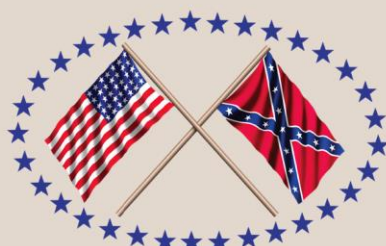


# Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)

[www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

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## President's Message

Dear Members,

I very much enjoyed our last meeting with Prof Frances Clarke introducing us to the Reconstruction. I hope Frances returns to us soon for another presentation. And Life Member Len was fantastic when talking about winning the Coles Quiz as a young man.

It has come to my attention that not everyone in our large audience had the benefit of these wonderful presentations because some could not hear them clearly, despite hearing aids. Therefore, we have resolved that all speakers use the microphone, which we will ensure is always working. Remind us if someone starts to speak without a microphone.

The other request was that we use PowerPoint slides to guide those who might have difficulty hearing. I do not think that we can always do this, but we will try as much as possible. (You are already an exception Len.)

I would particularly like to welcome our new member, Rob Muscat. Rob is President of the Military History Society of NSW. Several people are members of both that organisation and the Roundtable and Rob is well known to several of us. He has for a long time wished to join but it was not possible because he was Principal of School away from Sydney. Welcome Rob. Now, my next task is to convince him to do a presentation.

Remember to bring along \$5 or \$10 for the book raffle with the mission of emptying Past President Bruce's garage of books on the American Civil War.

*Ian McIntyre*

## Our Next Meeting

**Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> April from 6.00pm**

At The Chatswood Club,  
11 Help Street, Chatswood

Please book using the following link

<https://www.trybooking.com/DAOHV>

Includes dinner

Please book by **11pm Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April.**

## Program

Following on from an excellent meeting in February, we have a wonderful program planned for April –

**Firstly**, we will have another wonderful contribution from our life member **Len Traynor** concerning the **Confederate Museum** in Richmond, VA.

**Secondly**, we will have a short presentation from **Dr. Lisa Brown** concerning her ancestor's memorial and a significant **Civil War artefact**.

**Finally**, **Bruce McLennan** will give a presentation on **Fredericksburg and the Mud March** – the largest battle of the War and actions that did substantial damage to Union morale - on the eve of the Emancipation Proclamation.

On our **Website** you will always find the date of our next meeting. Our Facebook page is also

[www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

## Club Parking

The club offers free parking, with ample space for up to 50 vehicles. The parking lot provides direct access to the club.

### How to Access the Parking:

The entrance to the parking lot is located at the back of the club, accessible via McIntosh Street.

For GPS directions, enter '12 McIntosh Street, Chatswood.' This will guide you to the general area. Upon arrival, look for the parking complex with signage that reads 'Club Parking' in black lettering. The following image should assist you:



12 McIntosh St

**IMPORTANT:** You may need to phone the number on the post outside to get the gate opened. There are internal stairs up to the Club or you can catch the lift to G, then exit the glass doors and enter through the adjoining glass doors.

## Our Last Meeting

Our meeting was well-attended, and members and guests enjoyed the company and presentations.



## The Leonard Traynor Award

Two of our members received this award for their Contribution to the Newsletter. Tom Dixon was the recipient of the most recent 2024 award, and John Verhoeven received the 2023 Award.



Tom Dixon and Len Traynor



Len Traynor with John Verhoeven

## The \$6,000 Coles Quiz

### Len Traynor

*Len describes his experience entering this famous quiz and then winning the prize that enabled him to fulfil his long-standing wish to visit Civil War Battlefields.*

The Coles Quiz ran on Channel 7 from the late 19450s to the early 1970s and was originally called "The Coles £3,000 Quiz". With decimal currency, that became "The Coles \$6,000

Quiz". Second prize was a brand-new Holden sedan, and third prize was an all-expenses trip to Las Vegas and two weeks at the Sahara Hotel.

In 1961, I was at work at lunchtime reading a Civil War book, which I do on occasions and one of my colleagues said to me, "Why don't you go on the Coles Quiz?" and I said, "I wouldn't know what to do" and he said, "At least you'd get a trip to Melbourne". So I thought about it, and I thought, "Well, I wouldn't want the money because my former wife would sue me for more child maintenance" and, with legal fees, I'd probably get very little of it. And the Holden Sedan? I didn't drive so I wasn't interested in the car, but the trip to Vegas – I don't gamble but Vegas was closer to Civil War Battlefields than Sydney.

So I sat down and didn't tell anybody, and I wrote to Channel 7 and applied to go on the quiz. Four years later I had heard nothing. Two months later they notified me that I was going to be auditioned in Sydney along with other potential contestants. I was interviewed in North Sydney by the compere, Roland Strong, and his assistant, Dorothy, and I was given a quiz of 50 Civil War questions. I filled in the quiz and nobody said, "Thank you very much, we'll be in touch".

A couple of months later, I was notified I was going to Melbourne, and I thought, "My God, what have I got myself in for?" So I went to Melbourne and was met at the airport by a taxi to take me and another contestant to the motel. I ask, "What's your special subject?" and he said, "Australian horseracing", and I said, "That's a big topic", and he said, "No mate, I know it back to front and inside out. There's not one questions that they can ask me that I couldn't answer".

The recording was done at an old picture theatre in Melbourne – I can't remember the name of it – and before we started the recording, Roland Strong said, "If we ask you a question and we say the answer you gave us is wrong and you feel you are right, please don't argue, don't dispute it. Just accept our answer. If you can prove you're correct, we'll bring you back".

Recording's done on the stage of this picture theatre. You step out on stage and there's this huge picture theatre – 2000 seat capacity – packed to the rafters. I felt like a Christian at the Colosseum, and I thought they probably weren't as nervous as I was. It was like being a goldfish in a bowl – there's nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

So, the first contestant was the expert on Australian horseracing, and he fell at the first hurdle! And then it was my turn. My first question was "Who did General Lee succeed as General-in-Chief of the Confederate Army?" Anybody got the answer? I said, "He didn't relieve anybody. He was the first and only one appointed." And he said, "That's not the answer I have." I said, "Your answer's wrong". And a roar went up from the crowd and I thought, "I won't be able to leave Melbourne without being tarred and feathered". And he said, "Why is my answer wrong?" I said, "You probably have General Johnston". He said, "Yes" and I said, "Your answer's wrong!" Another roar went up from the crowd and I thought, "I'll be lynched as well as tarred and feathered!" He said, "You seem to know what you're talking about. Please explain". I said, "Johnston was severely wounded. Command was taken over by his senior division commander General Gustavus Smith. Lee came out from Richmond several hours later and took command of the army – not from Johnston but from Smith. He said, "We'll accept that". I said, "Thanks very much", and another roar went up from the audience.

Now, my second question: "What was the name of the Ironclad that was instrumental in the capture of Island No.10?" C'mon – anyone got that answer? It was the *Carondelet*.

My third question: "Name the Confederate Peace Commissioners and where and when they met?" Well, there were three of them – Alexander Stephens, Judge Campbell and Senator Hunter – and they met at City Point, Virginia on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1865 – and that's where they met Lincoln. He said, "Correct".

Now, that was the end of my section. I went back to Melbourne for a second trip – twice to Melbourne! – and the next question I had was: "History tells us General Sherman met Lincoln only once in the course of the war (they met twice but I kept my mouth shut on that one). Where did they meet and where?" Anyone come up with the answer. Anyone come up with the answer? Don't you read Civil War books? They met on board the *River Queen* at City Point Virginia on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1865. That was the question where I won the trip to America. I was happy with that as I wasn't particularly interested in anything else. But there was another question: "What was the name of the Cabinet Minister who accompanied President Jefferson Davis on his flight from Richmond?" Actually, there were three, but I kept my mouth shut on that one too. And I thought, "Who could it be? Alexander Stephens? Judah Benjamin or John H.



Reagan". I said, "John H. Reagan" and that was correct.

The next question – I didn't care because I didn't want to win the motor car, and I had my prize, the trip to America – "Name the three Confederate Cavalry Commanders of the Battle of Five Forks". Silence? This is a Civil War group? Well, I couldn't think of the three of them. I could think of Lee and Munford, but I couldn't think of Robertson, but it didn't matter because I had the trip I wanted.

Initially, after the first recording, I went up to Roland and apologised for my performance. He said, "Please don't apologise, Len". He said, "That was good television". And I thought, "Everyone in Australia watching this thinks I'm the most obnoxious little know all they've ever met in their lives". However, as I said, I was happy because I had the trip to America, and I found that Vegas was closer to the Civil War battlefields than Sydney.

And there's a postscript to that performance. For years, I used to correspond with a fellow in Brisbane called Jack Phillips. That was in the days before email and mobile phones. When I bombed out on the Coles Quiz, he wrote me the most scathing letter, "You should have known that – it was an easy question". And I wrote back and said, "Jack, it's easy to be acritical when you're sitting in the comfort of your loungeroom, but you're there with a live audience – an Australia-wide television audience – lights, cameras, big prizes and only 15 seconds to answer the question – the pressure is on". He wrote back and said he could do better than me. Two years later, he went on the Coles Quiz and went out on the first question. I wrote a conciliatory note. He never replied and never contacted me again.

And that, people, is my experience of going on the Coles Quiz!

### ***New members welcome***

We are delighted to welcome new members to our Round Table

This publication is the official newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia (NSW Chapter). All enquiries regarding the newsletter should be addressed to the Secretary of the Chapter by phone on 0411 745 707 or email: [secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au](mailto:secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au)

## **Reconstruction**

### **Professor Frances Clarke**



*The Roundtable was very privileged to have, as our guest speaker, Dr. Frances M. Clarke, Assoc. Professor of History at the University of Sydney, whose research specialities include the history of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction Era. Frances received her doctorate from Johns Hopkins University. The following are notes of the points she covered in her presentation:*

- **Basic outlines of this era**
- **Genesis of the Freedmen's Bureau**
- **Some of the new studies coming out on this topic**

The first official Reconstruction plan is put forward by Lincoln, right after he signs the Emancipation Proclamation. To say the least, it's an excessively moderate plan.

- Under his plan, any Confederate state then under Union control could request to rejoin the union once 10% of its pre-war voting population had taken an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and accepted emancipation.
- Once this minimal threshold was met, a state could establish a new government and send its representatives to Congress.

Republicans were furious, not least because his plan involved throwing all African Americans in the South under the bus.

- Under this so-called 10% plan, there was no provision for protecting Black people, or granting any civil rights – even for the hundreds of thousands who'd begun serving in US military.
- Lincoln basically proposed to reinstitute 'home rule' – letting Confederates take back control of their states and do whatever they wanted, so long as they agreed to emancipation.

This was in the pre-election period of 1864. Ever since, historians have debated why Lincoln came up with such a moderate plan.

- Is it because he, and everyone else, thought he'd lose the election? In that event, Dems would have taken the presidency and sued for peace (their stated platform) – almost surely destroying emancipation in the process.
- Is AL trying to preserve emancipation from being rolled back?
- We know Lincoln has argued from the beginning that rebellion was illegal. Given his belief that Confederate states had never *really* left the Union, he wants to make it easy for them to come back again.
- Also, he's a bit of a fatalist when it comes to race relations; almost, to the end, he's supporting colonization.
- Whatever his reasons, Congressional resistance — especially from Radical Republicans — is fierce. Lincoln's basically putting Congress on notice that the President has the sole power to make Reconstruction policy. This will be one of the main battlegrounds over the next few years: should the President or Congress have the deciding voice in how to reconstruct the nation?

Radical Republicans come up with their own Reconstruction plans in 1864 – which becomes the Wade-Davis Bill. It is much less lenient. First, this bill:

- required seceded states to remain under military rule until **over half** of enrolled voters had taken an oath of allegiance;
- barred any Confederate who'd held military or civilian office or had borne arms against the US from voting or holding office;
- stipulated new constitutions forbidding any form of involuntary servitude;
- extended legal protection to the formerly enslaved, including the right to serve on juries (although nothing about voting rights/land redistribution; Radicals were

themselves divided on those latter topics at this point);

- would have imposed a fine of up to \$1,500 and imprisonment of up to 20 years for anyone who attempted to return a person to servitude.

It doesn't become law because Lincoln pocket-vetoed this bill. Fatefully, of course, Lincoln is assassinated not long after, and Andrew Johnson takes over the White House – in one of those dreadful what-ifs of history. Instead of his old running mate Hamlin (a dedicated abolitionist), he chooses Johnson, one of the worst racists ever to hold a seat in Congress.

AJ was much less interested punishing Confederates than in reinstituting white supremacy.

After Appomattox, former Confederates understood that they were well and truly beaten. No one knew what was going to happen next. Everyone was waiting for the hammer to fall. Would there be reprisals for all the deaths? Trials and mass executions of former Confederate leaders?

It was not long until former Confederates comprehend that Johnson's going to do nothing whatsoever to protect Black southerners or to punish treason.

- As soon as he took over, and without consulting Congress, Johnson made a unilateral proclamation offering amnesty to nearly all white Southerners willing to take a loyalty oath – excluding only top Confederate leaders and the wealthiest landowners. They had to come to him personally to beg for amnesty.
- He began appointing provisional governors for former Confederate states.
- All across the South, men who had just removed their Confederate uniforms mere months before were elected to state officers and they started rapidly organizing state conventions.
- Local and state areas begin adopted what were called "Black codes" – which differed in various places but all imposing draconian restrictions on Black civil rights. Towns and cities began passing ordinances barring Black Southerners from owning dogs, drinking alcohol, carrying weapons, preaching, gathering in public, establishing businesses, owning houses, moving without written permission from their "employers" and so on.

From every corner of the South, reports began pouring in to the Northern press of violence committed against freedpeople and white Unionists. African Americans who dared to leave plantations were flogged or shot down; Black schools were burned and teachers driven away; former enslavers refused to deliver wives and children to African American men who'd fled enslavement to serve in US military. In many areas, bands of ex-Confederates roamed the countryside and murdered freedmen and isolated Union soldiers with impunity. The worst instances include:

- At a refugee camp near Pine Bluff, Arkansas, 24 Black men, women and children were found hanging from trees after a conflict with white residents.
- In Memphis May 1866, after an altercation between a white policeman and some Black veterans who'd just been demobilized, police joined with white mobs in rampaging through black neighborhoods; they burned every black church and schoolhouse, murdered at least 46 Black and 2 white people. Robbed hundreds and raped multiple Black women.
- Two months later, in New Orleans, an even worse massacre took place when local whites attacked a peaceful demonstration of Black freedmen (which also included many demobilized Black soldiers) – killing dozens and wounding hundreds.
- Everywhere, aspiring Black leaders were singled out and assassinated – often in broad daylight. Everywhere Black people were murdered for all manner of trivial offences – from refusing to yield the sidewalk to looking at a white person in the face.

Carl Schurz, who went on a fact-finding mission across the South, published his findings in the press in 1866. He noted that, if the federal govt failed to intervene, the South would soon become a virtual slaughter pen for the Black people. Many in the North were in agony watching this situation unfold. It was clear to all that the US has won the war but was now set to lose the peace.

In 1866, a Congressional report on Reconstruction excoriated Johnson's policies as a catastrophe. By the end of that year, Congress had overturned all of the President's decisions related to Reconstruction and barred all of the delegations from former Confederate states from entering Congress. Over Johnson's vetoes, Republicans in Congress then passed

the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Act of 1867.

### **The Freedman's Bureau**

This Bureau is signed into law a month before Lincoln's assassination. After Appomattox, it's the only form of government assistance that exists to help transition people from slavery to freedom or to help the hundreds of thousands of impoverished whites who are displaced and starving.

The Freedmen's Bureau was given awesome responsibilities. It's in charge of:

- distributing food and clothing to those in need.
- legalizing marriages between Black men and women
- establishing hospitals and providing medical care
- building schools and hiring and training teachers for black students
- negotiating labor contracts between enslavers and the free population
- helping freedpeople navigate the legal system and assisting in disputes over land, labour, and family matters
- Providing land to freedpeople.

It was set up under the War Department and funded by this Department – partly because soldiers were the ones who'd thus far been the only ones addressing the needs of formerly enslaved. It was massively contentious, in ways that we can no longer fathom in our era of widespread support for welfare states because

- the US federal government had never done anything even vaguely resembling this with taxpayer dollars before – trying to assist 4 million Black people and hundreds of thousands of impoverished whites.
- the US federal govt pre-war was miniscule: it had a few thousand employees; the CW has seen massive expansion to the alarm of many. The Freedmen's Bureau was seen as completely radical to many at the time.

Democrats were livid.

- They launched a viciously racist campaign against this Bureau that will echo down the ages.
- If you want to locate radical opposition to the expansion of the US federal government, you can locate it right here. Arguments have remained the same ever since.



So, Reconstruction is rolled back: as Black voters are intimidated away from the polls, and Democratic administrations are elected across the South, they rewrite the laws to make disenfranchisement permanent. To evade the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment's provision that the vote can't be taken away on the basis of color or previous condition of servitude, they introduce "grandfather" or literacy clauses. This is the basic story of Reconstruction that you'll find in most surveys that you pick up.

### **Newer scholarship on Reconstruction era.**

There has been so much newer scholarship – compared with the end of Burns' CW series that skips right over Reconstruction. This was a most moribund area when I started in the field, and it is now one of the most vibrant and prolific areas of scholarship.

One of the first things you discover if you read any of this newer work is the profound extent of the humanitarian crisis that the CW produced: Almost from the outset, enslaved people flooded Union lines the moment the US military appeared. They were treated in widely diverse ways, based on the military officials they appealed to:

- Abolitionist officers from New England tended to welcome escapees and put them to work but others drove them away or returned them to their owners.
- Most Union soldiers – raised in a climate of near universal racism – greeted freedom seekers with condescension at best and contempt or violence at worst.

Yet the so-called 'contraband' problem isn't one that officers can ignore.

- We don't know exactly how many of the south's 4 million enslaved people managed to find freedom during the war, but the number is certainly in the hundreds of thousands.
- There had been no planning for this situation whatsoever.
- The war was not supposed to be about emancipation, so the state has made no provision.
- There was a freedmen's aid movement, made up of various organizations. But it's small-scale aid – a drop in the bucket, given the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

Freedpeople were mostly funnelled into so-called "contraband camps" set up on the outskirts of occupied towns and cities.

- These were breeding grounds for disease and misery.

- There was very little medical care, sanitation, or facilities.
- Almost all freedpeople had escaped with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They had no money, connections, or power and mostly living in makeshift accommodation.
- Diseases – yellow fever, smallpox, cholera, dysentery, malnutrition, and exposure quickly had devastating effects on the weakened constitutions of people who were already underfed and overworked.
- As one scholar, Jim Downs, points out, this situation produced the largest biological crisis the US had seen to this point.
- He estimates that a full quarter of the 4 million former slaves died between 1862-1870, including over 60,000 who died of a smallpox epidemic that started in Washington and spread south as former slaves travelled in search of work.
- It's a bitter irony that hundreds of thousands of enslaved people fled toward freedom only to die once left to the mercies of the U.S. military.

It is important to note the fact that Lincoln passes a contraband camp on his way to and from the Soldiers' home daily in summer months. I wonder if he ever went in – he certainly knew the extent of the catastrophe. In any case, the US military's main agenda was not to aid freedpeople *per se* but to turn them into a workforce. These camps quickly became hubs for the recruitment of Black workers. Some Union officers hired or impressed black men to work digging trenches and building fortifications, occasionally for wages, but often for rations.

- They put Black women to work as cooks and laundresses, seamstresses, or hospital workers.
- Those who refused to work had their rations decreased.
- And if wages were paid, Union officials extracted the amount necessary to tend to the mass of elderly, orphaned, sick, or very young who could not work.

Elsewhere, US officers compelled freedpeople to labor on government-run plantations, under contracts signed either with former masters or US officials.

- From the outset, in other words, freedpeople were conceived of as an invaluable labor force, who needed to



be compelled back to work as quickly as possible.

- To prevent former slaves from existing outside the marketplace – engaging in begging, hawking, or scrounging to get by – the US military interpreted Black people who had not signed labor contracts as criminal vagrants – sorting them into categories of the ‘productive’ or the ‘lawlessly idle’ – effectively helping to establish new forms of unfree labor that would lead to “a century’s worth of convict camps, chain gangs, and penal farms”.

### Origins of the FB

The other thing I discovered in researching the origins of Reconstruction concerns the origins of the Freedmen’s Bureau.

When we tell the story of Reconstruction, it’s usually told from the perspective of what Congressmen are doing – the story I just told you. In fact, right after the Emancipation Proclamation came into effect in January 1863, the War Department created something called the American Freedman’s Inquiry Commission or AFIC to “investigate the condition of the colored population”, report on measures for their “protection and improvement”, and determine “how negroes could be employed by the government to suppress the rebellion”

This was what I thought I originally talk to you about tonight – the totally fascinating effort by three well-known philanthropists and abolitionists – Robert Dale Owen, Samuel Gridley Howe, and James McKaye. But I ended up ditching this plan because I wasn’t sure what you already knew about Reconstruction.

As the number of freedom seekers grew ever larger, these three men were travelling around the country and conducting interviews; talking to freedpeople, travelling up to Canada and across Union held territory to talk to communities of freedpeople; they’re studying what had happened in Haiti and the British Caribbean islands after emancipation took place there.

I discovered that their research and findings provided the intellectual basis for Reconstruction and for the Freedman’s Bureau, in particular. They’re providing all the research and reporting that Congress ends up using to support its plans.

Their preliminary report told the government, in essence, that enlistment rates are declining. If you don’t put these escaped slaves to work, you’ll lose the war: They estimated that 100,000 Black workers could be employed as military

laborers, and another 200,000 could be enlisted in the ranks. They made it clear that treating “colored refugees” with humanity was both a moral and pragmatic imperative: in order to work, freedpeople needed to be healthy and willing.

They were right, btw: over half a million freedpeople ended up working as soldiers or laborers. I’m absolutely certain that the war could never have been won without their contributions. The Confederacy would certainly have been a lot stronger if enslaved people had stayed put to grow all their food. But they didn’t!

Most of all, these men from the AFIC used free labor arguments which basically asserted that wage earning would transform slaves into men; don’t give them special treatment, land, or compensation for unpaid toil, they argued: This will just create dependents. (note cf with Dem. propaganda). In their final report, they endorsed what would become the main policies implemented by Radical Republicans in the former Confederacy:

- the immediate abolition of slavery,
- a temporary Bureau managed by the War Department to administer aid and transition Black workers to wage labor, support for freedman’s education,
- and the provision of legal and political equality for Black men.

But underlying this laudatory work, they expressed a deep hostility to anything other than short-term state intervention on behalf of freedpeople. Over and again, the AFIC emphasized that freedmen and women needed to “make their own unaided way, the better both for our race and for theirs.”

It might be noted that, ever since the end of the CW, there have been attempts to argue that the formerly enslaved deserved some compensation for centuries of unpaid toil, which was one of the mainstays of US economy in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Every year since the CR movement, bills to provide reparations have been introduced. We have these for all kinds of things (Japanese internment; looted Jewish treasure; various other forms of historical injustice but not enslavement).

I just have time to quickly mention one more branch of fascinating new scholarship on Reconstruction: this one to do with the Freedmen’s Bureau. At its height, the FB only employed 9,000 army officers; I’ve already mentioned the immense burden they carried. Over the past decade, we’ve seen a raft of

“agent studies” – local studies – discussing how this Bureau worked in the field.

As these studies note, The Bureau was purposefully set up to be decentralized and fluid so that agents could interpret and implement orders based on unique local circumstances.

General Oliver Otis Howard, the head of the Bureau, was explicit for the rationale behind this design: he wanted subordinates to “improvise and adopt” so he left much to the discretion of those engaged in the daily work. So, for better and often for worse, it’s the field agents who literally dictated the agency’s policies. And every agent had a different idea about how to discharge his duties.

Just as a few examples,

- one study takes one of the few Black Freedmen’s Bureau agents working in MD and shows his incredible success in mobilizing and empowering the black population – building dozens of new schools, hiring teachers and fundraising to pay for them.
- Another shows how a white agent in Texas was responsible for 2,800 square miles of territory with a staff of 9 men. With incredible bravery, he worked to arm Black civilians and construct schools.
- Yet another local study of a different region in TX shows that when the Freedmen’s Bureau arrived, local ministers prayed for the agents’ deaths from the town’s pulpits, deeming it a Christian duty to “kill a freedman or a white loyalist.” Only when this agent was murdered by the Klan did federal help arrive.
- This compares with another study which focused on an agent in Arkansas to show how the agent there accepted bribes from planters to furnish Black labours who he forced to remain on the plantation. Believing that white men had a natural right to have sex with Black women whenever they liked, he transformed his Bureau office into a brothel and forced freedwomen into sex before he’d help them find lost family members or enforce contractual pledges.

if you add up all these recent studies of FB agents in local areas it shows that they really ran the gamut from heroic to venal.

One final word on Reconstruction before I end. In the ‘60s and ‘70s, before Eric Foner’s 1935 magisterial book on this topic, it used to be

commonplace to hear liberals lament that Reconstruction was a dismal failure, little better than slavery.

As Foner points out, that’s simply wrong. It’s not just that there is a vast difference between slavery and oppression. For one, you get to keep your children for the most part and obtain *some* autonomy. Reconstruction leads to

- the rapid formation of hugely diverse and vibrant Black neighbourhoods and communities
- Black churches and political groups, Black owned banks, Black Wall Streets and so on
- Immense transformation of Black literacy rates; creation of public health systems, public education systems, and much else besides.

This is what African American sociologist and historian W.E.B Du Bois pointed out back in the 1930s.

Most importantly, although Reconstruction gets turned back and Jim Crow is instituted through a wave of racial violence, this era sets the precedent. Black men have received the right to vote; they’ve held enormous numbers of political positions.

As much as former Confederates tried, they simply couldn’t roll back all these gains. They become the springboard – the reference point – for the Civil Rights movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a point that’s now widely acknowledged with most books on this movement starting not in the 1950s but in the 1860s.

## Further Reading

If you’ve read anything on this era, it’s probably either W.E.B. DuBois’s groundbreaking *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward an History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (1935) or Eric Foner’s magisterial *Reconstruction*. DuBois, a black sociologist, was the first to emphasize the enormous gains made during this era, and the way these gains were beaten back as elites used racism to connect whites across class lines, papering over prewar and wartime divisions. Ignored for over a century, his work was rediscovered after WWII and would come to have a huge impact on all future Reconstruction scholars, including Foner. Since it’s out of copyright, it can be read online at [archive.org](http://archive.org). (it’s almost 800 pages long, so not exactly an “essay”!)

Anyone interested in how Foner’s thinking has changed in light of subsequent decades of scholarship might find interesting his *The Second Founding* (2019). Alternatively, whereas Foner’s

early work focused mostly on the relationship between North and south and Black/white relations, Heather Cox Richardson's *West from Appomattox* takes a more continental approach.

Those interested in daily life in the post-war South should check out Fitzhugh Brundage's brilliant social history, *The Promise of the New South*—which digs down into what it felt like to live and work in different parts of the South in the decades after the Civil War, or Steven Hahn's Pulitzer prize-winning *A Nation Under our Feet*, which traces black political strategies during Reconstruction and shows just how much the modern civil rights movement owes to African American activism in this earlier era.

Pervasive, devastating racial terrorism put an end to Reconstruction. On this topic, Kidada Williams' *I Saw Death Coming: A History of Terror and Survival in the War Against Reconstruction* (2023) has been greatly influential. Using trauma theory and following individual families, she shows the multigenerational economic and psychological impact of nightriding on Black families and communities. For another take on this topic, see William Blair, *Murders and Outrages: Racial Violence and the Fight over truth at the Dawn of Reconstruction* (2021). I also found Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku Klux: The Birth of the First KKK* (2015) particularly fascinating in the way it dealt with the response to Klan violence outside the south, and the way she reads the testimony given at the Klan hearings in the early 1870s.

The best book on military occupation is Greg Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (2015), which shows that the Civil War didn't end at Appomattox; instead, the government war powers remained in operation. A fascinating study of how the occupying army worked on the ground, and what would have happened without it there. After he published this book, he created a website that allows you to see where US Army units were stationed and when they were withdrawn:  
<https://www.mappingoccupation.org/>.

The best single volume dealing with all the diverse plans that Black and white abolitionists came up with for reconstructing the post-war world is Carol Faulkner's riveting *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, while Kate Masur's monumental *Until Justice Be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement* (2022), charts the pre-history to the Fourteenth Amendment.

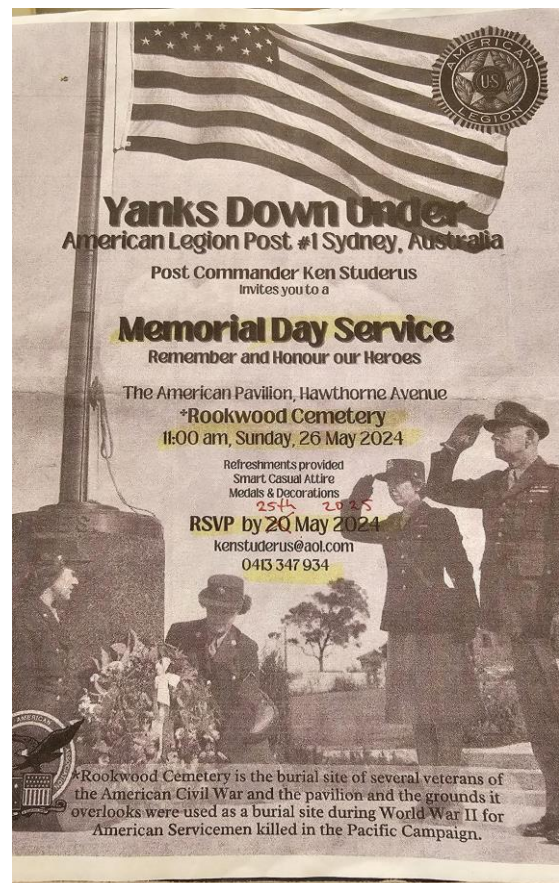
There are also two special issues of journals that are great help for getting a handle on the era. The journal *Civil War History*, vol. 51, issue 4 (Dec 2005) got a half dozen of the best-known Reconstruction-era historians to write counterfactuals, imagining what plans *might* have

worked during Reconstruction, and meditating on why such plans were not implemented (land rights; a Marshall-type plan; creating Black militia; and so on). Thinking systematically about the limits of the possible can be tremendously illuminating. The *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol 7, issue 1 (March 2017), also asked the leading names in the field to talk on the "future of Reconstruction Studies."

Finally, for anyone who wants a quick take of more recent work and doesn't have time for a whole book, the newish PBS documentary *Reconstruction* (in two parts; I think about 4 hours) is available on YouTube. Here's the first part  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxKsA7ccq8M>

## **Event: Yanks Down Under - Memorial Day Service Rookwood Cemetery 11am Sunday, 26 May**

Roundtable Members are invited to attend the following Service:



The paragraph at the bottom of this flyer reads:

*Rookwood Cemetery is the burial site of several veterans of the American Civil War, and the pavilion and the grounds it overlooks were used as a burial site during World War II for American Servicemen killed in the Pacific Campaign.*



## CIVIL WAR LETTER

*With thanks to Dan Howard*

### Robert E Lee to his wife Mary Anna Custis Lee

*On Christmas Day, 1862, ten days after the bloody battle of Fredericksburg, General Robert E Lee wrote a letter to his wife Mary. Here is an extract:*

But what a cruel thing is war! To separate and destroy families and friends and mar the present joys and happiness God has granted us in this world. To fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors, and to devastate the fair face of this beautiful world. I pray that on this day, when "peace and good will" are preached to all mankind, that better thoughts will fill the hearts of our enemies and turn them to peace. The confusion that now exists in their counsels will thus result in good. Our army was never in such good health and condition since I have been attached to it, and I believe they share with me my disappointment that the enemy did not renew the combat on the 13th. I was holding back all that day and husbanding our strength and ammunition for the great struggles for which I thought he was pre-paring. Had I divined that was to be his only effort, he would have had more of it. But I am content.



We might have gained more, but we would have lost more, and perhaps our relative condition would not have been improved. My heart bleeds at the death of every one of our gallant men. Give much love to every one. Kiss Chass and Agnes for me, and believe me with true affection yours.

(Source: Bob Blaisdale, editor, *Civil War Letters from Home, Camp and Battlefield*, 2012, Dover Publications)



**A Contribution from Member Denis Smith** (*Originally posted on 27 June 2012 by Keith Kosterman*):

### Guidance and Valuable Lessons for Ourselves and Children:

**Thomas Jefferson**

(*This is amazing. There are two parts. Be sure to read the 2<sup>nd</sup> part in red*)

***Thomas Jefferson was a very remarkable man, who started learning very early in life, never stopped learning and who...***

At 5, began studying under his cousin's tutor.

At 9, studied Latin, Greek and French.

At 14, studied classical literature and additional languages.



At 16, entered the College of William and Mary.  
At 19, studied Law for 5 years, starting under George Wythe.

At 23, started his own law practice.

At 25, was elected to the Virginia of Burgesses.

At 31, wrote the widely circulated "Summary View of the Rights of British America" and retired from his law practice.

At 32, was a Delegate to the Second Continental Congress.

At 33, wrote the Declaration of Independence and... took 3 years to revise Virginia's legal code and wrote a Public Education Bill and a Statute for Religious Freedom.

At 36, was elected the second Governor of Virginia, succeeding Patrick Henry.

At 40, served in Congress for two years.

At 41, was the American minister to France and negotiated commercial treaties with European nations along with Ben Franklin and John Adams.

At 46, served as the first Secretary of State under George Washington.

At 53, served as Vice President and was elected president of the American Philosophical Society.

At 55, drafted the Kentucky Resolutions, and became the active head of the Democratic-Republican Party.

At 57, was elected the third president of the United States.

At 60, obtained the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the nation's size.

At 61, was elected to a second term as President.

At 65, returned to Monticello.

At 80, helped President Monroe shape the Monroe Doctrine.

At 81, almost single-handedly created the University of Virginia, and served as its first president.

At 83, died on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence, along with John Adams.

Thomas Jefferson knew, because he himself had studied the previous failed attempts at government. He understood actual history, the nature of God, his laws and the nature of man. That happens to be the way more than what most understand today (*i.e.* 2012). Jefferson really knew his stuff. A voice from the past to lead us into the future.

John F. Kennedy held a dinner in the White House for a group of the brightest minds in the nation at that time. He made this statement: "This is perhaps the assembly of the most intelligence ever to gather at one time in the White House with the exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe." Thomas Jefferson

"The democracy with cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not." Thomas Jefferson

"It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which, if acted one, would save one-half of the wars of the world." Thomas Jefferson

"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretence of taking care of them." Thomas Jefferson

"My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government." Thomas Jefferson

"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." Thomas Jefferson

"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government." Thomas Jefferson

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Thomas Jefferson

"To compel a man to subsidize with his taxes the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1802:

"I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies."

"If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive of the people of all property – until their children wake up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered".

### Call for short talks

Our short ten-minute presentations on a particular battle or person have been a great success in revealing the depth of talent within our group.

Remember that we are a group of friends and a friendly audience. I know there are several amongst us who have not yet broken cover but who would be interesting and insightful presenters.

Please do not hesitate to volunteer to myself or John Morrison on a topic of your choice, be it short or long.

Ian McIntyre