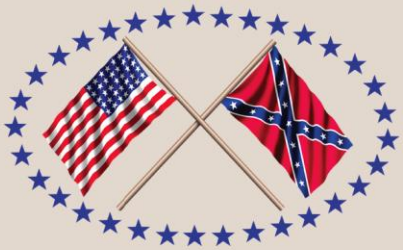
# Sumter to Appomattox



**American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)**
**www.americancivilwar.asn.au** **Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr**

*Number 135*
*Feb. – Mar. 2026*

## *President's Message*

In addition to a formal, minuted, meeting at the Chatswood Club, before every Members' meeting we have for several years followed a custom and practice introduced by my predecessor, Past President Bruce, of meeting for dinner.

At our last such dinner, Jannette, our newsletter editor, made a casual comment that was interesting. It was to the effect that other people had a tendency to ask her why she hung out with a bunch of old men (and one young man). She said she enjoyed it because the collective interests and conversation topics of the group are surprisingly wide and varied. Not Civil War focused at all. In fact, the youngest member of the dinner group apologised before he asked a question about the plan for the next program. We all enjoy getting together for dinner and the chat.

The Committee is merely a subset of the Round Table members and merely exhibits a subset of the interests and topics of conversation of the members of our Round Table as a whole. I think we should be proud of the wide range of interests, knowledge and conversation of our members. We have people who were born in many other countries, not least of which is obviously USA, and they bring interesting and valuable insights. The buzz of casual conversation before and after our meetings is a measure of the success of our quirky group of people. The social interchange is valuable and important. Long may it last. /*cont. next column*

## *Our Next Meeting*

**Monday, 13th April from 6pm**
The Chatswood Club
11 Help Street, Chatswood
Cost: $35 for an excellent buffet dinner including wine on the table

**Topics**
Western Theatre -
1. Tullahoma
2. Chickamauga

Please book by ……
using the following link:
https://www.trybooking.com/DLBCK

### *President's Message (cont.)*

Please do not be coy about volunteering to do a vote of thanks, an introduction or a presentation, no matter how short. The untapped talents within the Round Table have been great and a revelation, once we have found them.

Don't forget a $5 and a $10 note for the door raffles. Bruce's garage is still overflowing with books.

See you on 13 April.

*Ian McIntyre*

## *Program*

### April Meeting Civil War Roundtable

In recent meetings we have looked at the great Union victories of Vicksburg and Gettysburg. At the forthcoming meeting we will go back to the Western Theatre and look at two battles that occurred in rapid succession.

The first is Tullahoma, which occurred at the same time as Gettysburg and Vicksburg. It represented a substantial, even brilliant, and almost bloodless victory for Union General William Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland over Confederate General Braxton Bragg and the Army of Tennessee. Ian McIntyre will present an overview of this battle.

The second, the great Battle of Chickamauga, fought between the same armies only a few weeks later, resulted in the greatest defeat of the Union Army in the Western Theatre - in fact it was the second bloodiest battle of the war after Gettysburg. In many ways it represented the true lowest point for Union morale and commitment; it indirectly led to President Lincoln, in a little town in Pennsylvania, imploring his people not to lose hope so that their Nation would survive. I will present an evaluation of this battle which I have previously described as “a near run thing” for the preservation of the Union.

**Future Meetings**

In coming months, we will look at the following topics -

| | |
|---|---|
| June | • The Iron Brigade<br>• Draft Riots |
| August | Tennessee<br>• Chattanooga |
| October | Kentucky<br>• Heartland Offensive<br>• Perryville |
| Christmas | The Confederate Cabinet |

We have speakers for the June Meeting, but should anyone be interested in presenting any of the other topics, or parts thereof, please contact John Morrison on 0411 197 935 or email at johnjmorrison@bigpond.com.
Looking forward to some great nights, best wishes,

John Morrison
Program Coordinator, Civil War Roundtable.

## *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 (there’s a door on the landing on the right on the top level, just down from the gate) or you can catch the lift to G, then exit the glass doors and enter through the adjoining glass doors.

## *Our Last Meeting*

Our last meeting was well attended and everyone enjoyed catching up and having the opportunity to chat about their favourite battle amongst other topics.

We were fortunate to have presentations by two American members reflecting on their own family’s connection to the Civil War.

## Gettysburg – Personal Reflections

### From One Side of the Family to the Other

*Bernie Walker*

As most of you don't know much about me, I was born in the USA in Minnesota and grew up on one America's top dairy farms. This gave me good grounding in many areas.

I have been a builder, cowboy, cheesemaker, have managed our family dairy farm and set up a dairy feedlot in Victoria, and consulted on one of Malaysia's largest dairy farms. I was a soap and candle maker and printer. Now I am a VP of business development at Budmore and chocolate maker, along with being a mentor through the CSIRO, to researchers, doctors and professors. And just for fun, I have started on a Masters in MTHI at Sydney Uni, which is a master's in health technology & Innovation.

Basically, I am a polymath with fingers and interests in many pies. So, when someone asks if I can be on a committee, I am busy!

I especially enjoy being an amateur historian, having studied China, Russia, Ancient Rome, WW1 and WW2 and with a special interest in the American Civil War, which had family members on both sides of the conflict.

We have to go back in time for my story – ok, no, not that far back!

Mespelbrunn Castle

My father served throughout Germany in 1954 and his work as a radio repairman covered the area where his ancestors came from in Germany. Years later, he said, when showing my older brother pictures of Mespelbrunn Castle, not far from there, there was a signpost for the Spessart mountains. He was drawn to this part of Germany but didn't know why. Upon his return from Germany, his Aunt Mae told him some of the family history about the region of Germany where he had worked in 1954.

One of our earliest known ancestors was listed as a knight, going back to the year 1035, followed by much other documentation of family knights AND members of royalty in Franconia and early German kingdoms up into the 1750s.

There were also members of the privy councils (could be a shitty job!). I wonder if, by birthright, I am also a knight of the realm or the privy council. But no, it would fall to my older brother.

In the 1700's, America was looking good for many of the family with the various conflicts continuing in Europe. A large group of the family said *Es ist zeit zu gehen* – It is time to go – and they took a sailing ship bound for the USA. "The Duke of Bedford" started in Rotterdam via Portsmouth, with the destination of Philadelphia, arriving September 14th, 1751. The family names came from the area of the Spessart mountain and, due to many of the immigrants not being able to read or write, there

ended up being up to 52 different spellings of the same name in America's immigration records the last time we looked. if the name looks and sounds like Spessard, they are related to me.

On August 26th, 1821, my cousin 5 times removed, Michael Peters Spessard, was born. He and his wife had one son, Hezakiah, and several daughters. After the first shots on Fort Sumter, he joined company "C" 28th Virginia volunteer infantry brigade, which fought hard in many large battles. Their farm was a couple of days' ride to their first battle at the First Manassas and that was the first of many battles. Gettysburg proved to be a tough one for them.

**28th Virginia Infantry Regiment**

Flag of Virginia, 1861

| | |
|---|---|
| **Active** | June 1861 – April 1865 |
| **Disbanded** | April 1865 |
| **Country** | Confederacy |
| **Allegiance** | Confederate States of America |
| **Branch** | Confederate States Army |
| **Type** | Infantry |
| **Engagements** | First Battle of Manassas |
| | Peninsula Campaign |
| | Seven Days' Battles |
| | Battle of Williamsburg |
| | Battle of Seven Pines |
| | Battle of Gaines Mill |
| | Battle of Glendale |
| | Second Battle of Bull Run |
| | Battle of South Mountain |
| | Battle of Antietam |
| | Battle of Fredericksburg |
| | Siege of Suffolk |
| | Battle of Gettysburg |
| | Battle of Cold Harbor |
| | Siege of Petersburg |
| | Battle of Five Forks |
| | Battle of Sailor's Creek |
| | Appomattox Campaign |

As fate would have it, they would take part in Pickett's charge.

Directly in front of them, in the center of the Union line, there were friends of my Minnesota ancestors (mum's side of the family) in the First Minnesota Voluntary Infantry Regiment. There were originally 1000 troops there on the day the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter. They were signed up by the very first Minnesota governor, Alexander Ramsey, while he was visiting with President Lincoln on April12th 1861 in Washington D.C. They fought very hard and, by the time they got to Gettysburg, they were down to approximately 300 fighting men.

A bayonet charge by the 1st Minnesota Infantry Regiment against a Confederate brigade on the battle's second day

First Minnesota plugging the hole in the line

On July 2nd they were called up to plug a hole in the Union line against 1400 Alabamans. They went in like madmen to plug the hole in the Union line with a bayonet charge following their color bearer and stopped the Alabamans' charge until replacements could get there. In this one charge they lost 82% of their men.

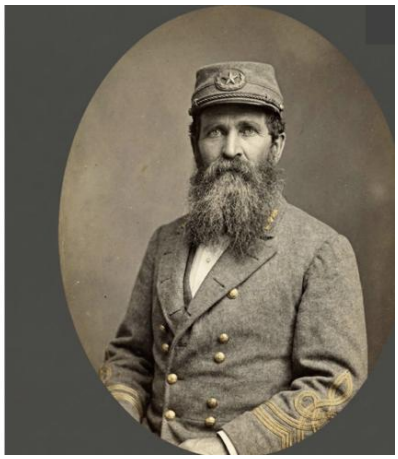
After such a loss of men on July 3rd they were put in what they were told would be a safe spot right in the middle of the Union line near the angle.

Cannon barrage

After the 90-minute barrage, one of the loudest barrages until WW1, Michael and Hezakiah would, along with approximately 15,000 Confederate soldiers, start towards the centre of the Union lines.

Union shot and shells devastated the Confederate troops, and one exploded very close to cousin Hezakiah, with a piece of shrapnel tearing into his groin. His father rushed to his son and was heard to say, “Look at my poor boy”. They spoke a few words and father offered his son his canteen, then Hezakiah said, “It will do me no good as I am mortally wounded. Please take it for yourself”. He kissed his son tenderly and gently laid his head on the ground. then the captain rose to his feet, put his sword to his shoulder, and ordered, ‘Forward, boys!’

Captain Michael Peters Spessard Gettysburg PA. July 1863



Captain Michael Spessard, along with some of his men from company “C” of the 28th Virginia, made it to the wall where the First Minnesota was and then over it, with fierce hand to hand fighting. Union reinforcements came up to help stop the rebel advance.

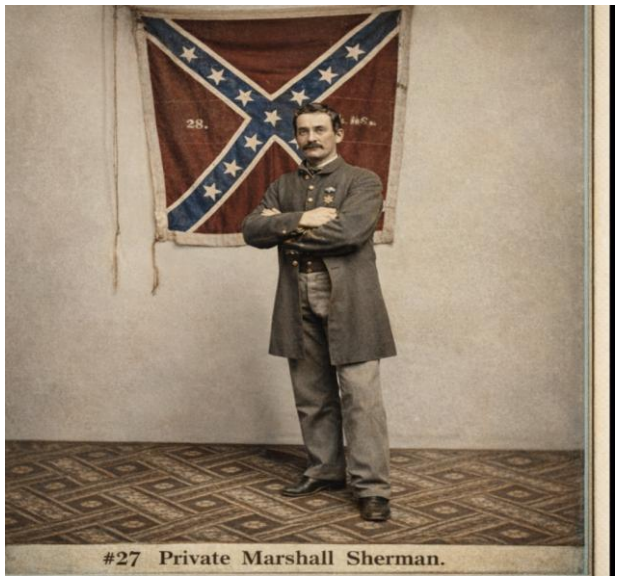
The rebel charge halted and the retreat of those that survived started.

28th VA near the wall at the Angle

At the height of the battle at least three flagbearers of the 28thVirginia had been shot or killed and the 3rd flagbearer was challenged with a bayonet and told “Drop it or die!!” by a barefoot 1st Minnesota private, Marshall Sherman, who grabbed it before it hit the ground (maybe he was in Gettysburg to get shoes too as his had disintegrated during the previous days’ marching).

Battle flag of the Twenty-eighth Virginia Volunteer Infantry Regiment

This flag was only one of the 38 Confederate battle flags captured or collected at the end of the battle. As was custom, the 28th flag, along with the others, was handed in to the war department, catalogued and, after the war, was sent to Marshall Sherman who borrowed the flag and proudly displayed it in his home and elsewhere for special occasions. Upon his death it disappeared to eventually be found and given to the Minnesota History Museum, where it was proudly displayed as a spoil of war that was paid for in blood.



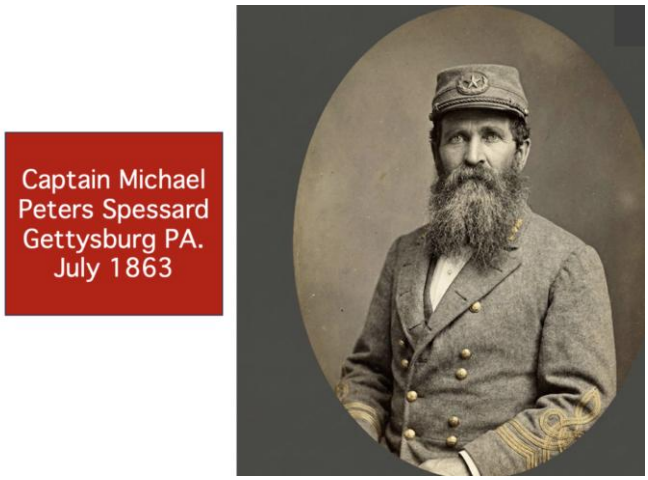

I was fortunate to be able to see it in person in September 2023 to then find out that there has been a tug of war going on with the flag as one side of my family (and a lot of other Virginians) have been asking for the flag to be returned.

In 1905, legislation was attempted with a congressional order directing all battle flags to be returned to their respective units around the country.

All of the Minnesota governors (including Tim Walz) and their attorney generals have said no!!! It was bought and paid for by Minnesota boys.

Marshall was awarded the medal of honor for his exploits at Gettysburg that day.

My cousin, Captain Spessard, went looking for his son amongst the thousands of fallen after the retreat and was unable to find him, then sadly accompanied his troops as Lee took his men back to the south to fight another day.




Cousin Hezakiah was found amongst the wounded and ferried to a field hospital where he passed away from his mortal wounds on July 19th1863. He gave his last full measure for what he believed in, as did so many others in this war. His mother was notified days later by letter, and it was some time before Captain Spessard would be told that his son had passed.

Michael was, soon after the event, promoted to Major and fought bravely till the end of the war, with just 56 still serving of the original 1862 roll call of 600 men in the 28th Virginia Volunteer Infantry Brigade men at Appomattox. He was with Robert E. Lee at the surrender to General Grant.

My cousin Michael Spessard would go on to be Sherriff, also serve in the Virginia legislature and hold many other public offices till his death in 1889.

My family is split on politics and, having empathy and sympathy for my fellow human beings, I believe that I am on the right side. My cousins several times removed did not have the same feelings about those they enslaved, and I know they were on the wrong side. The irony is that, in the next generation, the Givens family became another branch on the Walker/Spessard family tree.

One of my first cousins has suffered from sickle cell anemia that came down through the Givens/Spessard/Walker lines. There is only one way that can happen as there is west African blood flowing in our veins. One of my (not so great-uncles) was the grand master of the North Dakota KKK and I hope that he is rolling in his grave with the knowledge he had African-American blood in his veins.

I am a peaceful man and do not ever want to fight, but I will take up arms in the face of tyranny for my fellow human beings when needed. I will also fight for their right to disagree with me and say so.

### First Minnesota at Fort Snelling

### The Sioux Uprising

My next talk will be on another family story, the Dakota (Lakota) Sioux Uprising in 1862 that never should have happened ....(SPOILER ALERT) except for extreme horrible greed and neglect by the Indian Agents and the Federal government!

**HAD THIS STORY NOT HAPPENED THE WAY IT DID, I WOULD NOT BE HERE TONIGHT !!**

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## Gettysburg – Its Impact on the Local Civilians *June 26, 1863*

*Mike Bosch*

For more than two years since the start of the Civil War, the cry, “The rebels are coming!” had frequently echoed through the streets of Gettysburg. At first the citizens turned out with every weapon they could find to defend their possessions. However, the “rebels” never materialized and most of the town’s people became so used to the cry that, by 1863, they generally ignored it. On June 26, 1863, Confederate cavalry did arrive and enter Gettysburg from the west. They rode into town yelling, screaming and shooting.

The cavalry was followed by more than 5,000 infantry troops under the command of General Jubal Early. Early met with David Kendlehart, president of the town council, making demands on the town for very large quantities that could not be met so he settled for whatever could be supplied and he would spare the town. The idea of a Confederate “shopping spree” obviously appealed to Early as he accepted and spared the town.

Early also took the time to go to the Adams County courthouse where he pardoned several captured members of the Pennsylvania 26th Emergency regiment who had made an unsuccessful attempt to halt the Confederate advance. These captured soldiers, many of whom were students at Gettysburg College, were told by Early to “go home to your mothers before you get hurt”.

Their town had been spared but, little did they know, in less than one week’s time, they would play host to the greatest battle ever fought on the North American continent…

**John Burns, the hero of Gettysburg**

Burns was born in Burlington, New Jersey, of Scottish ancestry; his father claimed a relationship with poet Robert Burns. He served as an enlisted man in the War of 1812, fighting in numerous battles, including Lundy's Lane, and volunteered for both the Mexican–American War and the Civil War. He was rejected for combat duty in the latter war due to his advanced age, but he served as a teamster in support of the Union Army. He was sent home against his will to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he was named constable.

During Confederate Maj. Gen. Jubal A. Early's brief occupation of Gettysburg on June 26, 1863, Burns was jailed for his adamant assertion of civil authority in resisting. As the Confederates departed, Burns was released from jail and then arrested some of the Confederate stragglers, continuing his opposition to the invading army until he was relieved by Federal cavalry under Brig. Gen. John Buford.

On the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1, 1863, Burns took up his flintlock musket and powder horn and walked out to the scene of the fighting that morning. He encountered a wounded Union soldier and asked if he could use his more modern rifle; the soldier agreed and Burns moved on with the rifle and with cartridges in his pocket, for he had declined an ammunition box, insisting the bullets were more easily accessible to him in his pocket than the box. Approaching Major Thomas Chamberlin of the 150th Pennsylvania Infantry, Burns requested that he be allowed to fall in with the regiment. Chamberlin later wrote of Burns moving with deliberate step, carrying his Enfield rifle at a trail.

His somewhat peculiar dress consisted of dark trousers and a waistcoat, a blue "swallow tail" coat with burnished brass buttons (as would have been seen on a well-to-do gentlemen four decades prior), and a high black silk hat, from which most of the original gloss had long departed, of a shape to be found only in the fashion plates of the remote past.

Despite his scepticism about the request, Chamberlin referred him to the regimental commander, Colonel Langhorne Wister, who sent the aged Burns into the woods next to the McPherson Farm, where he would find better shelter from the sun and enemy bullets.

In McPherson (Herbst) Woods, Burns fought with the 7th Wisconsin Infantry and then moved to join the 24th Michigan near the eastern end of the woods. He fought beside these men of the famous Iron Brigade throughout the afternoon, serving effectively as a sharpshooter, in one case shooting a charging Confederate officer from his horse. As the Union line began to give way and they fell back to the Seminary, Burns received wounds in the arm, the leg, and several minor ones in the

breast; the Union soldiers were forced to leave him behind on the field.

Injured and exhausted, the old man was able to crawl away from his rifle and hastily bury his ammunition. He convinced the Confederates that he was a noncombatant, wandering the battlefield seeking aid for his invalid wife, and his wounds were dressed by their surgeons. This was a narrow escape for Burns for, by the rules of war, he was subject to summary execution as a non-uniformed combatant, or bushwhacker. He was able to crawl that evening to the cellar of the nearest house, and was later conveyed to his own home, where he was treated by Dr. Charles Horner.

## Aftermath of the Battle

The aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1–3, 1863) was defined by a staggering humanitarian crisis, the strategic retreat of the Confederate Army, and a fundamental shift in the American Civil War's trajectory.

### Immediate Humanitarian Crisis

The small town of Gettysburg, with only 2,400 residents, was left to deal with an overwhelming scene of devastation.

- **Casualties:** Over **51,000 soldiers** were killed, wounded, or missing. Nearly 20,000 wounded men remained in the area for months, occupying almost every house, church, and barn, which were converted into makeshift hospitals.
- **Environmental Toll:** Thousands of dead horses and mules littered the fields, often being piled and burned to mitigate the overwhelming stench of rotting flesh.
- **Civilian Hardship:** Fields were scorched, fences destroyed, and local supplies were looted or exhausted, forcing residents to rely on government aid.

Souvenir hunting at Gettysburg began almost immediately after the fighting ceased on 4 July 1863, as soldiers and local civilians scavenged the debris-strewn fields. This practice ranged from gathering military hardware to the gruesome collection of personal effects from the dead.

### Types of Historical Souvenirs

- **Ammunition & Weaponry**: Bullets (especially Minié balls) and shell fragments were the most common prizes, often gathered "as if gathering nuts". More valuable finds included swords, pistols, and bayonets.
- **Trench Art**: Soldiers used their downtime to carve bullets into charms, pipes, or other small trinkets.
- **Personal Effects**: Items such as ID tags, letters, photographs (daguerreotypes), and even "slave tags" were taken from fallen soldiers as tokens of the experience.
- **"Deadly Souvenirs"**: Unexploded artillery shells posed a significant danger to civilian hunters, frequently causing injuries long after the battle ended.
- **Natural Relics**: Pieces of "witness trees" or wood from famous locations like the Peach Orchard were carved into commemorative objects like goblets or furniture.
- **Evolution of the "Curiosity Shop"**: By 5 July 1863, Gettysburg had already begun its transformation into a tourist destination. Locals quickly capitalised on this interest by selling battlefield mementos to early visitors. This early scavenging formed the basis of many modern museum collections.

### Other Locals involved at Gettysburg

Sallie Myers

On 2nd July 1863, local teacher at the High Street School, Sallie Myers, encountered a

wounded Pennsylvanian, Sgt. Alexander MacFarland Stewart in the Catholic Church, which was now being used as a hospital. She asked what she could do for him and he said, “Nothing as I am dying”. She realised she could help and tended to many wounded soldiers in her home. After Stewart died in her arms, she wrote to his father, who came and collected his body. Later, he brought his other son and, subsequently, Henry Stewart was born and went on to become an Adams County historian who donated his family diaries.

The only civilian killed outright in the battle was Jenny Wade, who was making bread in her sister’s house. A stray bullet penetrated two doors and struck her heart from behind. Her fiancé was also killed in the battle.

Others died later – one, Edward MacPherson Woods, died on July 5th and was buried in the Methodist Cemetery.

Trostle Farm

The devastation after 2nd July included the scene at Trostle Farm – dead horses and soldiers in the yard outside the farmhouse.

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

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Any members wishing to contribute should contact John Morrison on johnhmorrison@bigpond.com or 0411 197 935

## 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