

# Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 64, May 2013

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Please visit our website [www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

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### A Message from the Chairman –

The first meeting for 2013 was a very great one with a special presentation by Edwin Bearss one of the key commentators in the Ken Burns' *The Civil War* series on TV. This was a great opportunity to hear one of the doyens of the American Civil War historical community and the attendance of 49 members and their guests reflected the interest that the opportunity to hear Ed Bearss presented. This was the best-attended meeting we have had since the formation of our Round Table Chapter.

I would wish to record my appreciation to our dedicated Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell, who provided Ed with his accommodation whilst in Sydney and Bruce McLennan for his tourist guide role in showing Ed some of the sites of the city and its environs. Also, the members who gave of their time to ensure that Ed's social calendar for his time in Sydney was appropriately filled.

On leaving Sydney, Ed was driven to Canberra where he was provided with a VIP inspection of the Australian War Memorial, including the personal services of a most knowledgeable AWM guide. Ed's reaction to this visit was one of great appreciation.

Many of our members would have seen the media reports of the devastating fire that destroyed the church hall at Dulwich Hill recently. One of our members, David Smith, is the pastor at this church with this fire, deliberately lit, creating a huge gap in the services that Holy Trinity Church plays in the support of the youth of the area. The expressions of support being offered to assist in maintaining the various services that have utilised the now fire-gutted church hall has been overwhelming. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that one of the first with an offer of help was the local Muslim centre.

A number of our members have approached me to ascertain how we could support Father Dave at this time. In speaking to Father Dave's wife, Angela, (David is presently in Syria as part of an international peace mission), she advised that donations can be made to the church and a number of fund-raising activities are proposed for the coming months. Details of these avenues of support will be provided in the coming weeks.

Individual members who wish to make a donation can do so by going online to the church's website [www.holytrinity.org.au](http://www.holytrinity.org.au), click on "NEWS" and then press the "DONATE" button located beneath the story on the fire. In addition, the Chapter might wish to make a donation to assist in the rebuilding. This option will be discussed at our meeting on May 20 and I'm hoping that Father Dave will be back from Syria to give us an update on what is happening at his church now.

*John Cook*

### Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, May 20**, at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club**, Pacific Highway, Roseville. As is our custom, meeting will commence with a bistro style meal from 6pm with the meeting proper to start around 7:15 – 7:30pm.

At this meeting Steve Gemell will lead discussion on the interesting topic:

#### **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Canby, Sibley and New Mexico**

Steve has suggested that if members wish to get a "heads up" on the topic prior to the meeting, they can Google "*The Man Who Lost the Civil War*" and the first return should be the YouTube link:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1Ktp5-SVfg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1Ktp5-SVfg)

This 15-minute clip is a specially edited version of an older 50-minute documentary. Be warned, however, not accept to the content of this clip without question!

Before Steve's presentation, we will again return to our very popular "Show and Tell" segment. Please bring along something or come prepared to speak briefly on a topic for about 3 minutes.

Please make an effort to come to this meeting, bring a friend and make this meeting the success that builds on what we achieved in our first meeting of the year.

## It 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 at 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, Virginia;

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

**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

### 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;

**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.

## Civil War Books at Bargain Prices...

In the last Newsletter, it was indicated that we will be conducting a "Garage Sale" of Civil War books that have been donated to us by two of our members, Paul Kensey and Terry Cartwright. These books include many of classic works by eminent Civil War historians, both past and present.

The good news, no, the great news, is that all books in the sale are at bargain basement prices with nothing over \$20!

When time permits we will be circulating a catalogue of these books and you will be able to see the extent of the bargains. Details of this book sale will be available at our next meeting on May 20. These details will include the date and venue for the sale, availability of the catalogue for the sale and other activities that will be held in conjunction with the sale.

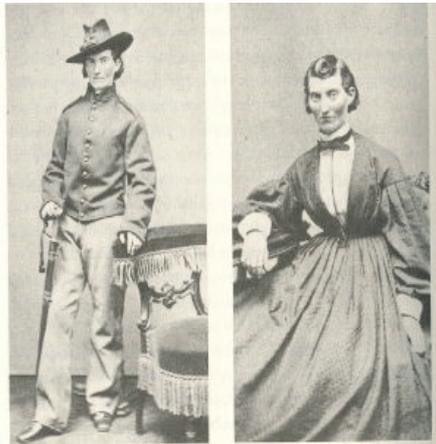
All proceeds from the sale will go to bolster our funding base and, in particular, to pay the contribution we made towards the cost the Ed Bearss visit.

Stay tuned!

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, 2075 or by e-mail [secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au](mailto:secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au)

## Women in Combat? Been There, Done That...

Recently, the United States military authorised the deployment of women in active combat. However, women have seen combat in every American war since the foundation of the Republic. Who were these women and why did they go to such lengths to conceal their sex? The American Civil War was unique with women being photographed and extensively documented serving as soldiers.



Frances Clalin, wife, mother, drinker, smoker and deadly cavalryman. Pretty good at poker too!

According to records, approximately 400 women managed to join in the Civil War as combatants. Many of them would later apply, and receive pensions following the conflict. Their stories are inspiring, filled with danger and bravery, exceptional because not one of them was compelled to fight.

These women sometimes even fought with distinction, felling enemy soldiers with equal alacrity as their male counterparts, and sometimes even more so.

The [Daily Mail](#) features a series of images and a short article featuring stories such as that of Union cavalryman, Jack Williams, who comrades described as "a hard-drinking, tobacco-chewing, foul-mouthed son of a gun." Deadly with a pistol and a sword, Jack could also hold his own at the poker table.

Jack was wounded three times and captured once, and only later revealed to be a woman - Frances Clalin, a mother of three. She joined to stay with her husband. When he was killed at the battle of Stone's River, she stepped over his body and charged as ordered. She was subsequently wounded herself and discharged when she was discovered to be female.

In fact, many women joined and fought alongside their husbands. The effort required of them was great because they had, at all times, to conceal their sex. This was probably much more difficult than the more commonly cited challenge of "keeping up with the boys." Many women of the period tended to be hardy, given the rigors of life on the farms of the western United States and back then, much as today, have always been capable of matching pace.

It is a myth that women are incapable of serving as well as men. Despite popular belief, when it comes to war, women have been there, done that.

In the male-dominated culture of the 19th century, however, women who were discovered were immediately discharged and sent home.

Some women were not discovered until they were wounded and surgeons attempted to treat them. It is also likely that hundreds of women went unrecognized, either keeping silent after the war, or being lost as casualties and sharing many of the mass graves prepared after battle. Many women who served later returned to life as wives and mothers, a few penning their stories to share with future generations.

At least one female soldier found life as a man easier, so much so that she chose to go about as a man for the rest of her life. Jennie Rodgers fought in forty battles as Albert Cashier. After the war, she continued to pass herself off as a man and enjoyed the right to vote. Her doctor discovered that he was a she in 1910, but agreed to keep her secret. She lived the rest of her days in a veteran's home. By the time of her death her true identity was revealed but she was still buried in her Union uniform and her tombstone bears both names.

The women soldiers of the Civil War are an inspiring story of those who remain so devoted to their husbands or to causes, that they will endure any hardship to support them. They did not serve to buck traditional gender roles or to usurp society, but rather to promote the welfare of their families and states. For this, we can regard them with honour and pride and accord each the recognition they deserve.

It's important, therefore, to recognise that women are no strangers to war.

*Source: Smithsonian Associates e-Newsletter, Vol 12, Issue 3.*

## African American Doctors in the Civil War...

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War when the nation was divided over the issue of slavery. During that time, many freed blacks enlisted in the Union Army, including several African American doctors. Little is known about these brave men, but there is a move to change that.

### Prologue to Change

Retired physician Dr. Robert Slawson is fascinated by two subjects: history and medicine. Slawson spent eight years as a doctor in the Army and 28 years teaching medicine at the University of Maryland. He is particularly interested in medical history, mainly the contributions that African Americans have made.

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After completing a research project on medical education prior to the Civil War, Slawson was assured from all of his readings that there were no African Americans in formal medical education in the United States. But after further study, he found that several blacks had indeed attended and successfully completed medical school. A handful had even served as doctors during the Civil War. He wrote about his findings in his book, "Prologue to Change: African Americans in Medicine in the Civil War Era."

"Of the physicians we've identified serving with the Army, three of them were commissioned officers," Slawson told CBN News. "The other nine were contract surgeons. The things they were doing as doctors mostly was taking care of disease," he explained. "They would do examination, take care of people with sickness, give medications."

### **Alexander T. Augusta**

Dr. Alexander T. Augusta was a veteran of the American Civil War and the first commissioned black officer in the U.S. Army. He is also the first black officer to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Augusta was born to free parents in Norfolk, Va. He was taught to read by a preacher, something that was illegal and dangerous in the state. He dreamed of becoming a doctor, but that seemed almost impossible in the 1800s. He applied to the University of Pennsylvania's medical school, but his application was denied. When he was unable to gain admittance to an American college of medicine because of his race, Augusta travelled to Canada where he enrolled at Toronto's Trinity College. After six years there he earned a degree in medicine.

"It's hard for me to even imagine the challenges that they had faced," author and health expert Dr. Michelle Gourdine said. "It had to be magnitudes harder than those of us who are black doctors now went through," she said.

Gourdine said that the hardships black medical professionals before her faced serve as a great encouragement and example to her and other African Americans.

"On top of it being a very difficult and challenging subject matter they had to understand, but to do that in an atmosphere where you were considered less than, where you were considered to be second rate, second tier, where you did not have all of the resources that you need in order to succeed and then to be able to achieve any way..." she marveled.

Slawson said Augusta's time in the Army was difficult both on and off the battlefield. Most black surgeons in the war worked in military hospitals or recruiting stations because many white surgeons refused to serve alongside them or under their command on the battlefield. "He (Dr. Augusta) had two assistant surgeons at the regiment with him and they were white and they rebelled obviously," Slawson explained. "The senior assistant surgeon said 'It's not right. There's no other white man working for an African black man, and I shouldn't have to do it either.'"

After returning to the United States in 1862, Augusta wrote a direct appeal to President Lincoln to serve as a surgeon in the Army. He was finally allowed entrance and earned a commission in the Union Army after many roadblocks.

### **John Van Surly DeGrasse**

Dr. John Van Surly DeGrasse, from Massachusetts, was one exception. He and many of the black doctors in the Civil War were of mixed race. De Grasse was born June 1825 in New York City.

In 1840 at 15 years old DeGrasse enrolled in Oneida Institute in New York. He later studied medicine at Aubuk College in Paris. DeGrasse received his medical degree with honours from the Bowdoin College's Medical School of Maine in Brunswick in May 1849. He was the second African American to graduate from an American college of medicine.

After volunteering in May 1863, DeGrasse received a commission as an assistant surgeon with the 35th United States Colored Infantry. He was one of only three African American doctors to do so and was the only black surgeon to serve in the field with his South Carolina regiment.

### **Determined to Serve**

Little is written in the history books about these African American physicians and their service to the United States of America.

"The powers that be decided that the acceptable physicians were white men, so a lot of the information on African Americans, as well as the early women physicians, people chose not to record it," Slawson said.

Slawson said, however, that one thing is clear about these men. "Anybody who wanted to go into medicine had to be determined that that's what they wanted to do," he said.

When the war ended, Augusta went on to serve on the staff at Howard University. De Grasse returned to his practice in Boston. He received a gold-hilted sword from Massachusetts Gov. John A. Andrew in appreciation of his service. He died November 25, 1868.

### **Modern World Forerunners**

Slawson often lectures on Black History. He said he is doing what he can to tell the stories of black doctors in the Civil War, each of whom he said deserves a place in history as forerunners of the modern world.

"I thought they were heroes," he said. "These were people who knew what they wanted, went after it and wanted to serve in the best way they could." "And they were trained physicians and that was the best service they could give," he said. "I don't see a difference."