The Newsletter of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University • Winter 2014 • Volume 1, Issue 4

Julia Grant’s World Tour Photographs
By Bailey Powell, staff writer

During their three-year world tour, Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia Grant, attended many dinners and significant events hosted by people of high power. Julia collected photographs, otherwise known as cabinet card photos, of the people they met during their trip. The entire album containing these pictures was donated to USGA by Ulysses Grant Dietz, the great-great-grandson of President Grant, and it contains 65 photographs.

Graduate student Melissa Lawrence, from the History Department, identified and organized all of the photos into recognizable metadata. Some of the pictures had been identified by Julia Grant, including brief descriptions of her impressions of and interactions with the people pictured. After all the information had been compiled, it was sent to the Mitchell Memorial Library Digital Preservation Access Unit, where the photographs were digitized front and back, and were left in the order in which they appear in Julia Grant’s album. Ryan Semmes, the Interim Coordinator of the Congressional and Political Research Center, and Archivist for the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, commented on the collection, “This compilation of photographs is very unique, and is valuable for anyone wanting to explore the Grant family history. The photos show the high fashion of the late nineteenth century in many parts of the world. We have included the photographer and studio information with many pictures, which may be helpful for those studying photography.” The images can be viewed on the Mississippi State University Libraries’ Digital Collection website, http://library.msstate.edu/dc/usgrant/worldtour.
Ida Honoré Grant Correspondence
By Bailey Powell, staff writer

I wish you would just keep my letters, they will serve as [a] sort of 'journal' to me afterwards. I write so much to you all there is nothing left for me to put in a diary (Ida H. Grant to Ma, May 19, 1889).

In 1889 Frederick Dent Grant was appointed as minister to Austria-Hungary. He, his wife Ida Honoré Grant, and their two children, Julia Dent Grant and Ulysses S. Grant III, set out for Vienna where they lived for the next four years.

Throughout their time in Vienna, Ida, Frederick, and their children wrote many letters to Ida's mother and sister as well as to a few other relatives. Ida gave her mother and sister specific instructions to keep her letters so that they might be used as Ida's journal containing her travels and experiences, as she states above. Recently, Ulysses Grant Dietz, the great-grandson of Frederick and Ida, donated the letters to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. They are now available on the Library's website in Digital Collections.

Bob Karachuk, associate editor, explained the process of making the letters available to the public: “David [Nolen] and I would not have been able to get the digital images of Ida’s Vienna correspondence mounted online without substantial help from others. When Ulysses Grant Dietz donated the original manuscript letters to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, he had already put them in rough order. Ryan Semmes, our archivist, and Doug Forrest, an MSU history graduate student, processed the collection. Randall McMillen and Jim Chow of the Mitchell Memorial Library’s Digital Preservation and Access Unit made the digital images of the manuscript pages, and piloted the archival management software. David and I only had to refine the organization of the collection and create the metadata that underpins how it appears online.”

The online edition includes 130 letters, amounting to 2,376 total pages of the original manuscripts. David Nolen, assistant editor stated, “This collection is a valuable resource for anyone researching late 19th Century diplomacy, American perspectives on European society, and women’s voices.” With the help of several student workers, editors of the Grant Presidential Library are in the process of transcribing the letters to make the text searchable, and creating a timeline and biographical dictionary to facilitate the understanding of the letters in context.

The images can be viewed on the Mississippi State University Libraries’ Digital Collection website, http://digital.library.msstate.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16631coll6

Frederick Dent Grant and his wife, Ida Honoré Grant, in 1905 (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)
Ulysses S. Grant Association Honored with Lincoln Forum’s 2013 Wendy Allen Award

By Meg Henderson, Editor

During the Lincoln Forum’s 2013 annual meeting last November in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the Grant Association received the high honor of winning the Forum’s annual national prize recognizing exceptional achievements in promoting scholarship on Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War.

The Lincoln Forum is a nationwide organization of individuals who share a mutual interest in the life of Abraham Lincoln and in the Civil War era. The Forum’s annual meeting includes a variety of educational activities and presentations, and an awards program, at which the Wendy Allen Prize is awarded.

This prize is named for the renowned Gettysburg artist Wendy Allen, who is considered the leading interpreter of Abraham Lincoln in paint and watercolor media. Past recipients of the prize include Ford’s Theater and Lincoln’s Cottage, both in Washington D.C., and the Lincoln Memorial Museum in Redlands, California.

Lincoln Forum officer Russell Weidman presented the award to Dr. John F. Marszalek, executive director and managing editor of the Grant Association. Weidman praised the work of Marszalek and his staff, highlighting the publication of the “Papers of Ulysses S. Grant,” recognized as among the major sources of study for the Civil War era. Weidman also recognized the association’s decision to open the collection of documents to scholars and to the students at Mississippi State University, which has hosted the Grant Association since 2008. This move, he believed, would further open the door to more thorough and accurate scholarship on Grant’s military and presidential careers.

In accepting the award, Marszalek thanked Lincoln Forum officials and members of the Grant Association, as well as MSU President Mark E. Keenum, Dean of Libraries Frances Coleman, and the staff at the Grant Presidential Library.
From the Grant Library Archives: Frederick Douglass’s Hair

By Meg Henderson, Editor

Researchers could spend a lifetime pouring through archives and never stumble upon anything that is truly exceptional – but the possibility drives them forward. Three years ago, a hair lock from the 19th century African American social reformer and abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass, was found among items in the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, housed at the Mitchell Memorial Library.

While carefully combing through notes made by Grant biographer Lloyd Lewis more than 60 years ago, an MSU doctoral student came upon a folder containing materials about Frederick Douglass, an icon of Civil War-era and Reconstruction history. Also an orator, writer, and statesman, Douglass (1818-95) lived during a time when giving a lock of hair as a personal memento was common.

The folder also contained a detailed narrative of when and to whom the lock was given, as well as personal accounts of Douglass’s visits and relationships with a group of Indiana Quaker families.

The Quakers were family members of Lewis, who died in the late 1940s. After his death, Lewis’s widow gave the notes to prominent Civil War historian Bruce Catton, who completed the three biographical volumes on Grant which Lewis had begun. When the Grant volumes were complete, Catton donated the papers to the Grant Association.

The story goes that during Douglass’s trip to Pendleton, Indiana in 1843, the Lewis family was among those who saved Douglass’s life after a mob of pro-slavery men and boys nearly beat him to death. The account tells of how the Quaker families ran off the mob before they could finish their assault. The "Friends," as Quakers are named, took the bleeding Douglass to their neighborhood and cared for him as he healed, hiding him in tall corn during the day so that "no returning mob could find him." They cared for him in one of the homes at night.

Though not yet born during Douglass’ 1843 visit, Evangeline Lewis was 11 years old when Douglass made a return visit to her family in 1876. It was during this second visit that Douglass and Evangeline’s relatives recounted how he had been met the first time with violence from a pro-slavery mob and how the Lewis family had saved his life.

According to Lloyd Lewis’s notes, it was during the second visit that Evangeline Lewis’ two older cousins “asked Douglass if, as was the fashion of the time, they could have a lock of hair from his celebrated head.”

The Grant Library staff members believe the lock of hair to be authentic, as Lewis was a careful historian who researched the matter thoroughly. Though the lock could be verified with DNA testing, the Grant Library staff wishes to preserve the fragile strands of hair instead.

While locks of hair are housed in other historical collections, the recorded personal interactions surrounding the Douglass lock of hair and the friendships that led to its presence in the Lewis family notes make it a unique historical treasure.

The Grant Presidential Library continues preservation efforts within the collection and is making the contents available to the public.
Board Member Profile: Harriet Furst Simon
By Meg Henderson, Editor

John Y. Simon was the name and face behind the Ulysses S. Grant Association from its conception in 1962 at the Civil War Centennial until his death in 2008. His wife, Harriet, may have acted behind the scenes in the Grant Association’s editorial work, but she played a crucial supporting role then and continues to champion the association’s work today.

Simon grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, where she attended – ironically – Robert E. Lee Junior High School. Her love of literature and learning led to a Bachelor’s degree in English from Goucher College and a Masters in Education from Harvard; there, she met her future husband, who was working on his Ph.D. in History.

Looking back on her work with the Grant Papers, Simon remembers both hard work and a sense of accomplishment. From the beginning, she acted as a “volunteer assistant” to her husband, typing cards for the documents, proofreading, and sorting index cards at their dining-room table – often working weekends and holidays. One of her fondest memories is working on The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant, published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons in 1975. She enjoyed visiting the publishing house and meeting the publishers in New York.

"That book appeals to a large group of people," Simon said, "whether they’re interested in first ladies, the Civil War, or important women in history."

In addition to her work on her husband’s projects, Simon has years of editorial experience in her own right. She has been an editor at the Center for Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale since 1977.

“When I joined the Dewey Center, they were working on materials in the 1916 period. When we completed editing John Dewey’s published writings, we moved on to Dewey’s correspondence, and this work was similar to what the Grant Association was doing. We collected photocopies of letters from all over the world both to and from Dewey. Now that four volumes have been published in an electronic edition, we’re working on Dewey’s classroom lectures from the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago and Columbia University, in an electronic version only,” she said.

After working for over fifty years in the editorial business, Simon shows no signs of slowing down. But her life is not all work and no play. She loves traveling and spending time with her family. Her daughter and two granddaughters live near Chicago, the elder granddaughter attending New York University. Last Thanksgiving, they took a trip together to Boston.

Simon is also an avid volunteer in her community, sharing her love of literature and literacy with her community. She has been active in the public library since moving to Carbondale and works at the library book sales two or three times a year.

“I love it that books are recycled back into the community,” she said.

She also reads newspapers for the blind once a week on Southern Illinois’s campus and works twice a week at the public library with an adult leaner who never learned to read. [continued on page 6]
Dispatches from Grant • Winter 2014 • Volume 1, Issue 4

[continued from page 5]

Grant Association members who are attending the annual meeting in St. Louis will have the pleasure of meeting this remarkable, energetic, and delightful lady. Not only is she the USGA secretary, she is also a founder and unflagging supporter of the Ulysses S. Grant Association.

History and Genealogy at the Denver Public Library
By Jim Kroll, USGA Member

In 1973, I graduated from Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania where I majored in history, having taken one course each semester from Dr. John Marszalek. While living in Erie, I developed lifelong friendships with John and Jeanne. Shortly after graduation, the Marszaleks moved to Starkville, and my wife Joan and I eventually moved to Denver, where in 1979 the Denver Public Library employed me as a shelver.

Fifteen years ago, the Library asked me to manage the Western History/Genealogy Department and the Blair/Caldwell African American Research Library. Like the U. S. Grant collection at Mississippi State, these departments are special collections. My colleagues assist graduate students with research for their dissertations as well as fourth graders with their biographical reports; senior citizens with their genealogical pursuits and journalists with their deadlines; historic preservationists with applications for the National Trust and bottle collectors researching maps for potentially propitious places for digs.

With over 4,500 manuscript collections, 350,000 books and serials, 900,000 photographs, 5,000 maps, and 5,000 paintings and prints, the Western History collection occupies four floors of the 350,000 square foot Central Library and continues to grow.

As vendors and librarians digitize more and more publications, special collections like the U.S. Grant Library and mine at the Denver Library are in a position to acquire and make accessible those documents, maps, and images that we cannot find elsewhere. Along with the materials, we provide the staff - archivists, librarians, clerks, and digital technicians - who have the in-depth knowledge, historical perspective and good will to guide others through the maze of papers and images. I am honored to be a member of a profession that has generosity as a core value.

President Grant travelled to Colorado in 1873, a guest of Senator Henry Teller. In 1880, Grant’s son, Ulysses S. Grant, Jr., married Fannie Josephine Chaffee, daughter of Colorado’s other Senator, Jerome B. Chaffee. In the Genealogy Collection, we have a copy of Grant’s memoirs; in the Western History collection, pieces of information about his visits and interactions with Coloradoans. John Marszalek gave my wife and me a membership to the Grant Association as a gift to congratulate me for completing a masters degree in American History. USGA membership means an annual reunion so I can be John’s student again, a role that I am happy to play.
Pulitzer Prize winning biographer digs into Grant collection for forthcoming book

By Meg Henderson, Editor

Bestselling biographer and Pulitzer Prize winner Ron Chernow has spent several weeks in the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library researching his forthcoming book. And he will return many more times to continue his research.

Chernow, who has previously written about historical giants such as John D. Rockefeller, George Washington, and Alexander Hamilton, has spent the last two and a half years delving into the life of another man who helped change the course of American history – Ulysses S. Grant.

The idea came to him in 2010, shortly after finishing his Pulitzer Prize winning biography on George Washington. Chernow knew that he wanted to begin a new project but felt that there were not many figures of comparable stature to Washington. Grant was one. Both men had been war heroes and presidents in the two most defining eras in American history: the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Chernow decided that Grant would be his new subject.

Between his “strong and often overbearing father” and his “equally difficult father-in-law,” Grant and his wife, Julia faced the difficulty of feuding families, a fact that is often overlooked in portraits of the general and president, Chernow said. “In a way, the Civil War was already being fought out before 1861 in the Grant family – between the Yankee family from Ohio and the Southern family from Missouri.”

Chernow explained his philosophy of biography this way: “I try to put at the center of the book a psychological portrait of the character, and I also try to synthesize both the public and the private lives. The material at the Grant Library is invaluable. It will allow me to present a rounded portrait of this person that I hope will make him seem very real on the page.”

Until his visit to the Grant Library, Chernow immersed himself in secondary-source research to give himself a broad background. He spent a three-month hiatus after ankle surgery reading the Civil War trilogies of Shelby Foote and Bruce Catton and has since read nearly eighty books about Grant, the Civil War and Reconstruction. He then spent 2013 carefully perusing all 32 volumes of The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant.

During his week at the Grant Library, Chernow worked his way through Series 2 of the unpublished Grant material. The 32 published volumes represent only 20% of the materials in the Grant Library, so he believes having access to the unpublished material will give him a wealth of new information. “I feel lucky to be the beneficiary of [former Executive Director John Y.] Simon’s work,” he said, “And the staff at the Grant Library rolled out the red carpet for me. The Grant Library is an absolute jewel. I’m going to be back many times.”

Dr. John Marszalek, Executive Director of the Grant Library, praised Chernow’s previous work and his plans for his Grant biography. “Ron Chernow is one of the nation’s leading biographers, and his praise of our Grant collection is most meaningful. I can’t wait to read his completed book.”
The Meridian Campaign, February 1864
By Dr. John F. Marszalek, USGA Executive Director

This February marked the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Meridian.

When most people hear the name “Sherman,” they immediately think of his famous “march to the sea” in Georgia. Here he practiced destructive war, hoping to substitute it for the kill-and-maim fighting that had been the practice until then. Clearly the “march to the sea” is the most well-known example of destructive war, but it was in Mississippi that Sherman first implemented it.

Sherman had long been upset at having to fight southern friends he had made during his residence in that region before the war. Having thought about this for a long time, he decided that destruction and psychological strategy was the best way to end the war with the least casualties. If he could defeat guerrillas in Mississippi through this kind of warfare, he would prove it to be the most efficient and least fatal way to wage war.

Sherman received Grant’s permission to lead his 23,000 men from Vicksburg, through Jackson, and to Meridian. He was convinced that his destruction of railroads and anything else of military value in the middle of Mississippi would successfully eliminate guerrillas and the Confederate military in general. He began his March on February 3, 1864 in two columns, the 17th Corps under James B. McPherson and the 16th Corps under Stephen A. Hurlbut. A 1,300 man cavalry force screened these columns.

The roads were terrible, but Sherman’s army made steady progress. After nearly two weeks of living off the land, Sherman arrived in Meridian on February 14, 1864. He had chased Leonidas Polk’s Confederate army into Alabama and left behind a swath of damaged or destroyed Confederate territory. He gave his soldiers a brief respite and then on February 16, he ordered them to destroy the railroad and anything of military value within Meridian. For five days, they went to it, for hundreds of miles in all directions. The railroads were uprooted, and the small town’s military possibilities were eliminated.

Except for the fact that a cavalry force under William Sooey Smith traveling south along the eastern part of the state had been waylaid by Nathan Bedford Forrest and never reached Meridian, Sherman pronounced loudly that he had achieved an important success.

He was correct. He had chased away the Confederate army, thus leaving the state a hollow military shell at his mercy. Sherman knew that he had been right all along. He could wage successful war without having to slaughter people he considered friends. Destruction worked, and it saved lives.
Welcome New Staff Writer, Bailey Powell

Bailey Powell, originally from Birmingham, Alabama, is a new student worker at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. She is a junior at Mississippi State University, majoring in English, and she plans to teach English for secondary education after graduate school. She is the treasurer of the Sigma Phi Lambda Psi chapter at MSU and a member of the Famous Maroon Band. Bailey previously worked in the Instructional Media Center within the Mitchell Memorial Library. She transferred to the Grant Library to gain experience in reading, writing, and editing.

As a student worker, she assists Meg Henderson with the newsletter for the Ulysses S. Grant Association. She also assists David Nolen and Bob Karachuk with transcribing the Ida Honoré Grant Correspondence. Bailey is very thankful for the opportunity to work alongside the editors and staff of the Grant Library.

2014 USGA Annual Meeting May 2-4

Meet us in St. Louis for the 2014 USGA Annual Meeting! Join Grant scholars and others interested in Ulysses S. Grant and Civil War history for a weekend of tours, lectures, and other events. The weekend will include events at White Haven, the childhood home of Julia Grant, and Jefferson Barracks, where Grant served as a young officer, as well as a Civil War Symposium and a talk from executive director Dr. John F. Marszalek. Saturday evening will feature a tour of St. Louis on a riverboat, dinner, and a talk from Grant historian Dr. Edwina Campbell.

For more information on the meeting and to register and book a hotel room, please visit the following website: http://www.usgrantlibrary.org/usga/annualmeeting/2014.asp

• A Look Ahead •

March 4—April 29: C-SPAN American Presidents Exhibit at Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University. Details available soon at library.msstate.edu.

March 17: Screenings of PBS Documentary “Civil War: The Untold Story” and discussion panels at Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University. The documentary will air in April; for local listings, visit www.mpbonline.org. For information on the March 17 events, call Meg Henderson at 662-325-4552.

March 26: Marszalek Lecture at Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University. For information, call Meg Henderson at 662-325-4552.

April 17-18: Corinth Contraband Camp Symposium—Visit nps.gov/shil for details.

May 9-17: Grand American Queen Riverboat Cruise with historians John F. Marszalek & Frank J. Williams and George Buss as Abraham Lincoln—e-mail histours@aol.com for information.
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 issue of the USGA newsletter, please email with a photograph, if available, to mhenderson@library.msstate.edu.

Updating our Records

If you have moved or changed your contact information recently, please send us your updated mailing address, phone number, and email. There are also a number of members who have outdated mailing addresses, and we are not able to get in touch with them. If you know anyone listed below, or someone who is a member and is not receiving communications from the Grant Association, please encourage them to call Meg Henderson at 662-325-4552 or email mhenderson@library.msstate.edu. Thank you!

Tom Arliskas                Thomas B. Queen
Maclay M. Armstrong         Robert Skimin
Col. John Bennet            Robert A. Stoller, M.D.
John C. Bourdage            Marilyn S. Tarr
Williard Bunn, Jr.          Frederick G. Terry III
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