

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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Special Christmas/End-of-Year Edition

Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message from the Chairman –

As we come to the end of another year, I think we can be well satisfied with our meetings over the year. The attendance has averaged over 30 per meeting, which represents a most significant increase from earlier times. Indeed, if we count the Club staff member who came into the meeting when Ed Bearrs was speaking we had 50 members and guests for that meeting.

This renewed interest in our meetings is a direct result of the brilliant schedule of meetings planned by our Program Director, Bruce McLennan. Thanks Bruce, for the outstanding job you have done since taking on the role of Program Director, you make us all look good!

Particularly heartening for those of us that have been around for a long time, is the influx of new members and I trust that this trend will continue into 2014.

The sale of Civil War books is proceeding slowly and there are a number of Civil War history classics still available for purchase at rock bottom prices. Indeed, I can assure you that you will not find a better selection in any bookshop and certainly individual books will not be sold at a lesser price. If you are interested, please contact me as soon as possible and we will work out a great deal for you.

You will note that our next meeting is our Christmas / End-of-Year function, which will be preceded by our Annual General Meeting, where elections for the Chapter Executive and Committee will be held. I hope that all members might consider nominating for one or more of these positions and I can assure everyone that none of the current office bearers have an emotional attachment to their position.

Papers for the AGM, including nomination forms for the various positions, are enclosed with this Newsletter. Please make a special effort to be at the meeting and the following celebrations because I believe it will be something special to round off a great year and set the scene for a better 2014.

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting is the Christmas/End-of-Year function that is to be held on **Friday, December 6**, at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club**, Pacific Highway, Roseville, commencing at **6:00pm** with a short Annual General Meeting.

After the AGM, the festivities will commence with drinks and canapés followed at around **7pm** by a main course of your choice appropriate to the occasion. The meal will conclude with homemade Christmas cake, courtesy of Helen Cook, together with tea/coffee as required.

Please note that, having regard to possible RBT testing on the way home after the function, you will need to take your consumption of the Christmas cake into your overall alcohol consumption for the evening.

It is hoped that you will be able to attend this function and to bring with your wife/husband/partner, for a great night.

The cost for the function is **\$40 p.p.**, which will cover the food and wine and soft drinks during the meal. Pre-dinner drinks can be purchased from the bar.

If you are able to come to the function, you are asked to advise our Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell, of your attendance and the number of guests accompanying you. This advice will greatly assist us in making the necessary catering arrangements.

Furthermore, you are asked to consider joining our Round Table's Executive / Committee, having regard to the fact that all present members of the Executive and Committee do NOT have an emotional attachment to their present positions.

John Cook

It Happened in December

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

December 3, 1826 – George Brinton McClellan is born in Philadelphia;

December 5, 1839 – George Armstrong Custer is born in New Rumley, Ohio;

December 6, 1833 – John Singleton Mosby, (CSA), is born in Edgemont, Virginia;

December 13, 1818 – Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of Abraham Lincoln, is born in Lexington, Kentucky;

December 19, 1814 – Edwin Stanton, US Secretary of War 1862 - 1868 is born Steubenville, Ohio;

December 29, 1808 – Andrew Johnson, 17th US President, 1865 – 1868, who succeeded Lincoln, is born in Raleigh, S.C.;

December 31, 1815 – George Gordon Meade is born in Cadiz, Spain.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

December 2, 1863 – General Braxton Bragg turns over command of the Army of Tennessee to Lieutenant General William Hardee at Dalton, Georgia;

December 4, 1862 – Confederate General Joseph E Johnston assumes command in the West;

December 14, 1861 – Brigadier General H H Sibley is assigned command of all Confederate forces on the upper Rio Grande and in the New Mexico and Arizona Territories;

December 15, 1863 – Major General Jubal Early, CSA is assigned to the Shenandoah District.

NAVAL ACTIONS

December 1, 1861 – US gunboat Penguin captures the Blockade Runner *Albion* off Nassau and confiscates its cargo;

December 12, 1862 – On the Yazoo River, Miss., the Federal ironclad Cairo strikes a mine and sinks;

December 17, 1861 – Federals sink a number of hulks loaded with stones in Savannah Harbour in an effort to halt shipping;

December 24, 1864 – Federal fleet bombards Fort Fisher, guarding Wilmington, NC, the last Confederate open port;

December 30, 1862 – The USS Monitor, hero of the battle with the Merrimack, flounders off Cape Hatteras in heavy seas, 16 officers and men are lost.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

December 7, 1862 – Confederate raider, John Hunt Morgan, with 1,400 men surprises a Federal garrison at Hartsville, Tenn., taking 1,800 prisoners;

December 16, 1864 – Battle of Nashville ends as Confederate army commanded by General John B Hood, is almost destroyed by Union troops under General George Thomas;

December 25, 1864 – Federals land troops to take Fort Fisher, N.C., but the assault fails and they are withdrawn;

December 26, 1862 – Federals attack a guerrilla camp in Powell County, Kentucky;

December 28, 1862 – Federal Army of the Frontier pushes back Confederates at Dripping Springs, Arkansas, capturing Van Buren.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

December 8, 1862 – Lincoln issues Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, pardoning participants in “the existing rebellion” if they take the oath to the Union;

December 9, 1863 – Black Federal troops at Fort Jackson, La., mutiny over alleged mistreatment of one white officer of his troops;

December 10, 1861 – An Act of the Confederate Congress in Richmond admits Kentucky to the Confederacy, thus completing the 13 states;

December 11, 1861 – Already suffering under the Federal blockade, Charleston, S.C., is struck by a disastrous fire sweeping through its business district;

December 18, 1865 – The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution abolishing slavery is declared in effect by Secretary of State Seward after approval by 27 states;

December 20, 1860 – The South Carolina Convention in Charleston passes a formal declaration of secession. The first state to secede;

December 22, 1864 – General Sherman sends President Lincoln: “I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah;

December 27, 1860 – The US flag is raised over Fort Sumter as South Carolina troops occupy Charleston forts.

Words of Wisdom...

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

- Abraham Lincoln

Robbed of Glory, the Aftermath of Gettysburg and its Impact on Soldiers and Civilians, Part 2...

This is the concluding part of an article by Chris Wehner, a long-time Smithsonian member and Civil War Studies contributor. The first part of this article was included in the previous edition of this Newsletter (No. 67)

Another question that historians contemplate is the idea of "honor and glory" with regard to the battlefield. We know that both were important values for people living at the time. Linderman does a fine job in his work discussing the role of Victorian era values. So how did these simple and, perhaps to us, simplistic values play with regard to how soldiers and civilians understood War? Women (mothers) played an important role in shaping the soldier before he left home. Indeed, they played a role with regard to their sons' experiences. I have read accounts in newspapers where Union mothers stood up at town meetings and volunteered their sons on the spot, one even threatened to disown her two sons if they were not among the first to enlist in 1861.

Back to Cornelia Hancock for more on this and other thoughts. Hancock soon travelled to a field hospital outside of Gettysburg, hoping to see *"some familiar faces among the regiments of my native state."* The short journey was yet another awe inspiring event as she *"began to realize that war had other horrors than the sufferings of the wounded or the desolation of the bereft."* By now the smells of the rotten and decaying bodies and animals settled in delivering an *"overpowering, awful stench on which the July sun was mercilessly shining."* She was now on the battlefield as she made her way to the field hospital. It was here that the war became palpable to someone who had never witnessed such carnage.

She continued, *"Not the presence of the dead bodies themselves, swollen and disfigured as they were, and lying in heaps on every side, was as awful to one spectator as that deadly, nauseating atmosphere which robbed the battlefield of its glory, the survivors of their victory, and the wounded of what little chance of life was left to them."*

A very poignant and important remark. The year was 1863, and the only person here talking about the "glory" of war was a woman who loved her country, who loved the men that left her to go fight, but simply had no context, no frame of reference, to draw from as to the realities of war. By 1863 it's hard to find any soldier speaking of the glory of a battlefield. Hancock realized too late that the horror of war had indeed robbed it of any glory, even for the victors.

About The Author: **Chris Wehner** is the archivist and curator for SoldierStudies.org as well as a history teacher and published author. His book, *The 11th Wisconsin in the Civil War: A Regimental History*, was released by McFarland & Co. in 2008. Chris currently resides in Colorado.

Some Personal News

Mike and Ruth Broadley, two of our members who travel from Springwood regularly for our meetings, were involved in the recent Blue Mountains' bushfires. Indeed, the fires came close to the back of their property. Mike's action with his garden hose saved not only their house, but also that of the next-door neighbour's. Well done, Mike!

On different matter completely, our long-term member, Jennifer Kirkby, has become engaged. It is our understanding that whilst in England for the cricket, Jim Maxwell, the ABC's premium cricket commentator, proposed to Jennifer following some encouragement from his fellow commentators. Congratulation Jim, you have got yourself a real gem!

If Jim is awake, we intend to toast the happy couple at our Christmas/End-of-Year function in December.

The Gettysburg Address

Members will be aware that November 19, was the 150th Anniversary of Lincoln's historic Gettysburg Address. Jenny Holder was good enough to send us e-mail with a link on You Tube to a recitation by Jeff Daniels, of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain fame in the movie Gettysburg. This link is:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvA0J_2ZpIQ

This link provides, also, a number other videos relating to Gettysburg and the Civil War generally and is well worth a look, particularly with the video that claims to be an authentic presentation of how Lincoln made his presentation.

Personally, I think that none of these presentations matches the quality and emotion that our former Chapter Chairman Paul Kensey brought to his recent recitation of the Address at our meeting earlier this year!

On the Lighter Side...A True Story!

Speaking of Paul Kensey, some time ago he gave his presentation on James Armstrong Custer to a country Rotary Club. Over drinks after the presentation, one of their members said to him – "You seem to know a lot about Custer, did you know him personally?"

Now Paul is old, but surely not that old!

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 e-mail secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

Christmas Holiday Traditions in the Civil War North and South ...

This article is reprinted from an earlier edition of our Newsletter and is considered to be relevant to our celebrations for the forthcoming Christmas holiday season.

Many of the traditions associated with the Christmas holiday celebrations in the United States today began during its Civil War. Without a doubt it was the loneliness and insecurities of war that prompted citizens and soldiers alike to re-create the solace and comfort of the homes they had left behind. They did this by re-establishing familiar European traditions, thus creating the illusion of love and peace in a time when very little of that existed in their daily lives.

Christmas had always been celebrated in Europe with eating, drinking and dancing often to excess. It was the Puritans that sought to break from what they considered indulgent behaviour and were successful in this when they immigrated to America. With their arrival in their new land, Christmas became a serious occasion, the purpose of which was to introspectively ponder sin and religious commitment.

It took almost 200 years for the United States to move away from this Puritan ethic and begin to enjoy the Xmas holiday season once more. In 1830, Louisiana was the first state to declare Christmas as a public holiday and other states soon followed but it was not until 1870 that Congress legislated to make Christmas a federal holiday. The religious revivals of the mid-19th Century also added to the trend to celebrate and recognise Christmas.

Christmas cards, carols, special foods and the holding of winter dances all date back to the late 1850s. During the Civil War it was common to cut down small fir and pine trees and take them into the home for decorating often with mistletoe as a sign of bringing good fortune to the household. Letters from Union soldiers during the War mention decorating their camp Christmas trees with salt- pork and hard tack.

It was the development of the modern Santa Claus that embedded Christmas into the American way of life. In 1861, Thomas Nast, a German immigrant working as a writer and artist for *Harper's Weekly* was asked to provide a drawing to accompany Clement Clark Moore's poem, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. Nast called on his childhood memories of Bavaria. To create what is now the modern image of Santa Claus. His cherubic Santa, thin by today's standards, was depicted as bringing gifts of *Harper's* to the soldiers, thus, for the first time combining imagery (Santa Claus) and commercialism (selling *Harper's*) in the American marketplace.

Santa brought children gifts and these gifts were always hand-made. Children were satisfied to receive just small hand-carved toys, cakes oranges or apples. Many Southern diaries tell the story of Santa running the blockaded Southern ports to fill children's stockings with what little the parents could spare to make the day special for them.

Even General Sherman's soldiers played Santa to the impoverished Southern children by attaching tree branch antlers to their horses and bringing food to the starving families in the war-ravaged Georgia countryside.

The most famous Christmas gift of the War was sent by telegram from William Tecumseh Sherman to Abraham Lincoln on December 22, 1864. It said:

"I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton"

The gift, of course, was not the guns, ammunition or the cotton, but the beginning of the end of the Civil War!

Notice of Annual General Meeting

In accordance with the relevant legislation, notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia, NSW Chapter Incorporated will be held at 6:30 pm on Friday, December 6, 2013, at the Roseville RSL Memorial Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville.

Business:

- To receive the report from the Secretary of activities throughout 2013 and proposed program for 2014;
- To receive and if thought fit adopt the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2013;
- To elect office-bearers of the Association and ordinary members of the committee;
- To transact any other business in accordance with the rules of the Round Table.

Brendan O'Connell
Secretary/Treasurer

Please Note:

1. The financial statements for this Annual General Meeting are enclosed as an attachment to this Newsletter.
2. Included as an attachment to this Newsletter, also, is a nomination form for the 2014 Executive and/or Committee, which should be returned to the Secretary/Treasurer, Brendan O'Connell prior to the AGM.
3. The length of the meeting is to be very short and will not interfere with the festivities of the evening. Guaranteed!!