

Sumter to Appomattox

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

No. 48, November 2009

Please visit our website www.americancivilwar.asn.au

A Message to Members –

In presenting the final Newsletter for 2009, I must first sincerely apologise for my tardiness in getting this month's edition to you and, particularly for the consequent late notice of our Annual General Meeting and end-of-year/Christmas function. As you will see from the adjoining column of this page the AGM and Christmas party will be held on Friday, November 20, at our normal meeting venue of Roseville RSL Club. I am able to give an absolute assurance that the AGM will be of the shortest duration and members are asked to bring their wife, partner and/or friends to our usually sparkling social event of the year.

Without seeming to be pushing too hard, I would ask all members to consider joining our Committee, in either one of the executive positions or as a Committee member. In this regard, we are in the urgent need of a new Chairman since Paul Kensey "threw this kitbag over the wall" at the end of 2008. It is true that we have stumbled through this year without a Chairman, but the emphasis is on our "stumbling"! We need some one to provide leadership and direction to our activities. So as the old advertisement says – Please consider!

Looking to 2010, I really hope that we can remain a viable Chapter, providing challenging and useful presentations to our membership with their wide ranging interests in matters about America's Civil War. To this end, if you have any ideas on topics we could address in our meetings next year please make your suggestions known to us. If you know some one who might be prepared to give a Civil War presentation, let us know also. Best of all, if you would like to give a presentation yourself, please "step up to the plate"!

As this Newsletter goes to print, we have just received a generous offer from a Mr Alec Dalglish who wishes to donate to the Chapter a collection of some 69 Civil War books including a number of the classic books on the era. Although we will be accepting Mr Dalglish's kind offer, we still have to consider precisely how we will take up the offer. Any suggestions?

Finally, a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to all.

John Cook

Our Next Meeting

As foreshadowed in the Message to Members in the adjoining column of this Newsletter, our next meeting will be our **End-of-Year/Christmas Function**. The function is to be held on **Friday, November 20, commencing from 7pm**.

As is our custom, this function is one for the wives, husbands and partners as well as members of the Chapter, so please bring along your "better half", if only to see there are others who do not share with us a passion for matters Civil War. This Christmas Function will take the form of a very short Annual General Meeting to elect the Executive and Committee for 2009 followed by **sit-down meal** for most of the time. The venue for this function is **Roseville Memorial RSL Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville**

The cost for the evening is \$40:00 per person (all inclusive) with the evening being subsidised to a significant extent by our raffle and from Chapter funds. Please let Brendan O'Connell know if you are coming as soon as possible but no later than Wednesday, November 18. Brendan can be contacted either by 'phone on (02) 9449 3720 or by e-mail at secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au. This function will be a great way to end our year's activities and it is hoped that there will be a large turn-out of members to celebrate together.

Vale: Jeff Bryant

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Jeff Bryant, one of the Chapter's long-standing members, who died tragically just before our last meeting at the end of September. Members will remember Jeff as one of our regulars at dinner before our meetings and note that he and his brother Carl were key members of the last of Paul Kensey's Civil War battlefield tours.

To Jeff's family and, fellow member Carl, in particular, we would wish to extend our most sincere sympathy for their loss.

It Happened in November

HATCHES AND DISPATCHES

November 3, 1816 – Jubal Early, (CSA), is born in Franklin County, Virginia;

November 5, 1818 – Soldier-politician, Benjamin Franklin Butler, (USA), is born in Deerfield, NH;

November 9, 1825 – A P (Ambrose Powell) Hill, (CSA), is born in Culpepper, Virginia;

November 13, 1814 – Joseph (Fighting Joe) Hooker is born in Hadley, Mass;

COMMAND CHANGES

November 1, 1861 – Major General George B McClellan succeeds retiring Lieutenant General Winfield Scott as general-in-chief of the Union armies;

November 2, 1861 – Major General John C Frémont is relieved of command of the Union's Western Department;

November 5, 1862 – President Lincoln relieves General McClellan of command of the Army of the Potomac replacing him with Ambrose Burnside;

November 10, 1862 – McClellan takes an emotional, spectacular farewell of the Army of the Potomac;

November 24, 1862 – Confederate General Joseph E Johnston is assigned to the major command in the West comprising six states;

November 30, 1863 – Gathering his defeated army in north-west Georgia, Braxton Bragg learns that his resignation has been accepted by President Davis.

BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

November 11, 1864 – Federals in Rome, Ga., destroy bridges, foundries, warehouses of use to the enemy and proceed towards Atlanta;

November 16, 1864 – General Sherman and 60,000 Union troops leave a burned out Atlanta and begin their march to the Sea;

November 17, 1863 – The Confederate siege of Knoxville, Tenn, gets underway and the partial siege of Chattanooga continues;

November 29, 1864 – The Federal army under command of John Schofield withdraws under Hood's nose without suffering attack in the "Spring Hill Affair" (in Tennessee).

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

November 6, 1860 – Lincoln is elected President of the United States;

November 8, 1864 – Lincoln is re-elected as US President with Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as his Vice President;

November 12, 1861 – The Confederate blockade runner *Fingal*, purchased in England, arrives in Savannah with military supplies;

November 15, 1861 – The YMCA organises the US Christian Commission for support to Federal soldiers;

November 19, 1863 – Lincoln delivers the *Gettysburg Address* at the dedication ceremony for the new national cemetery at Gettysburg;

November 25, 1864 – Confederate agents set fire to a number of New York hotels and Barnum's Museum without causing significant damage;

November 26, 1861 – A convention at Wheeling adopts a constitution for a new stateto be called West Virginia, created by secession from Virginia;

November 27, 1863 – General John Hunt Morgan and a number of his officers escape from the Ohio State Penitentiary and manage to reach Confederate territory;

November 28, 1861 – Southern Congress officially admits Missouri to the Confederate States of America.

The First Lincoln Cent Turns 100!

Issued to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, the 1909 Lincoln one cent piece would have become a collectors' item anyway, but when the designer, Victor David Brenner included his initials "VDB" conspicuously on the reverse side of the coin, it caused a scandal nationwide. Struck by the US Mint only a few 1909-dated Lincoln cents were minted before public outcry and protest had the initials permanently removed from the coin.

This coin had a number of other "firsts" associated with it. It was the first cent piece to have a p[resident's portrait featured on it and it was the first to bear the motto:

In God We Trust

Surprisingly, a small collection of these coins are still available and may be purchased from the New York Mint (which by the way is not affiliated with the US Mint). The cost is \$US 39:95 per coin or \$US 34:95 for each if five are purchased. What a classic example of inflation – more than Zimbabwe's current rate!

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 7pm on Friday, 20 November 2009 at the Roseville RSL Memorial Club, Pacific Highway, Roseville.

Business:

- To receive the report from the Secretary of activities throughout 2009 and proposed program for 2010;
- To receive and if thought fit adopt the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2009;
- 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: The financial statements for this Annual General Meeting are enclosed as an attachment to this Newsletter.

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, NSW, 2075 or by e-mail to secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au

A Great Story...If only it were true!

At the end of October, an e-mail was received from John King, one of our members residing in Queensland sent the text of a letter of condolence from President Lincoln to a Mrs Bixby who had lost sons in the War. The contents of this letter of condolence were:

*Executive Mansion,
Washington, Nov. 21, 1864.*

Dear Madam,

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,

A. Lincoln

In response to John King's e-mail, Len Traynor, oracle on matters Civil War sent John an e-mail, the text of which states in part:

"...Sadly Mrs Bixby was not entitled to receive her sympathy letter from President Lincoln, as she didn't have five sons killed in battle. It was later determined that only two had died in battle, two had deserted and I believe the other survived. Another myth from the Civil War..."

What a pity the facts got in the way of a really good, compassionate story. Lincoln's condolence letter, as originally reported by John King, was a beautiful piece of writing and people reading it would likely be greatly moved by its language and sentiments.

John and Len, thanks for your contributions to this Bixby condolence letter, particularly to you John, who took the trouble to update us with Len's input. Call me a romantic, but this is one time when I would have liked Len's facts to have been incorrect!

Some Quotable Quotes

The following quotes relating to the beginnings of America's Civil War have been gleaned from a number of sources:

"As a nation we began by declaring that all men were created equal. We now practically read it, all men are created equal, except negroes"

Abraham Lincoln, 1855

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I expect it to cease to be divided"

- Abraham Lincoln, opening statement of the Lincoln-Douglas debates 1858

"The time for compromise has now passed. The South is determined to maintain her position and make all who oppose her smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel"

**- Confederate President Jefferson Davis
February 16, 1861**

"South Carolina is too small for a republic and too large for an insane asylum"

- James L Petigru, on hearing of its secession from the Union

"I am with him"

- Stephen A Douglas, following Lincoln's inaugural address

"If the Union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native state and share the miseries of my people and, save in defense (sic), draw my sword on none"

Robert E Lee, 1861

"War means fighting, and fighting means killing"

Nathan Bedford Forrest

"We will fight you to the death. Better to die a thousand deaths than to submit to live under you"

John Bell Hood, CSA

"The time for was has not yet come, but it will come, and that soon; and when it does come, my advice is to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard"

- Thomas J Jackson to VMI cadets, April 13, 1861