

DISPATCHES FROM GRANT

The Newsletter of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential
Library at Mississippi State University

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“Lincoln: The Movie and the Man” Symposium



Lincoln interpreter George Buss speaks at a “presidential press conference” at Mississippi State University

On September 23 and 24, the Office of the President and the Mississippi State University Libraries, along with the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library,

Shackouls Honors College, and

African American Studies, co-sponsored a symposium on *Lincoln: The Movie and the Man*.

The symposium commenced with a screening of “Lincoln,” the epic 2012 historical drama directed by Stephen Spielberg.

Activities on the 24th included a panel discussion focusing on Spielberg’s treatment of Lincoln’s lasting impact on the country. The panel included George Buss, a nationally acclaimed Lincoln interpreter; Dr. John F. Marszalek, a retired MSU Giles Distinguished Professor and current Executive Director of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library; Frank J. Williams, a retired Rhode Island Supreme Court chief justice and renowned Lincoln historian; Dr. Stephen Middleton, director of the African American Studies program at MSU; and Dr. John David Smith, Charles H. Stone Distinguished Professor of American History, University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

Each panelist also made a presentation focusing on various aspects of Lincoln’s presidency and the Civil War. Buss, performing as Lincoln, gave a “presidential press conference” with journalist Sid Salter; Smith discussed Lincoln and the black troops; Marszalek examined Lincoln and Grant’s military leadership; Middleton explored issues surrounding African Americans and the 13th Amendment; and Williams discussed American films portraying the 16th president over the last century, from D. W. Griffith’s 1915 silent film “Birth of a Nation” to Spielberg’s “Lincoln.”

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ULYSSES S. GRANT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Grant Library Welcomes New Staff

Visitors and patrons have seen some new faces around the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library lately.

David Nolen began work as an Assistant Editor with the USGA in July 2013. Prior to that, he served as the Humanities Reference Librarian at Mississippi State University Libraries from 2008-2013. David's academic background is in Spanish language and literature and Latin American Studies, but he has worked with patrons from the History Department frequently in his time at MSU. While growing up, he willingly and enthusiastically visited historical places around the U.S. on family trips, including many Civil War-related sites.



David Nolen, Assistant Editor

Robert (Bob) Karachuk is Visiting Associate Editor at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, working on a scholarly edition of *The Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, a digital edition of Grant Family Papers, and a cumulative index for the thirty-two volumes of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. Bob has made a career as a historical editor, most recently as Associate Editor of the Adams Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston and earlier as Associate Editor of the Documentary History of the Supreme Court at the Supreme Court Historical Society in Washington, D.C. Bob has been appointed the next Education Director of the national Association for Documentary Editing, with responsibility for administering the annual Institute for the Editing of Historical Documents sponsored by the ADE and funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.



Bob Karachuk, Visiting Associate Editor

Grant Library Associate Editor On Leave for Fellowship

Aaron Crawford, Associate Editor at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, left for Dallas in August for a one-year fellowship at Southern Methodist University. While he continues to work on editorial projects for the Grant Library, he is also engaged in editorial projects at SMU.

Aaron is collaborating on the Grant Memoirs with Bob Karachuk. At SMU, he is also working on a larger project about presidential memoirs and working on the Center for Presidential History's Collective Memory Project. He recently interviewed Grant Association president Frank J. Williams about his role on the Military Commission Review Panel, responsible for reviewing the cases of detainees from Guantanamo Bay.

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Board Member Profile: Frank Williams

For over twenty-five years, retired Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank J. Williams has led the Ulysses S. Grant Association as its president. He was asked to take the position by former USGA Executive Director John Y. Simon and then-president Ralph Newman.

Prior to becoming a USGA member, then board member, and finally president, Williams has been immersed in Civil War scholarship throughout most of his life. As a child, he was fascinated with Abraham Lincoln and wanted to learn about the president beyond what was taught in school.

"I've been studying Lincoln since I was 11," he said. "I used my pocket money to buy used books on Lincoln, and they influenced me to become [like Lincoln] a lawyer." It was during these years that, while reading about Lincoln, Williams also discovered Grant.

Before graduating from the Boston University School of Law, Williams served five years in the U.S. Military, stationed in Germany and Vietnam, and was awarded several honors, including the Bronze Star, three Air Medals, and the Republic of Vietnam Silver Star.

Williams served as town moderator for Richmond, Rhode Island and Solicitor for several other Rhode Island towns before his 1995 appointment to the state Supreme Court. He was elevated to Chief Justice in 2001. Two years later, President George W. Bush appointed Williams to the United States Court of Military Commission Review; he served as Chief Judge until retiring in 2009.

In addition to his distinguished judicial career, Williams is one of the nation's leading Lincoln scholars. He has authored or edited over fourteen books, contributed chapters to several others, and lectured on Lincoln throughout the country. Since 1996, Williams has chaired The Lincoln Forum, which he founded with Harold Holzer and others. In 2000, he was appointed to the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which planned events to celebrate Lincoln's birthday in 2009.

His private library is one of the nation's most notable Lincoln collections. Today, it includes over 10,000 books, 40,000 clippings, and 20,000 other memorabilia. A few of his favorite items are a signed copy of the Lincoln-Douglas debates and Lincoln's legal documents from his years of practicing law.

"From a young age, the idea was to collect everything," he said. Now, he and his wife, Virginia "still collect, but there's not much else [to collect] except new publications. We have no more room."

The USGA has experienced much change throughout Williams' presidency. When John Y. Simon died, he said, "I was thrust into a role I was promised I would never have to confront," referring to the difficult decision to move the Grant collection from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale to Mississippi State University. "This was very traumatic," he added.

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USGA President Frank J. Williams

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Williams, continued

However, in working with John F. Marszalek, Simon's replacement as Executive Director, and MSU, Williams believes the Grant Association is in a place where it can continue the work of disseminating information about Grant to the public.

"We now have the Presidential Library, we're continuing the Papers [of Ulysses S. Grant] project, working with the University of Virginia Press to digitize the papers, and completing the annotated Memoirs," he said. Williams added that he also thinks it is important for the staff to attend conferences and publish articles.

Somehow between his various duties, Williams finds time for his hobby, baking. In fact, he is an accomplished amateur chef (Williams, with self-deprecating humor, calls himself a "foodie"). This hobby began, like his Lincoln studies, at age 11, and he now regularly bakes pastries, pies, and cakes, giving most away to friends.

"I learned baking from my dear mother, a wonderful woman and a great cook. It's an art form that's very therapeutic," he said.

USGA is fortunate to have "The Chief" as its president, and it can look forward to continued future success under his leadership.



Union and Confederate re-enactors showcase an authentic Civil War-era cannon at the Greensboro Center, Starkville, MS.

Historical Marker (re)Dedicated

In the spring of 2011, the historical marker on Louisville Street near the State Shopping Center which observed Union Colonel Benjamin Grierson's Civil War raid through Starkville was accidentally broken.

As a part of Starkville's commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, a new historical marker was purchased by donations from the Golden Triangle Civil War Roundtable, the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, and private individuals.

A dedication ceremony unveiling the marker took place on Saturday, September 28 at its new location: the corner of Highway 12 and Louisville Street, in front of Walgreens. The dedication was followed by a program at the Greensboro Center, at which time winners of the high school essay contest received their awards and speakers discussed the history of Grierson's raid and took questions from the audience. Live music and a Civil War era cannon were on display at the Greensboro Center prior to the program.

Grierson and his men were the only Union soldiers to visit Starkville during the Civil War. Grierson's Raid played an important role in helping Grant capture Vicksburg on July 4, 1863.

Brochures offering more information on Grierson's Raid and other Starkville area sites significant to Civil War history are available at the Greater Starkville Development Partnership office downtown and at the Starkville Public Library and on the Grant Library website: <http://www.usgrantlibrary.org/links/>

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New play GRANT & TWAIN to premiere at Salt Lake Acting Company in February

A new play, GRANT & TWAIN, by Elizabeth Diggs will premiere at Salt Lake Acting Company in February 2014. Salt Lake Acting Company is a professional theatre founded in 1970 with a mission to “make a significant contribution to the American theatre by developing and producing new plays.”

The play dramatizes a story familiar to Grant Association members -- Grant's determination to save his honor and provide for his family by writing his *Personal Memoirs* after he was left bankrupt in a Ponzi-style swindle by his son's Wall Street partner, Ferdinand Ward.

Diggs says that it had been her dream when she began work on the play more than four years ago, that it could be produced during the sesquicentennial observances of the Civil War.

Diggs writes that Grant has been portrayed dramatically as either an accidental hero or as a bloodthirsty butcher. She notes that military historian T. Harry Williams says, “Grant was a success because he was a complete general and a complete character. He was so complete that his countrymen have never been able to believe he was real.” Diggs wanted to portray the real man. While the play is an imagined portrayal of events and not a documentary, her intention was to depict events and characters “without irony” by being true to the story.

The surprising friendship between Grant and Twain, which forms during the writing of Grant's memoirs, is the focus of the play. During this time, Twain faces the jealousies of Grant's old military secretary Adam Badeau, who Grant hired to help with the book. When the book is half completed, Grant is diagnosed with terminal cancer, and Twain goes into serious debt with a subscription plan while Grant writes in a race against death.

In addition to the title roles, the characters are Julia Dent Grant, Adam Badeau, Grant's African American valet Harrison Terrell, and William Perkins Ingersoll, an iconic Union Soldier who appears in flashbacks to the war.

Diggs became captivated by Grant when she read *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*. She delved deeply into Grant scholarship and undertook a personal crash course in the Civil War in order to write the play. She joined the Grant Association in 2012 and attended the Annual Meeting that May in Starkville.



Liz Diggs, Playwright

Elizabeth Diggs is a playwright and Associate Professor of Dramatic Writing at Tisch / NYU. She has written plays produced off and off-off-Broadway, and at regional theatres nationwide. She received a Guggenheim grant in playwriting, among many other awards.

Information about the production can be found at <http://www.saltlakeactingcompany.org>

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Julia Grant World Tour Images Digitized

Photographs from a 19th century world tour by former president Ulysses S. Grant and wife Julia now may be viewed online. The images are available through the Mississippi State University Libraries' Digital Collection website, <http://library.msstate.edu/dc/usgrant/worldtour>.

The album was donated to the Grant Presidential Library by the president's great-great grandson, Ulysses Grant Dietz. In 1877, the couple embarked on a two-year world tour that would solidify the former Union Army commander and U.S. chief executive's reputation as an international celebrity. What had been planned as a quiet holiday evolved dramatically as the Grants found themselves in high demand for social engagements, speeches, dinners, and other events hosted by some of the most important people in Europe, North Africa, Asia and Latin America. Along with photographs, Julia Grant recorded impressions of the leaders they met, particularly their interactions with the American visitors. The album and biographical notes provide a unique window into the Grants' post-presidential life, while also shedding light on nations and cultures of the world in the late 19th century.

The Civil War 150 Years later aboard the Grand American Queen

The Lincoln Forum and the U.S. Grant Presidential Library are pleased to co-host, yet again, with Forum member Charlene Corris of Custom Travel Concepts, a Civil War and Abraham Lincoln cruise aboard the beautiful steamer, American Queen May 9-17, 2014. Historian guides John F. Marszalek and Frank J. Williams, with Lincoln interpreter George Buss, will provide lectures and discussions, and Virginia Williams will present her illustrated lecture on "A Trip to the Outhouse?" The steamboat will travel from New Orleans to Memphis, visiting Vicksburg, St. Francisville, Natchez and Helena.

The Sesquicentennial Cruise includes a 7-night cruise aboard the American Queen; lodging and transportation in New Orleans; all meals, snacks, bottled water, and beer and wine with dinners; shore tours using the "steamcoaches"; evening entertainment in the Grand Saloon, including "An Evening with President Lincoln" (George Buss); Civil War presentations; private reception with Frank Williams, John Marszalek, and George Buss. A portion of the registration fee will be donated to either the Lincoln Forum or the U.S. Grant Association. Transportation to the New Orleans airport and to the New Orleans hotel and travel insurance not included.

The cruise itinerary includes an overnight stay in New Orleans and day trips to historic river towns—St. Francisville, Natchez, Vicksburg, Helena, and Memphis—where guests will tour antebellum homes, museums, military sites, and more. Each day will also feature a talk given by a guest historian.

For details and reservations, contact Charlene Corris at Custom Travel Concepts. Phone (toll-free): 866-956-4440. Email: histours@aol.com

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Congratulations!

At the 2013 Lincoln Forum in Gettysburg, the Ulysses S. Grant Association was awarded the Wendy Allen prize for outstanding Civil War scholarship. The Grant Association is proud of its faculty and staff for their hard work and dedication to Civil War scholarship, preservation, outreach, and education.

• A Look Ahead •

- * **Late November:** Registration opens online for the USGA Annual Meeting in St. Louis, May 2-4, 2014. www.usgrantlibrary.org. Take advantage of “early bird” registration through January 15.
- * **January 13, 2014:** PBS Documentary “Civil War, The Untold Story” screening and panel sessions, Mississippi State University
- * **March 26, 2014:** Marszalek Lecture Series, Mississippi State University—Dr. John Hubbell, editor of *Civil War History* and director—emeritus of Kent State University Press

Send us your news!

Do you have any news, such as an event, publication, or book review, related to Ulysses S. Grant or the Civil War? If you'd like to share your news in an upcoming issues of the USGA newsletter, please email with a photograph, if available, to mhenderson@library.msstate.edu.



*The Ulysses S. Grant Presidential
Library wishes you and your family the
happiest of holidays! We look forward to seeing
you in St. Louis in 2014.*