Arkansas completes a bill calling for a referendum on secession;

January 17, 1861 – The Crittenden Compromise, proposing several amendments to the Constitution in order to save the Union, is "killed" in the US Senate;

January 18, 1862 – The Confederate Territory of Arizona is formed;

January 26, 1861 – Louisiana secedes from the Union;

January 28, 1863 – A mass rally in St Louis ratifies the Emancipation Proclamation;

January 29, 1861 - Kansas is admitted as the 34th state of the Union.

Famous Last Words

"Men, we have fought through the War together; I have done my best for you; my heart is too full to say more,,, goodbye."

- General Robert E Lee,
April 9, 1865

Bi-Centenary of Lee's Birth

This month represents the bi-centenary of the birth of one of the South's favourite sons, Robert E Lee. Born in Stratford, Westmoreland County, Virginia on January 19, 1807, Lee was named Robert Edward after his mother's two brothers. His father, "Light Horse" Harry Lee was a hero of America's Revolutionary War, governor of Virginia and a member of the US House of Representatives and other members of his family were signatories to the Declaration of Independence.

Lee was educated in various schools in Alexandria and, in 1825, was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1829, second in his class and without a single demerit, a record that still stands today.

He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Corps of Engineers and served on various engineering projects in Georgia, Virginia and New York.

In June 1831, Lee married Mary Anna Randolph Custis, the only daughter of George Washington Parke Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington and adopted son of George Washington. Being an only child, Mary inherited Arlington House which was located across the Potomac River from Washington D.C., where she and Robert raised seven children.

In 1836, Lee was appointed First Lieutenant and, later, in the rank of Captain, fought in the Mexican War, initially in General Wool's command, but later was reassigned to the staff of General Winfield Scott. General Scott would write of Lee that he was "... the best soldier I ever saw in the field".

In 1852, Lee was appointed Superintendent of West Point and, in 1858, commanded the Federal force that captured John Brown at Harper's Ferry arsenal. At the beginning of the Civil War, Lincoln offered Lee command of the Union Army, but Lee refused this offer, resigned his commission and "went south". In a letter to his sister on April 20, 1861, Lee wrote:

"With all my devotion to the Union and the feeling of loyalty and duty as an American citizen, I have not been able to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home. I therefore have resigned my commission in the army and save in defense (sic) of my native state, with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed."

Lee and his family left Arlington House at the beginning of the War, never to return. He served first, as an adviser to President Jefferson Davis and then, in 1862, following General Joseph E Johnston's wounding at the Battle of Seven Pines, took command of what was to become the Army of Northern Virginia.

After four terrible years of war, Lee met with the Union's commanding general, Ulysses S Grant, at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. Here, generous terms of surrender were offered by Grant and accepted by Lee and thus, the Civil War effectively was ended.

After the War, Lee was offered a number of commercial inducements for use of his name. On receipt of one such offer for \$50,000, Lee refused saying:

"Sirs, my name is my heritage of my parents. It is all that I have and it is not for sale."

This refusal came at a time when he had nothing. In the autumn of 1865, Lee was offered and accepted the position of President of the troubled Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. The college was later renamed Washington and Lee College in his honour.

Robert E Lee died of a heart attack at his home at Washington College on October 12, 1870, aged 63 years. He is buried at the College's chapel near his family and his favourite horse "Traveller". His last words were reputed to be:

"Strike the Tent"

Lee was a man whose military tactics have been studied, world-wide, and who many regard as one of the greatest Americans who ever lived. It is appropriate, therefore, on the bi-centenary of his birth we reflect on this icon of a previous era.

Dates for your Diary

Brendan O'Connell advises that the following dates have been booked with the Roseville Memorial RSL Club for our program of regular evening meetings throughout the year. These dates are scheduled for the second Monday of each month, except in April, June and November (AGM and Xmas function))

- Monday, February 12, 2007
- Monday, March 12, 2007
- Monday, April 16, 2007 (avoids Easter Monday holiday)
- Monday, May 14, 2007
- Monday, June 18, 2007 (avoids Queen's Birthday holiday)
- Monday, July 9, 2007
- Monday, August 13, 2007
- Monday, 10 September 2007
- Monday, October 8, 2007
- Friday, November 30, 2007 (Christmas function and AGM)

All meetings will commence with a bistro style meal from 6pm with the meeting proper to commence at 7:15pm. Please pencil these dates into your diary. The schedule of speakers and topics for these meetings will be provided to you at a later date.

No Casino Licence for Gettysburg

The following article from an American source has been sent to us by Jenny Holder, one of our members residing in South Australia:

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board failed to issue one of the handful of state casino licenses to Crossroads Gaming Resort & Spa, which had proposed building a casino in Adams County -- a decision that brought cheers from those who believed the Gettysburg battlefield area was not the place for slots.

Sal Prezioso, who lives on West Confederate Avenue, Gettysburg, said he was excited about the news:

"I called people in Michigan and New Jersey and everyone was ecstatic. I think national conscience says Gettysburg belongs to the nation because of what happened here," he said. "I'm glad that somehow common sense and decency took hold of the board."

Gettysburg's mayor said that the decision brings a divisive issue to a close. Mayor Bill Troxell stated:

"We had very strong feelings both for and against (in town). Now that the decision is made, we will live with it and we'll all move forward together,"

This is great news for Pennsylvania historians and re-enactors who have fought long and hard to prevent a casino being built in the environs of a most important icon of America's history.

Nat Turner's Slave Revolt

Thirty-four years before the 13th Amendment prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States and all places within its jurisdiction, a bloody and horrific slave insurrection sent shock waves through the eastern states of America and, in particular, Virginia.

Nat Turner, a self styled religious mystic had gained a large following amongst the free blacks and slaves in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner claimed to have had a series of visions in which he observed black figures fighting white figures with streams of red blood flowing. He interpreted these visions as divinely inspired messages that foreshadowed a bloody slave insurrection that was sanctioned by God and he was to be God's prophet, a black Moses, who was to lead the slave rebellion that would ultimately result in the release of all Afro- Americans from bondage. For more than three years Turner contemplated taking decisive action to secure his own liberty and the freedom of other slaves in his community. He waited for a heavenly sign to signal the start of the revolt and construed that the eclipse of the sun in February 1831 was such an indication that the time had arrived.

Delays occurred in mounting the insurrection, including a somewhat ironic sickness of Turner himself, but on August 21, 1831, following a further "divine indicator" earlier in the month in the form of a sighting of sun-spots, Turner and his co-conspirators carefully planned their violent attacks. No one, aside from slaves and poor whites sympathetic to their cause was to be spared! All slaveholders and their families were to be killed.

Under cover of darkness this infamous slave rebellion began early the following morning in the courtyard of the Travis farm where Joseph Travis and his whole family were hacked to death. The attackers seized a few guns and rifles and a small quantity of gunpowder. They moved on to the Francis's plantation and then to the Reece farm where all resident families were killed in a most violent manner. With each farm attacked more slaves joined the revolt and more families were killed. At Levi Waller's farm, the local Southampton County militia arrived scarcely fifteen minutes after the insurgents had finished their deadly work to find ten headless children stacked up in one gruesome heap!

Word of the slave revolt spread quickly throughout the County and two groups of white men were hastily assembled to meet the threat. When Turner and his rebels reached James Parker's farm, three miles from the County seat of Jerusalem, the slave "army" was defeated in Parker's field.

Nat Turner's rebellion failed for a number of reasons: first, his men were poorly armed, lacked sufficient ammunition and many were too drunk to fight effectively. More importantly, local slaves did not join his ranks in the numbers Turner had anticipated.

Turner was never to show the slightest remorse for instigating this bloody insurrection and the immediate legacy he gave to the enslaved Afro-Americans in Virginia following his execution was the adoption by the Commonwealth of much more oppressive slave laws and the introduction of extreme censorship of abolitionists within its borders.

Ken Burns' Civil War Series

For those of us who paid \$150 for the DVDs of the famous Ken Burns' series *The Civil War*, we might be a little upset when they hear that it is now available at J B Hi-Fi, Chatswood at **\$19:98** for the three DVD set! This classic DVD series and the companion series *The West*, which is available at a similarly discounted price of around **\$30**, represent real bargains for those patient souls who have waited until now to make a purchase of these classic historical series on DVD.

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 Brendan O'Connell, Secretary/Treasurer of the Chapter, by telephone on (02) 9449 3720, by post to PO Box 200, St Ives, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au