

DISPATCHES FROM GRANT

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

Summer 2013 Volume 1, Issue 2

2013 USGA Annual Meeting Held in Georgetown, OH



On the weekend of May 3-5, 42 members of the Ulysses S. Grant Association gathered in Maysville, Kentucky for the 51st USGA Annual Meeting.

John F. Marszalek, Executive Director of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library and Association, worked with Lee Schweikart and Stan Purdy of the Ulysses S. Grant Homestead Association in Georgetown, Ohio to plan the meeting events.

Schweikart and Purdy organized an outstanding Land of Grant tour, which took place Saturday. The tour covered significant sites from U.S. Grant's childhood, such as his birthplace, childhood home, family tannery, and school. Other places of historical significance, such as homes of abolitionists who participated in the Underground Railroad, were also included along the route. Ned Lodwick, from the Homestead Association, provided informative commentary on the history of the sites.

Main speakers at the meeting were Dr. Charles Calhoun, history professor at the University of East Carolina, and Frank Scaturro, president of the Grant Monument Association. Dr. Calhoun spoke about the impact of U.S. Grant on the presidency, and Mr. Scaturro presented the history and restoration of Grant's tomb in New York City.

The annual meetings provide a great opportunity for USGA members to learn more about Ulysses S. Grant and his era and to meet others who are interested in keeping history alive. The 2014 meeting will be held May 2-4 in St. Louis, Missouri. Details will be on our website—www.usgrantlibrary.org. We hope to see you there!

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AND THE WINNER

IS... We received several excellent suggestions for newsletter titles, but **Eileen and Ksenia Bradner** are the winners of the contest. They will receive a signed copy of Vol. 32 of the USG Papers. Congratulations!

Board Profile: Ulysses Grant Dietz

One USGA member shares a name and genealogical ties to the general and president. Ulysses Grant Dietz, great-great grandson of Ulysses S. Grant, refers to his heritage as “an accident of birth, although one I cherish.”

Dietz, a New Jerseyan, has worked at the Newark Museum since 1980. He is chief curator and curator of decorative arts; and also in charge of the Ballantine house, which was built in 1885 and is now a wing of the museum.

He researches, exhibits, publishes and adds to the collection, which encompasses some 40,000 from the 1500s to the present day. The Ballantine house has nine “period” rooms representing what a family like the Ballantines would have had in their home in the late nineteenth century, as well as four galleries whose objects explore how the idea of “home” has evolved over the past three centuries in America.

Preserving history, apparently, runs in the family. Dietz said, “My grandfather, USG III, was a founder of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, so the preservation bug might have been inherited from him.”

Dietz is passionate about his job because he is “always aware of the power of objects to tell stories” and believes that “through objects, the things people own and live with,” he is able to better understand history. Over his career, Dietz has also written several books on the collections in his care at the museum.

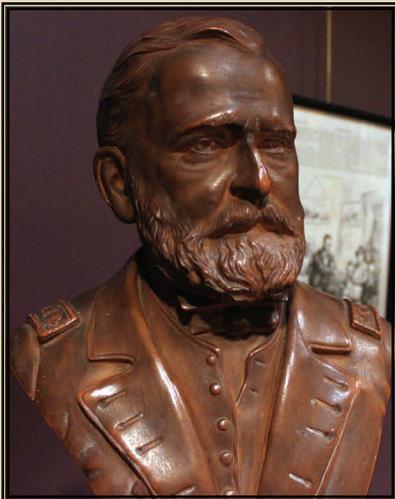
Writing is a hobby as well as a professional activity for Dietz. He has published two novels, *Desmond* (1988) and *Vampire in Suburbia* (1998), which explore the life of a lonely eighteenth-century vampire searching for love and meaning in the twentieth-century world.

(continued on p. 3)



Dietz (R) accepts the John Y. Simon award from Jim Bultema at the 2013 USGA annual meeting.

Donors Expand USGPL Collection



USG bust donated by Jorja Lynn in 2013.

A number of generous donors have allowed the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library to expand its collection of books and ephemera that attract scholars as well as curious visitors. Bill Cosgrove, Dr. Joseph and Ann Prezio, and Sam Erwin and Robert Haughton have helped fill the USGPL’s bookshelves with various books on the Civil War; Carolyn Andrews recently donated almost 1,000 Civil War books. USGA president Frank Williams and his wife, Virginia donated a large number of prints and photographs, which have been digitized and may be viewed on Mississippi State University Library’s website. This year, Ulysses Grant Dietz donated items which include a walking stick engraved with U.S. Grant’s initials, a teakettle engraved with “General and Mrs. U.S. Grant 1882” and scrap books belonging to U.S. Grant’s son, Fred Grant. Also this year, Jorja Lynn of Holly Springs, MS, donated over 100 framed prints, framed Harper’s Weekly covers, and Grant memorabilia, including a bust, 19th century commemorative plates, and a presidential campaign pin, as well as whimsical modern items, such as Grant family paper dolls.

British Writer Visits Grant Presidential Library

London barrister Richard Wilmot-Smith has traveled far to pursue his interest in Ulysses S. Grant. He is beginning the long-term goal of writing a biography that will focus on Grant's post-Civil War years.

Wilmot-Smith arrived in Starkville May 20 and spent nearly a month at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library researching material on the latter part of Grant's life, beginning with his presidency. This biography will be unique in that it will be written as a memoir, narrated in the voice of President Grant, and it will pick up where Grant's personal memoirs, which detail his war years, conclude.

By writing in Grant's voice, Wilmot-Smith hopes to present a narrative that is insightful, complex and personal.

"I wondered what he would have said and thought it might be educative to understand what he was like and then convey his story in a manner which people will want to read," Wilmot-Smith said.

As historians know, there are always new questions waiting to be asked. What would later become Wilmot-Smith's research question came about unexpectedly. On a trip to the Catskills in 2003, he visited a local private lending library and randomly pulled a book from one of the shelves. It was a biography of Grant. The page showed a photograph of Grant's funeral, which was and remains today the largest funeral of any U.S. president.

Wilmot-Smith asked himself, "Why so many people? This was not just a big funeral for a national hero, but something exceptional and unsurpassed. So I thought I'd get to know him."

After reading on his own and joining the Ulysses S. Grant Association, Wilmot-Smith discovered the large body of work devoted to Grant. However, much of this scholarship casts the general and president in a decidedly negative light.

"I could not understand how a man who pulled the country together after the disaster of Andrew Johnson, pushed through the 15th amendment, spoke passionately about civil rights, entertained Frederick Douglass at the White House, put together a proper peace policy with regard to American Indians and suppressed the KKK could be regarded in the same paragraph as people like Warren Harding," he said.

Dr. John Marszalek said, "We have been pleased to have a scholar of Mr. Wilmot-Smith's caliber researching in our holdings, and we are looking forward to the publication of his innovative book."

As an attorney, Wilmot-Smith has publishing experience; he is working on the third edition of a textbook on construction contracts, published by Oxford University Press. However, this biography will be a completely different venture for him.

He added, "This is a long project. I am not giving myself a deadline, but it is years away."

Dietz, continued from p. 2.

There are many stories that live on through the heirlooms that have been passed down to Dietz, and he has graciously donated some of those items, such as a silver teakettle on stand used by U.S. and Julia Grant, to the U.S. Grant Presidential Library. These objects greatly enhance the story of Grant that the library staff can share with visitors.

Although Dietz knew about the USGA through his grandfather and his mother's involvement, he did not become an active member until Frank Scaturro began his campaign in the 1990s to restore Grant's tomb in New York City.

"That turned me into a 'Grant activist,' somewhat against my will, he said, but added, "Being tied to the tomb and then through John Y. (Simon) and John Marszalek to the USGA has really deepened both my understanding of USG and his family and of his role in American History."

Dietz is proud of what the USGA has accomplished in the past and looks forward to a thriving future.

"I am incredibly excited by Mississippi State University's embrace of the papers and the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, and pleased that this great Union general's legacy is in the deep South. He would be so pleased, I'm sure," he said.

Updates on the USGPL Staff: Publications, New Members, and a Fellowship

The most important work of the USGPL continues to be its publication projects. The major undertaking at present is the preparation of the two volume USG memoirs for publication, both in hardback and digital editions. This work entails returning to the original words that Grant wrote and producing the most accurate manuscript. Annotations will identify names and places in the text and correct the few errors that Grant made in his writing. When completed, this will be the first scholarly edition of the Grant memoirs ever published.

Associate Editor Aaron Crawford has concentrated his efforts in USGPL on the memoir editing, and he is now being assisted by new members of the staff: Bob Karachuk and David Nolen. John Marszalek continues to provide overall supervision, while archivist Ryan Semmes and Assistant Meg Henderson provide research and a variety of other support.

As the work goes on, the manuscript will be sent to members of the USGA Editorial Board, outside historians, and literary editors. This is a time-consuming project, but the editors are making steady progress.

Bob Karachuk will spend his year at USGPL assisting in the memoirs editing and will undertake the creation of a cumulative index for the 32 volumes of the *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. This index will be published as the final volume of the *Papers*.

David Nolen is working on the digitized edition of the Grant Family Papers which will appear on the USGA website. The edition of the letters of Grant family members in the years after his death will contain a copy of the original letter, a transcript, and annotations. These letters will begin appearing online as soon as each one is editorially ready. David is also updating our Grant Family Genealogy to include the more recent Grant descendants.

Any help that members of USGA are able to provide will be much appreciated. For example, we continue to collect original Grant Family letters and/or copies of such correspondence.

USGA acknowledges the financial support of Mississippi State University, the National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Two new members have joined the USGPL staff in the past few months. David Nolen, formerly a reference librarian in the Mitchell Memorial Library at Mississippi State University, is part-time with the USGPL and part-time with Mitchell Memorial Library's Congressional and Political Research Center.

Bob Karachuk comes from the Adams Papers in Boston, Massachusetts, and will be a Visiting Associate Editor for the next year. He will assist Associate Editor Aaron Crawford in editing the USG memoirs and other editorial projects. Dr. Crawford has left for Dallas, Texas, where he has accepted a one-year fellowship at Southern Methodist University, with plans to return to Starkville, Mississippi.

A full introduction of our new staff members and an update on Aaron Crawford will be published in the next issue of the newsletter.

Recent Publication: *Grant at Vicksburg: The General and the Siege*

Grant at Vicksburg: The General and the Siege, First Edition, 2013

By Michael B. Ballard

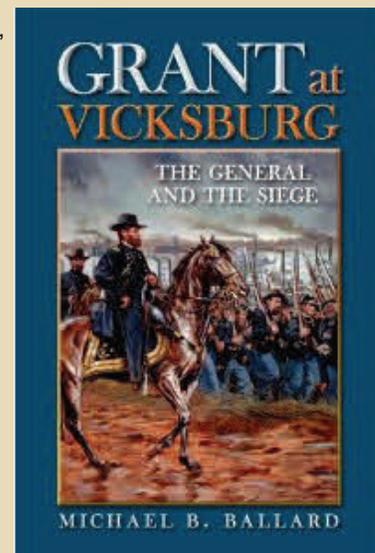
On May 22, 1863, after two failed attempts to take the city of Vicksburg by assault, Major General Ulysses S. Grant declared in a letter to the commander of the Union fleet on the Mississippi River that “the nature of the ground about Vicksburg is such that it can only be taken by a siege.” The 47-day siege of Vicksburg orchestrated by Grant resulted in the eventual surrender of the city and fulfilled a major strategic goal for the Union: command of the Mississippi River for the remainder of the war. In this revealing volume, Michael B. Ballard offers the first in-depth exploration of Grant’s thoughts and actions during this critical operation, providing a never-before-seen portrait of the general in the midst of one of his most notable achievements.

After an overview of Grant’s early Civil War career from his first battle through the early stages of the attacks on Vicksburg, Ballard describes in detail how Grant conducted the siege, examining his military decisions, placement of troops, strategy and tactics, engineering objectives, and relationships with other officers. Ballard shows how Grant’s obsession with a perceived danger of a rear attack by Joseph Johnston’s Confederate army affected his decision making and shows how threats of Confederate action occupied more of Grant’s time than did the siege itself.

In addition, Ballard soundly dispels a false story about Grant’s alleged drinking binge early in the siege that has been taken as truthful by many historians. He examines how racism in Grant’s army impacted the lives of freed black people and slaves in the Vicksburg area and explores Grant’s strained relationship with John McClernand, a politically appointed general from Illinois. The book concludes with the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 and the expulsion of Johnston and his army from the region, and it demonstrates the impact of the siege on the outcome of the war and the short and long terms of Grant’s military career.

By analyzing Grant’s personality during the siege and how he dealt with myriad issues as both a general and an administrator, *Grant at Vicksburg* offers a revealing rendering of the legendary general.

For many years, Michael B. Ballard was coordinator for the Congressional and Political Research Center. He is the associate editor (retired) in the U. S. Grant Presidential Library and retired University Archivist at Mississippi State University. He has written or edited eleven books, including *Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles*, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi*, and *U. S. Grant: The Making of a General, 1861-1863*.



Book Review: *The Union Forever: Lincoln, Grant and the Civil War*

The Union Forever: Lincoln, Grant, and the Civil War by John Y. Simon.

Edited and with an introduction by Glenn W. LaFantasie for the Ulysses S. Grant Association, 2012.

Book review by Jonathan Shea

Most people know of Dr. John Y. Simon because of his marathon project, *The Papers of U.S. Grant*. Of course, members of the USGA know him as the longtime executive director. It is not as well known that he was an accomplished Lincoln scholar as well.

Some of his best short articles have been collected in *The Union Forever*. These rare articles reveal a lot about Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. As Frank Williams and Harold Holzer say in the Forward, "And it is altogether fitting and proper that we so honor John Y. Simon with the publication of his essays."

Part I of the book examines Abraham Lincoln. Essays in this section focus on topics such as Lincoln's difficult personal relationship with his father, Fort Sumter, his sometimes frustrating relationship with General Halleck, and the complex subject of emancipation.

In the second section, Simon continues his long quest to rescue General Grant's reputation from the depths to which it sank from "lost cause historians." In the same way that he shows the "drunken, incompetent butcher" reputation unfair to Grant the general, he also shows that "incompetent and scandal ridden" is not a correct judgment of the Grant Administration.

Although Simon clearly admires Grant, he does not shy away from controversy, tackling Grant's notorious 1862 order expelling Jews from the military department he commanded. He also charts the relationship between the general and his Commander in Chief.

In short, *The Union Forever* should please Civil War and Lincoln buffs greatly but would also be entertaining and informative for people with a more casual interest in the history of the Civil War era. Simon demonstrates his thorough knowledge of Civil War history, as well as his famous sense of humor, throughout these essays. Glenn LaFantasie has done an excellent editorial job on the lectures of a master editor. All royalties go to the USGA.

A Look Ahead: Upcoming USGA Events

September 23-25: Lincoln Movie Symposium at Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

September 28: Dedication of Grierson's Raid marker at the Greensboro Center, Starkville, MS

October 12: John Y. Simon Day at White Haven, St. Louis, MO

