

# 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 –

Your Committee has held its first planning meeting for the year and, as a result, 2013 looks like being a vintage year for our Chapter!

By the time you are reading this Newsletter, we will have had our first event for the year – a theatre party to the Roseville Cinema to see the newly released movie Lincoln preceded by Dinner at the Roseville Memorial RSL Club. What a wonderful and highly acclaimed motion picture it is, for which Doris Kearns Goodwin of *Team of Rivals* fame had significant input, resulting in a storyline that is so much more accurate than many of the other Civil War movies. The movie is set in the period from January to April 15, 1865 and focuses on the passing of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution (the abolition of slavery). Whilst there are some errors of fact, probably inserted for dramatic effect, its authenticity is a major feature of the movie,

Most importantly, we kick off our regular meetings for the year on March 18, with a special presentation by Edwin Bearss one of the key commentators in the Ken Burns' *The Civil War* series on TV. This will be a great opportunity to hear one of the doyens of the American Civil War historical community and should not be missed.

In late October, we will be hosting a meeting for another overseas visitor, Michael (Mick) Bedard, who will be speaking about Medicine in Civil War times. Between these two meetings, Bruce McLennan, our Program Director, is organising a most interesting and exciting set of presentations, including having Bruce Dennett challenge again our ideas about the Civil War politics, events and personalities.

If you have some ideas about what topics we might consider at our meetings this year (or next year), Bruce is more than happy to speak with you and progress your ideas. In particular, if you would like to do a presentation, either long or short, Bruce will be most enthusiastic to discuss your thoughts.

Our 2013 program can only be as successful as we want it to be with your active support and involvement. I look forward to seeing you at our meeting throughout the year.

*John Cook*

## Our Next Meeting

Our first formal meeting of the year will be held on **Monday, March 18**, at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club**, Pacific Highway, Roseville.

As is our custom, meeting will commence around 6pm with dinner followed by a very special speaker in the person **Edwin Bearss**, distinguished Civil War historian and guide. Most of our members will have seen and heard Ed Bearss in his many television performances, including the seminal Ken Burns' *The Civil War* series. At this stage we have not yet finalised the focus of his presentation, but you can be guaranteed that it will be something really special and should not be missed.

Besides the formal presentation, we are intending to open the meeting for an extended question and answer session, where we will be seeking to gain some insights to the Civil War events and personalities that might have eluded us up until now. Ed Bearss will certainly be able to share his vast knowledge and experience gathered over a lifetime of study and "walking the ground" of the various Civil War battlefields.

The meeting provides, also, an opportunity to invite family and friends who might have some interest in, but not the passion for matters Civil War, as many of our members do.

Please make an effort to come to this meeting, bring a friend and make our first meeting for 2013 the success that it can be.

## This Year's Meeting Dates

The Following dates have been booked with the Roseville RSL Club for this year's meetings:

18 March  
20 May  
15 July  
9 September  
28 October  
29 November (Friday)

Please ensure you have these dates recorded in your diary.

## It Happened in March

### HATCHES AND DISPATCHES

**March 6, 1831** - Philip H Sheridan is born in Albany, New York;

**March 22, 1817** - Braxton Bragg (CSA) is born in Warrenton, North Carolina;

**March 28, 1818** - Wade Hampton (CSA) is born in Charleston, South Carolina.

### COMMAND CHANGES

**March 5, 1862** - Pierre G T Beauregard assumes command of the Confederate Army of Mississippi;

**March 9, 1864** - Ulysses S Grant is named General-in-Chief of the Army of the United States;

**March 11, 1862**, - Lincoln removes McClellan from his command as General-in-Chief of the Union armies;

**March 17, 1864** - Lieutenant General U S Grant formally assumes command of the armies of the United States.

### BATTLES/MILITARY ACTIONS

**March 2, 1865** - Battle of Waynesborough - the last campaign in the Shenandoah Valley;

**March 7, 1862** - Battle of Pea Ridge (Elkhorn Tavern), the biggest battle west of the Mississippi;

**March 9, 1862** - Ironclads CSS *Virginia* and USS *Monitor* engage at Hampton Roads, Virginia;

**March 12, 1864** - Red River campaign begins under command of Nathaniel Banks (USA)

**March 16, 1865** - Battle of Averasborough, N.C. March 19, 1865 - Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina;

**March 21, 1865** - Last major effort by the Confederates to Stop Sherman 's march south of Bentonville, N.C.

**March 23, 1862** - Jackson and Shields Clash at the Battle of Kernstown, VA;

**March 25, 1865** - Grant defeats Lee at Fort Stedman, Virginia .

**March 25, 1865** - Union troops begin the siege of Mobile, Alabama

**March 29, 1865** - The beginning of the final Appomattox campaign;

**March 30, 1864** - Confederates attack Snyder's Bluff, Mississippi .

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

**March 4, 1861** - Lincoln is inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States;

**March 4, 1861** - The "Stars and Bars" is designated as the official Confederate flag;

**March 4, 1865** - Lincoln is inaugurated for a second term as President;

**March 13, 1863** - Explosion at the Confederate Ordnance Laboratory in Richmond kills or injures 69 people;

**March 14, 1863** - Farragut leads his Union flotilla up the Mississippi past Port Hudson, La;

**March 21, 1861** - Louisiana ratifies the Confederate Constitution;

**March 26, 1863** - West Virginia voters approve the gradual emancipation of slaves;

**March 27, 1865** - President Lincoln meets with Grant, Sherman and Porter aboard the *River Queen* at City point, Virginia;

**March 28, 1865** - Lincoln offers terms of surrender.

## Civil War Books at Bargain Prices...

In the coming months we will be conducting a "Garage Sale" of Civil War books that have been donated to us by two of our members, Paul Kensey and Terry Cartwright. These books include many of classic works by eminent Civil War historians, both past and present.

The good news, no, the great news, is that all books in the sale are at bargain basement prices with nothing over \$20!

Shortly we will be circulating a catalogue of these books and you will be able to see the extent of the bargains. More details of this book sale will be available at our March meeting, including the date and venue for the sale, availability of the catalogue for the sale and other activities that will be held in conjunction with the sale.

All proceeds from the sale will go to bolster our funding base and, in particular, to pay our contribution towards the cost the Ed Bearss visit. Stay tuned!

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](mailto:secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au)

## Abraham Lincoln's Son, Robert...

*Jenny Holder, one of our South Australian members, has provided this most interesting article for our Newsletter. Thanks Jenny!*

Robert Todd Lincoln was the only child of Abe and Mary Lincoln to survive into adulthood - with his three brothers having died from illness at young ages. Believe it or not, Robert lived until 1926, dying at age 83. But along the way, he sure lived a remarkable life.

For starters, he begged his father for a commission to serve in the Civil War, with President Lincoln refusing, saying the loss of two sons (to that point) made risking the loss of a third out of the question.

But Robert insisted, saying that if his father didn't help him, he would join on his own and fight with the front line troops; a threat that drove Abe to give in.

But you know how clever Abe was. He gave Robert what he wanted, but wired General Grant to assign "Captain Lincoln" to his staff, and to keep him well away from danger.

The assignment did, however, result in Robert's being present at Appomattox Court House, during the historic moment of Lee's surrender.

Then - the following week, while Robert was at the White House, he was awakened at midnight to be told of his father's shooting, and was present at the Peterson House when his father died.



Robert Todd Lincoln

Of Lincoln's other sons, little Eddie died at age 4 in 1850 - probably from thyroid cancer. Willie was the most beloved of all the boys. He died in the White House at age 11 in 1862, from what was most likely Typhoid Fever.

Abe grieved the hardest over Willie's death. It took him four days to pull himself together enough to function as President again. Lincoln had a temporary tomb built for Willie, until they could return home with his body to Springfield and he often spent long periods of time at the tomb.

Tad was a real hellion. None of his tutors could control him, which is why he grew up unable to competently read or write. He was a "momma's boy", he had a lisp and was probably mildly retarded.

He died at age 18 in 1871, most likely from the same thyroid cancer from which Eddie had died, suggesting a genetic flaw.

But - back to Robert, shown at age 22 in the photograph below, following his father's assassination, he moved to Chicago with his insane mother, and brother Tad, who was 12 at the time. Robert finished law school and practised the craft for a time, while constantly struggling to keep crazy Mary in check.



As she had done as First Lady, Mary went on shopping binges that far exceeded common sense, driving what was left of the family fortune into bankruptcy, and leading to violent disputes between Robert and her.

Robert also had torrid battles with Mary to keep her from destroying Lincoln's private papers, not just for their financial worth, but for their historic value also, with Mary forever trying to tear them apart and burn them in fireplaces.

In fact, her irrational behaviour (she was probably schizophrenic) grew so destructive that Robert had to have her put away, with his signature signing her into a psychiatric hospital, where she stayed locked up for three months. Mary never forgave him for it - and they remained estranged from then on - until Mary died at age 63 in 1882.

Worth noting, as a deceased President's wife, Mary had petitioned Congress for a pension and she got one! She received \$3,000 a year, a sizable sum back then.

Of profound interest, as an adult Robert wrote there was a lot of distance between his father and him - caused mainly by Abe's being absent so much of the time during Robert's formative years. Abe was forever gone on state wide judicial circuits, or campaigning for office - or serving in the state legislature. Robert writes that his most vivid memories of his father were seeing him pack his saddlebags to be off again. Nonetheless, Robert respected his father - and he wept obsessively the night he was killed.

In 1868, Robert married a senator's daughter and they had three children - two girls and a boy, Abraham Lincoln's only grandchildren. Their son whom they named Abraham Lincoln II (but whom they called "Jack") would die in 1890 from an infection arising from having a boil pierced under his arm. He was 15 at the time, and at left is a blurry, but still remarkable photo of his lying in bed, shortly before he died.

(cont'd overleaf)

The two daughters, however, lived fairly long lives, one living until 1938 to die at age 69, and the other until 1948, dying at age 72.

The last direct descendent of Abraham Lincoln would be the child of one of Robert's daughters - Abe Lincoln's great grandson - a man named Bud Beckwith, who died married but childless, in 1985.



Robert Lincoln's three children in a photograph taken before Jack's death

In his own right, Robert made quite a life for himself. He got into politics and was highly regarded in those circles. In fact - he served as Secretary of War under President Garfield - and, incredibly, was with him when Garfield was shot at the Washington train station!

Some years later, Robert would also be present when President McKinley was gunned down in Buffalo!

In later years, Robert would grow a beard. He would serve in other political appointments and ambassadorships, and later became president of the Pullman train car company, a booming enterprise back then, and a position he would hold for the rest of his life.



In this photograph Robert (far right), in his late Seventies, is appearing at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922

It is worth noting that Robert was an avid amateur astronomer, and even had an observatory built into his Vermont home, which is better described as a mansion, really; but anyhow - the telescope was so well built and powerful that's it's still used today by a local astronomy club.

**A footnote:** Abe Lincoln once said he doubted Robert would do as well in life as he had done. You sure wouldn't know it, however, from the mansion Robert lived in? See photograph, below:



Beyond that, Robert was several times offered the chance to run as President or Vice-President, with his every time refusing the offer, so - Old Abe's assessment of his son was way off the mark, wasn't it? Of course, who knows how much 'being Abe's son' influenced Robert's success in life? But anyhow - now for the most incredible coincidence there is to know about Robert Lincoln -

In his 20's, Robert was standing on a train platform in Jersey City - buried among a crowd of passengers attempting to buy sleeping births from a haggard conductor - when the train moved.

Robert was standing so close to the train that it spun him around and sent him dropping into the space between the train and the platform - a perilously tight place to be - against a moving train threatening to crush him!

Suddenly - a hand grabbed Robert by the neck of his coat and pulled him up onto the platform, a quick action by a solidly strong man that may well have saved Robert's life. Do you know who that man was? It was Edwin Booth - the brother of John Wilkes Booth ... who had murdered Robert's father.

Lastly, the photograph of Robert Todd Lincoln's final resting place is presented, the sarcophagus at Arlington National Cemetery, where he's buried with his wife and son Jack.



Truly, Robert Todd Lincoln led a full and productive life overshadowed somewhat by the tragedy of his father's assassination, but one of which his father would have been justifiably proud.