

# Sumter to Appomattox

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

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Please visit our website [www.americancivilwar.asn.au](http://www.americancivilwar.asn.au)

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## A Message from the Chairman –

Our last meeting in July was really well attended with a number new faces joining us and joining our Chapter of the Round Table. This trend is most welcome! As I advised in our last Newsletter, I had prevailed on our “elder statesman”, Paul Kensey, to share with us some of his extensive knowledge and understanding of matters Civil War with a presentation relating to the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg leading up to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address later in 1863. I’m sure that all present were suitably impressed by Paul’s presentation to us and, in particular, his rendition from memory and with out notes of the Gettysburg Address. All I can say is that like a fine wine, Paul is getting better with age. Thanks Paul for a vintage address, which all of us present really appreciated both the preparation you had put into it and passionate delivery of the topic.

The second part of the meeting was one of the videos featuring Dr Gary Gallagher in his highly regarded DVD *Civil War* series. Lectures from this series been presented at some of our meetings and have proved to be very popular. This meeting’s topic, ‘*Remembering the War*’, was no exception and the discussion that followed was particularly interesting and reflected a scholarly understanding of this aspect of American history. Thank you to all members who actively participated in the discussions.

Finally, I would like to mention the book sale we had on the Saturday following our last meeting. It was most unfortunate that the response from members was not particularly positive and we only sold a few books making a total of \$170. In this regard, the fault lies in our inadequate publicity for the sale and it is hoped that this can be rectified in the coming months. To this end, Brendan O’Connell has prepared a listing of the books still to be sold and this listing is provided as an insert to this Newsletter. As you can see from this listing, there are a large number of classic Civil War books available and all are at rock-bottom prices. Please look over this listing and fill out the order-form provided with any books you want.

*John Cook*

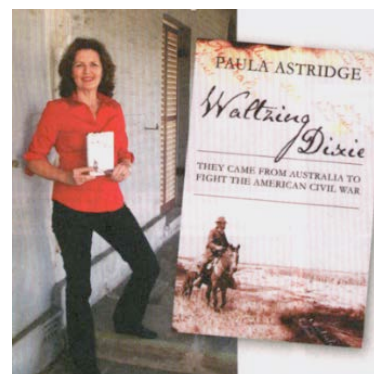
## Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, September 9**, at the **Roseville Memorial RSL Club**, Pacific Highway, Roseville. As is our custom, meeting will commence with a bistro style meal from 6pm with the meeting proper to start somewhere around 7:15 – 7:30pm.

The speaker for this meeting is Rebecca Power, one of our new members, whose address is entitled:

### Waltzing Dixie

The title of Rebecca’s presentation takes its name from a new book of the same name authored by an Australian, Paula Astridge and recounts the exploits of two Irishmen, Thomas Meagher and John Mitchel who fought in the American Civil War after first being transported as convicts from Ireland to Australia and then escaping incarceration from what is now Tasmania.



Paula has generously offered us ten signed copies of her book, which we intend to auction at the conclusion of our meeting to help fund our activities.

In addition, we will continue with our popular “Show and Tell” segment, so please bring along something or come prepared to speak briefly on a topic for about 3 minutes.

Please make an effort to come to this meeting, bring a friend and make this meeting a success that builds on what we achieved in our earlier meetings this year.

## Gettysburg Hero to be Awarded Posthumous Medal of Honor 150 Years after the Battle...

One hundred and fifty years ago, a wounded Wisconsin soldier stood his ground on the Gettysburg battlefield and made a valiant stand before he was slain by a Confederate bullet.

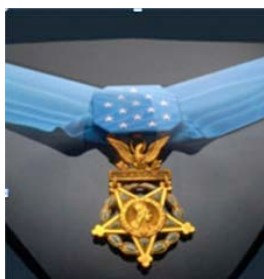
Now, thanks to the efforts of modern day supporters, **1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Alfonso Cushing** is being considered for the nation's highest military decoration. Two Wisconsin congressmen have added an amendment to this year's annual defence bill in Washington and approved by Secretary of the Army, John McHugh that will grant Cushing the posthumous honour.

Cushing, pictured below, will become one of 3,447 recipients of the Medal and the second from the Civil War honoured in the last 13 years.



Cushing died on July 3, 1863, the last day of the Battle. He was 22 years old. A West Point graduate, Cushing and his men of Battery A, 4<sup>th</sup> US Artillery were defending the Union position on Cemetery Ridge against Pickett's Charge, a major Confederate thrust that might have turned the tide of the War. Cushing was in command of 110 men and six cannons. His small force stood their ground under a Confederate artillery bombardment lasting two hours, during which he was wounded in the shoulder and the groin and his battery was left with two guns and no long-range ammunition. His stricken battery should have been withdrawn and replaced with reserve forces, but Cushing shouted that he would keep his guns at the front line. Within minutes, Cushing was killed by a Confederate bullet to the head.

The decision to make this posthumous award, shown below, was an honour 150 years overdue, according to Margaret Zerwekh, a 90-year woman who lives on the land in Delafield where Cushing was born. She jokes that Cushing's family has adopted her for her efforts to see Alfonso recognised.



It is interesting to note that although Cushing's substantive rank was 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, his gravestone (shown below) shows his rank a Brevet Lieutenant Colonel.



Ms Zerwekh first started her campaigning for Cushing in 1987 by writing to the Wisconsin Senator William Proximire. Proximire entered into the Congressional Record and she assumed that was as far as it would go. However, the current senator, Russ Feingold, took up the case and helped Zerwekh and others to petition the Army for consideration of the case. Interestingly, Cushing's bravery inspired on Civil War historian to take up Cushing's cause by launching a Facebook page titled *'Give Alfonzo Cushing the Medal of Honor'*.

After a lengthy review of historical records, the Army agreed earlier this year to recommend the award of the medal.

According to the Defense (*sic*) Department more than 1,500 soldiers from the Civil War have received the Medal of Honor. The last recipient for Civil war service was Corporal Andrew Jackson Smith of Clinton, Illinois, whose descendents received the Medal in 2001.

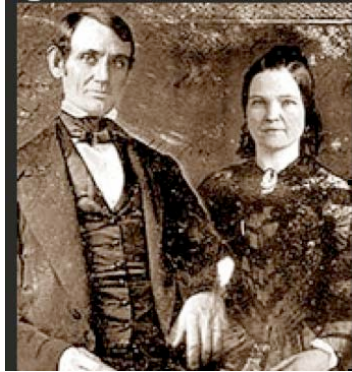
The Cushing name is prominent in the south-eastern Wisconsin town of Delafield. A monument to Cushing and two of his brothers - Naval Cmdr. William Cushing and Army 1st Lt. Howard Cushing - stands at Cushing Memorial Park, where the town holds most of its Memorial Day celebrations.

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 e-mail [secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au](mailto:secretary@americancivilwar.asn.au)

## Some Interesting Photographs

The following photographs have been gleaned from a number of sources and members may not have seen them before.

The first of these is a photograph taken of Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary (nee Todd) on their wedding day on November 4, 1842 in Springfield, Illinois, after three years of a stormy courtship and a broken engagement.



The next picture is of Mary Lincoln's half sister, Emily Todd, who in 1856 married Benjamin Helm, future Confederate general. At the risk of being accused of being judgmental, it would appear that Emily was well ahead of Mary in the beauty stakes, at least from an examination of these photographs!



After Helm's death in 1863 Emily Helm passed through Union Lines to visit her sister in the White House. This caused great consternation in the Northern newspapers. Emily Helm took an oath of loyalty to the Union and was granted amnesty.



The photograph, above, is a well-known picture of Lincoln visiting the troops early in the War and highlights his height in relation to the typical Union officer during this period, accentuated by his wearing of the stovepipe hat.

The next photograph was taken in 1913 and shows two veterans, one a Confederate and one a Union soldier, shaking hands during the celebration at Gettysburg commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle.



This image was retrieved from the Library of Congress files.

The photograph, below, is a **live** cannonball that was found in July, this year, in downtown Atlanta near their Centennial Olympic Park. Unfortunately, since it was found to contain live explosives, it had to be detonated.



Lastly, there is a photograph of an African-American Union soldier and his family, the context and the source of which remains a mystery?



Any member who can shed some light on this photograph should contact the Newsletter editor with a view to collecting his/her prize, which is a bottle of fine wine to the first member who can provide the necessary details of both the source and context of this photograph.

# Elizabeth Van Lew - The Most Hated Woman in Virginia - Part 2

(cont'd from Newsletter No.65)

The Virginia Historical Society's Caroline Legros guesses most Richmond residents don't know anything about Van Lew's exploits. "She was a surprise and a shock. I think Richmonders weren't ready for her. I think she was somebody outside of her time and the city hated it."

Van Lew used her job as a bully pulpit fighting tirelessly for racial and gender equality. Labeled a traitor to the "Lost Cause" – the firebrand is threatened and bullied but was not deterred.

Dr. Lee says, "It says a great deal about her that she remained true to her cause." Neighbours shunned the eccentric Van Lew like the plague forever calling her "Crazy Bet". Penniless from helping the Union war effort and freeing countless slaves Van Lew fell on hard times. Van Lew's biographer Elizabeth Varon says, "The only people who stood by her were the African Americans of Richmond."

The family of a Union soldier Van Lew helped while imprisoned in Richmond learnt of her financial plight and sent money. Upon her death in 1900, Van Lew is buried in an unmarked grave in Shockoe Hill Cemetery. No monument was erected in her honor. The once grand Van Lew mansion is demolished in 1911.

Richmond Haunts tour guide Bergman says, "She was not on the right side to be celebrated. Years after her death Van Lew's abolitionist friends in New England helped secure her legacy. They shipped a massive stone and bronze plaque to Richmond and the delivery that makes bold headlines. Bergman says, "As a grave marker it is interesting mostly of its simplicity."

Historians say a century and a half after Van Lew wrote her chapter in history, it is about time her story should emerge from the shadows. "I think the long term history will be kind to her," Bergman says. "Maybe she can come back and maybe she can be one of those forgotten heroes we no longer forget."

What about her massive shrine? Some say it is a fitting tribute to the woman who was so unyielding. Dr Lee says, "I think that we would want to remember what she has done not only for African-Americans, but all of us."

Elizabeth Van Lew is taking her place among some of the top spies in history. Van Lew is part of the Sisterhood of Spies gallery at the spy museum in Washington where you can see a book with a passage written in Van Lew's own handwriting. The passage reads –

**"Keep your mouth shut and your eyes and ears open".**

## It Happened in September...

### HATCHES AND DESPATCHES

**September 4, 1864** - Confederate raider and cavalry leader, John Hunt Morgan, is shot and killed in a federal raid on Greenville, Tenn;

**September 6, 1819** – William S Rosecrans (USA) is born in Delaware County, Ohio;

**September 10, 1836** – Joseph (Fighting Joe) Wheeler (CSA) is born in Augusta, Ga;

**September 12, 1818** – Richard J Gatling, inventor of the first machine gun (Gatling Gun) used in the Civil War is born in Hertford County NC;

**September 27, 1808** – Raphael Semmes, the Confederate naval commander responsible for the destruction or capture of 64 Union ships is born in Charles County, MD;

### BATTLES / MILITARY ACTIONS

**September 1, 1864** – Union forces under General Sherman occupy Atlanta; September 8, 1863 – General Braxton Bragg retreats into Georgia;

**September 9, 1863** – Federal forces commanded by General Rosecrans occupy Chattanooga, TN;

**September 15, 1862** – Confederates capture Harpers Ferry, W.VA, taking 12 000 prisoners;

**September 17, 1862** – The Battle of Antietam halts Confederate advance into the North;

**September 18, 1862** – Lee withdraws his Army of Northern Virginia from Maryland under cover of darkness;

**September 19-20, 1863** – The Battle of Chickamauga – a Confederate victory after they exploit a gap in the Federal lines and force a hurried and confused Northern retreat;

**September 19, 1864** – The Third Battle of Winchester where Federal forces commanded by Sheridan defeat Early's Confederates;

### OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

**September 11, 1864** – Generals Sherman and Hood enter into a ten-day truce to allow for the evacuation of citizens of Atlanta, GA;

**September 22, 1862** – Following the strategic Union victory at Antietam, Lincoln issues the preliminary emancipation proclamation.