

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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A Message from the Chairman –

The high quality of the presentations at our meetings was certainly upheld by the four speakers at our forum in June on *“What Caused the Civil War – Southern and Northern Perspectives”* and the paper with each participant’s contribution will serve as a most useful reference to our members. I would wish to extend my personal thanks and the appreciation of all members to Angus Hordern, David Wilson, Margaret Neil-Smith and Brian Elkington for their efforts in making the forum the great success it was. I believe that on the basis of the responses to this forum and the one last year we should make the “forum format” an annual event.

Again this year we had a number of our members participate in the Memorial Day Commemoration Service at Waverley Cemetery and the social activities following the Service. This simple commemoration with our American cousins provides a picture of stark contrast between the absolute horror of war and the gallantry of those who made the supreme sacrifice to make their world a better place. We have the opportunity in this commemoration to reflect on the opportunities that we have been given to build on these sacrifices and pursue the option of peace for our world.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is an invoice for our annual fees. The annual fee remains the same as last year at \$25 per family and I would appreciate your early return of the proforma confirming your personal details, including an e-mail address if you have one, to Brendan O’Connell, our Secretary /Treasurer.

I’m looking forward to hearing the Brazil family’s presentation at our August meeting. We had to re-schedule the meeting to the Monday evening of the previous week rather than the normal third Wednesday of the month to accommodate Matthew Brazil’s schedule but I believe any inconvenience this will cause will be more than offset by the presentation we are to receive. Take my word for it – this meeting is going to be something really special!

I hope we will see you all at our August meeting.

Paul Kensey

Next Month’s Meeting

IMPORTANT! NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE

Our next meeting for this year is to be held at our normal venue, the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**, on the evening of **Monday, August 9, 2004** with the meeting’s proceedings to commence at **7pm**. It has been necessary to change the date of this meeting from that previously scheduled to accommodate the work commitments of our speaker. As usual, members will be able to meet at the Club **from 6pm for a bistro style meal**. We have been advised that Monday night at the club is now “Roast Night”.

The speakers at this meeting will be the “Matthews” Brazil (father and son) who will address the subject of:

“No Published Timetable – The Underground Railway in Civil War Times”

Members may know the son, Matthew, from some of our meetings last year but may not have met his father, Matthew. Besides his full-time position with a major IT company, the elder Matthew is enrolled at the University of Sydney as a PhD student in History. He is a US citizen, originally from California and with a most interesting professional background in the Asia-Pacific region. Also, many of you will not recognise the other Matt (the son) as he has grown at least 30 cm (that’s one foot in the old imperial units some of us “oldies” still use) since we saw him last. He is now no longer a little boy!

This presentation will include, also, contributions from the remainder of the family including some singing of Civil war songs by the daughter Esther.

Although guarantees are rarely given, members can be assured that the presentation at this meeting will be one of the best we have had. As is our normal practice a paper of the presentation will be available to members at the conclusion of the meeting. Members living outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area will have the paper mailed out automatically with the next Newsletter in September.

It Happened in August

HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

August 6, 1811 – Judah Philip Benjamin, Attorney General and Secretary of State for the Confederacy is born in St Thomas, British West Indies;

August 27, 1809 – Hannibal Hamlin, US vice president under Lincoln 1861 – 1865 is born in Paris Hill, Maine;

August 31, 1822 – Fitz-John Porter (USA) is born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

COMMAND AND POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

August 1, 1864 – Major General Philip Sheridan is named commander of the Army of the Shenandoah and charged with ridding the valley of Confederates especially Jubal Early;

August 12, 1863 – Relieved of corps command at Vicksburg by Grant, Major General John A McClernand is refused a new command by Lincoln;

August 17, 1862 – Major General JEB Stuart is assigned command of all cavalry of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia;

August 20, 1861 – Major General George B McClellan assumes command of the newly organised Department and Army of the Potomac for the Union;

WANTON KILLING AND DESTRUCTION

August 7, 1861 – The village of Hampton, Virginia, is burned to the ground by Confederate forces;

August 13, 1831 – The slave insurrection led by Nat Turner begins with 55 whites and about 100 blacks being killed;

August 21, 1863 – Confederate guerrillas under Quantrill sack Lawrence, Kansas, killing about 150 men and boys and destroying over \$1.5 million in property;

August 25, 1863 – Following Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Federals force some 20,000 people in Missouri from their homes, which are then burned.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

August 5, 1864 – Union forces under command of Admiral David Farragut defeat Confederates at the Battle of Mobile Bay;

August 9, 1862 – Federal Army of Virginia under Pope clash with Stonewall Jackson's corps at the Battle of Cedar Mountain, Virginia;

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS cont'd

August 10, 1861 – Confederate troops are victorious at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the major battle of the Civil War in Missouri;

August 18, 1864 – The Battle of Weldon Railroad, Virginia begins;

August 22, 1862 – In a raid on Catlett's Station, Virginia, JEB Stuart captures Union General John Pope's baggage train including Pope's papers;

August 23, 1864 – Fort Morgan, Mobile Bay falls to the Federals;

August 26 – 30, 1862 – The Second Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) ending in a Confederate victory;

August 28, 1861 – Federal forces capture Fort Hatteras, North Carolina, thus sealing off an important blockade running route.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

August 2, 1861 – Federal Congress passes the first national income tax measure calling for 3% of income over \$800;

August 4, 1861 – A meeting is held in New York to combat intemperance in the federal army;

August 8, 1863 – In the wake of defeat at Gettysburg, Lee offers to resign as Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Davis rejects the offer;

August 14, 1861 – Major General John C Fremont declares martial law in St Louis city and county;

August 19, 1861 – Confederate Congress agrees to an alliance with Missouri resulting in Missouri having two state governments, Federal and Confederate;

29 August 1863 – The Confederate *H L Hunley* sinks in Charleston Harbour, the five man crew of the submarine are lost

Famous Last Words

"My plans are perfect. May God have mercy on General Lee for I will have none"

- General Joseph E Hooker, April 1862, before the Battle of Chancellorsville

NOT In Defence of the “Lost Cause”

In our last Newsletter an article prepared by one of our members was published titled “In Defence of the Lost Cause”. This article was critical of one of the articles appearing in the March, 2004 issue the Chapter’s Newsletter. Members were invited to express their views on these articles with the promise that all contributions would be published. Well, the defence of the “Lost Cause” article got right up Terry Cartwright’s nose and his response is presented below:

“...It is very interesting to observe that the proponents of the “Lost Cause” would not move until after General Lee died. They were very well aware that he would not have countenanced their actions. Also, Jackson and Stuart had already died and were not in a position to contradict the views of some of the second-rate generals like Early and Pendleton.

Of course, the “Lost Cause” was a myth. James M McPherson in his book “Battle Cry of Freedom” encapsulates the whole nonsense of the matter when he wrote:

“...This Lost Cause mentality took on the proportions of a heroic legend, a southern Gotterdammerung with Robert E Lee as a latter-day Siegfried”

The article “In Defence of the Lost Cause” refers to the Overland Campaign. Certainly Lee held Grant up at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor, but each time Grant disengaged and kept advancing. On crossing the James River no doubt he would have taken Petersburg but for the ineptness of some of his generals. In his memoirs **Grant wrote that he had always regretted the assaults at Cold Harbor as no advantage whatsoever was gained to compensate for the heavy losses sustained** (*emphasis added*). Did Lee ever acknowledge his mistakes in ordering the attacks at Malvern Hill (Seven days Campaign) and the suicidal “Pickett’s Charge” at the Battle of Gettysburg?

I have always considered that if Grant had been in command of the Federal forces at Antietam, he would have crushed Lee then thus obviating the need for the Battle of Gettysburg and the Overland Campaign.

Lee was the master of defensive warfare and used his advantages of entrenchments, internal lines and knowledge of the terrain in Virginia to great effect, explaining the massive casualties suffered by the North. Similarly in the Seven Days Campaign when Lee was the aggressor his casualties were significantly greater than McClellan’s.

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The writer of “In Defence of the Lost Cause” goes on to wonder how different the result of the War might have been if the Confederacy had a fairer allocation of manpower and resources. What an inane comment! When was war ever fair? What would have happened if the North had used all the manpower available to it? I consider that General Nathan Bedford Forrest answered this question best when he was asked about the key to his success in battle. Paraphrasing his reply, he said:

“Get there first with the most”

I consider modern historians are correct in rejecting the myth of the “Lost Cause”. Again, McPherson put the whole question in perspective when he wrote:

“... but a persistent question has nagged historians and mythologists alike: if Marse Robert was such a genius and his legions so invincible, why did they lose?”

The writer of “In Defence of the Lost Cause” is critical of some historians contending that they are attempting to re-write history. Does this writer consider that such people like Catton, McPherson and Gallagher have not been objective in their writings? All they have done is destroy the myth and bring a considered and mostly impartial view of the War and its characters.

- Terry Cartwright”

Editor’s Note: *What do readers think of Terry’s response? Has he provided some balance to the issues raised or is this just another typical piece of “anti-Confederate” writing? Let us know your views with the guarantee that **all** such responses will be published in subsequent issues of our Newsletter.*

An Interesting New Book

Few events in Civil War History have generated such deliberate mythmaking as the retreat that ended at Appomattox. The popular version of events is that Lee’s Army, tattered and starving but devoted to their commander, found itself hopelessly surrounded through no fault of their beloved commander, who surrendered them rather than sacrifice their lives.

A new book, first published in 2002, contends that the South surrendered in a more disorderly and less noble fashion than hitherto believed. Masses of troops deserted their beloved Robert E Lee and Lee made some fatal mistakes of his own for which he hasn’t been held accountable.

This book, *Lee’s Last Retreat – The Flight to Appomattox* written by William Marvel and published by University of North Carolina Press is very well researched using contemporaneous source material and with a sceptical eye toward memoirs written well after the events they purport to describe. This book is definitely worth a read.

Next Year's Conference

Preliminary planning is under way for the third of our full day conferences, scheduled for Saturday, July 2, 2005. The likely venue for this conference will be the Gordon Club at Chatswood and the proposed conference theme is:

"Appomattox and Beyond"

It is hoped that we will be able to attract some high profile speakers for the keynote addresses and a copy of the conference papers will be available to all participants at the conclusion of the conference.

Members who have some thoughts on the scope, format and content of the conference or who would wish to contribute to the conference as a speaker in one of the sessions are asked to contact John Cook on telephone 9412 3214 with their ideas.

Gettysburg Property Sold

This article comes from The Civil War News, July 2004, via Jenny Holder one of our South Australian members.

"...The Yingling Farm in Gettysburg, site of several re-enactments, including this year's and filming for "Gettysburg", will be subdivided. The 276 acre farm will be purchased after the re-enactment by Tim Shields, who owns adjacent property. According to the Gettysburg Times, Shields plans to leave 200 acres undeveloped and build six homes, grouped in pairs and restore the house and barn."

"Mr. Shields is going to ruin the movie site with houses and will probably end the re-enactment held there as the people who buy the houses will not want re-enactors playing war in their backyards in the summertime. Even though I am sure the re-enactment sponsors will attempt to find another place to hold the annual event, this place is special as it is near the battlefield and, in all likelihood, had troop movement on it, thus making it historical ground. What a crime!

Tom Bowman
Proud Son of Union Veteran
Pvt. William Bowman
210th Pennsylvania Infantry
My Great Grandfather"

The Melbourne Group's Conference

The original ACWRTA in Melbourne will be holding their conference in February 2005 to coincide with the 140th anniversary of the visit of the CSS Shenandoah to their city in 1865. Further details of this conference will be made available to our members later this year through this Newsletter.

"Little Phil's" Dark Side

Unquestionably, one of key figures in the ultimate Union victory in the Civil War was General Philip H Sheridan. Yet Sheridan had a disagreeable side in his dealings with subordinate officers and a penchant for ruining the careers of officers to whom he took a disliking. Presented here is one of the most famous of Sheridan's "sackings".

At the beginning of April 1865, in the final days of the Confederacy, Union troops under command of General Sheridan had an important victory at the Battle of Five Forks. Sheridan should have been happy with the actions of his troops in taking the enemy's defensive positions so decisively. Rather than celebrate this victory, however, Sheridan relieved, without justification, Major General Gouverneur K Warren of command of the Union V Corps. This action was to ruin Warren's distinguished service career and was in spite of Warren's troops having played a key role in winning the battle.

Years later, but after Warren's death, a court of inquiry exonerated Warren for his conduct during the battle. Warren went to his grave protesting that his actions during the Five Forks battle were proper and was never to know of this vindication by the court of inquiry. This was not an isolated case.

Members interested in reading more about Sheridan's personal vendettas should obtain a copy of the magazine *America's Civil War* (May 2004) where Eric Wittenburg has produced an excellent article on the subject.

May I Quote You General Sheridan?

The following quotes have been attributed to Major General Philip H Sheridan:

"The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war"

"Reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does the destruction of human life"

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian"

(Actually, Sheridan's original quote was "... *The only good Indians that I ever saw were dead*", but the media's paraphrasing of the quote sounds much better!)

Finally, Some Social Jottings

The Chairman and Secretary were pleased to accept, on behalf of the Chapter, the kind invitation of Eileen Molloy, Consul General of the United States of America and were present at the reception in observance of the 228th Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America on Sunday, July 4, 2004 at the Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point.