

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 www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message from the Chairman –

Our joint Program Directors, Bruce McLennan and Philip Shanahan, have developed an innovative program of meetings for the remainder of this year, as seen by the presentations for our next meeting (see adjoining column). This initiative, together with development of our Facebook page originating from Bruce McLennan's idea and now managed by Peter Zacharatos, provides the potential for an exciting immediate future for our Chapter of ACWRTA. Sincere thanks, Bruce, Philip and Peter!

Notwithstanding the program of meetings developed so far, we are still looking for contributions from our members to our program of presentations. Perusal of our last edition of our Newsletter outlines a proposal for involving members in presentations for our meetings. This so-called "Syndicate Model" proposal seeks specifically to provide a less onerous approach to preparing presentations for our meetings. A number of examples have been provided and the suggestion made that these in presentations the syndicate might take differing or even opposing views, thus providing the meeting with "food for thought" and a catalyst for further informed discussion. At this point it is considered appropriate to invite members to ... **please consider.**

On the second page of this Newsletter we have "floated" an idea for holding a conference to commemorate the end of America's Civil War. As stated in the previous paragraph - please consider and we would greatly appreciate an expression of your views at our next meeting.

Finally, I would ask you to make a special effort to be at our meeting on June 2, with a view to continuing the great program of meetings planned for this year.

John Cook

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, June 2**, at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club**, Pacific Highway, Roseville. As is our custom, the meeting will commence with a bistro-style meal at **6:00pm** with the meeting proper to start somewhere around **7:15 – 7:30pm**. The meeting is to be a "double-header" with two very different presentations:

Fredericksburg

In this presentation, **Colin Alderdice** will lead us in looking at the historic town of Fredericksburg as it is today and discuss the events of the early 1860s that wrote the name of Fredericksburg into American history. No place more vividly illustrates the intensity of the Civil War that engulfed America. Using a range of materials collected during his visit to Fredericksburg and its battlefields in 2012 (and available as handouts for members at the meeting), Colin will provide a comprehensive overview of this crucial phase of the War.

The second presentation, which is to be given by **Wayne Morrison**, presents a "first" for our group, the title of the presentation being:

Gaming the Civil War

Wayne will provide an interactive presentation on the hobby of war-gaming as it applies to the American Civil War. There will be an overview of the hobby, followed by a detailed description of "Fire & Fury", a popular set of rules for the American Civil War. With the assistance of experienced gamers, two members of the audience will command a Union and a Confederate force in a Pickett's Charge type scenario. The aim of the presentation is to explain and demonstrate (using approximately 100 miniature figures on a 4 foot by 3 foot table) a typical battle in miniature.

In addition to these presentations, we will be conducting our regular and popular "show and tell" segment in which individual members are able to share with members interesting "snippets" relating to the period they have come across in recent times. If you have something to share, please be prepared to give a short (3 – 4 minutes) presentation.

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 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;

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.

Floating an Idea for Next Year ...

2015 presents the Sesqui-centenary of the end of America's Civil War. It might be worthwhile, therefore, to consider commemorating this by holding a conference in the March/April period with a theme associated with the end of the War.

Such a conference could involve a high profile keynote speaker, possibly from America, and as a consequence, would require a significant level of financial resources above the current level available to us at the present time.

It is envisaged that the panel of speakers for such a conference would include, also, Australian academics and Civil War historians who have supported us in the past (people like Bruce Dennett, Len Traynor and Paul Kensey).

It might be appropriate in considering the proposal for this conference we might use the conference model that our Melbourne cousins used for their conference earlier this year.

At our next meeting we would like to have a short discussion on the feasibility of holding such a conference, together with any ideas you might have regarding speakers, program of presentations, etc. Please be prepared to voice your views on this proposal and, if there is positive support for the conference, all offers of assistance will be most welcome.

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

Photographed with Lincoln ...



After an 1863 portrait session (Nicolay is on the left), Hay wrote in his diary: "Nico & I immortalised ourselves by having ourselves done in a group with the Prest."

(Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

Did You Know?

It was twelve days after Lincoln's assassination that John Wilkes Booth was shot and killed by soldiers at a farm in Virginia, and his body taken to New York for autopsy and identification. Booth was a famous actor, and his body was easily recognised. Soon after his death, however, conspiracy theories began circulating, claiming that Booth didn't die, but had escaped and lived for years.

In the blog, *Wonders and Marvels*, Jack El-Hai writes about the FBI file on John Wilkes Booth. The first official Bureau of Investigation opened in 1908, and the first documents on Booth came in the 1920s. A Missouri man wrote to the bureau claiming that Booth was his next-door neighbour, but nothing was to come of those allegations, although the FBI investigated Booth's life twice more, in 1948 and 1977, at the behest of the National Park Service. In the 1948 case, they examined the [boot that Booth wore](#) during his initial escape. (Dr. Samuel Mudd cut this boot off as he was treating Booth's broken leg.) There was writing on the inside of the boot, but the FBI couldn't decipher it. In 1977, the FBI examined [Booth's diary](#) for secret or invisible writing. The bureau didn't find anything beyond his melodramatic and arrogant prose, written in distinctly visible lettering:

"Our country owed all her troubles to him [Lincoln], and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment ... I have too great a soul to die like a criminal ... spare me that and let me die bravely."

John Wilkes Booth's Diary ...

Booth's escape journal offers an unparalleled window into the assassin's mind. Into this pocket date book, Booth inscribed for all time his deepest emotions.

He justifies Lincoln's murder:

"Our country owed all her troubles to him, God simply made me the instrument of his punishment."

He loses hope:

"After being hunted like a dog through swamps, woods, and last night being chased by gun boats ... with every man's hand against me, I am here in despair."

But he will not give up, and rallies his spirits:

"I think I have done well, though I am abandoned, with the Curse of Cain upon me ... To night (sic) I try to escape these blood hounds once more."

His plight as an injured, hunted man has not robbed him of his characteristic vanity:

"I have too great a soul to die like a criminal ... spare me that and let me die bravely."

And then, the final entry, quoting the villain Macbeth:

"I must fight the course. 'Tis all that's left me."

He does not know it when he writes those words, but John Wilkes Booth has five days to live.

(Reference: James L. Swanson is the author of *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase For Lincoln's Killer*.)



Photo of John Wilkes Booth's diary by Carol M. Highsmith.

Chamberlain's Lost Medal Of Honor Found in a Book ...

The long-lost Medal of Honor belonging to the "Lion of Little Round Top" has been found.

The Medal awarded to then-Colonel (and later Major General) Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain for his "distinguished gallantry" in leading the 20th Maine volunteers on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg came by mail to the Pejepscot Historical Society in Maine in July from a donor who wished to remain anonymous.



Historians from the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress and the U.S. Army have since verified the authenticity of the medal.

"Though it seems almost too good to be true, we are confident that we are now in possession of Joshua Chamberlain's original Medal of Honor," said Pejepscot Historical Society Director Jennifer Blanchard.

"All of the experts we've consulted believe it to be authentic, and we are tremendously honored to return the medal to Chamberlain's home" in Brunswick, Maine, which is now a museum open to the public, Blanchard said in a statement.

After Chamberlain's death in 1914, the medal came into the possession of his last living descendant, granddaughter Rosamond Allen, the Times Record of Maine reported.

When she died in 2000, the contents of her estate were donated to the First Parish Church of Duxbury, Mass., and the anonymous donor found the medal in the back pages of a book he had purchased from the church, the newspaper said. The donor said the medal was given to the historical society "to honor all veterans."

Chamberlain, who served four terms as Maine governor after the war and was president of Bowdoin College, was called "one of the knightliest generals in the Federal Army" by an adversary, Confederate General John B. Gordon.

The "Fighting Professor" who taught languages and rhetoric had several horses shot out from under him through 24 battles, in which he was wounded six times, from Antietam to Appomattox.

It was on July 2, 1863, that he passed into legend on the second day at Gettysburg in command of the 20th Maine, which held the far left flank of the Union Army on Little Round Top.

Confederate General James Longstreet sent wave after wave of infantry against Chamberlain's position. The Maine volunteers held, though barely.

Longstreet sent his Alabamians up the hill in one last push. Chamberlain later wrote that his troops were nearly out of ammunition. "At the crisis, I ordered the bayonet," he wrote.

In the desperate melee, a rebel officer aimed his handgun at Chamberlain at point-blank range and fired.

"In the excitement, his aim was poor and, strange to say, I was not hit," Chamberlain wrote. "I struck the weapon from his hand with my saber."

The stunned Alabamians fell back or surrendered under the weight of the charge by the 20th Maine. The flank had not been turned; the line had held. The next day, the charge by massed Confederate troops under Major General George Pickett would be thrown back by the federals and the Union would be saved.

"It's a tremendous privilege to join with the Pejepscot Historical Society, and indeed, the people of Maine, in welcoming home General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's Medal of Honor," said Senator Angus King, I-Maine., in a statement.

"This special moment undoubtedly captures the hearts and minds of all Mainers, as we continue to proudly recognize the legacy of General Chamberlain's leadership and heroism," King said.

Chamberlain continued to serve his state and nation long after the war. At age 70, he volunteered to fight in the Spanish-American War and later wrote that he was "greatly distressed" at being turned down.

Famous Last Words ...

"I shall come out of this battle a live major general or a dead brigadier general"

- Brigadier General Albert Perrin, killed in action at the Battle of Spotsylvania, 1864