

General Orders, No. 11 - The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

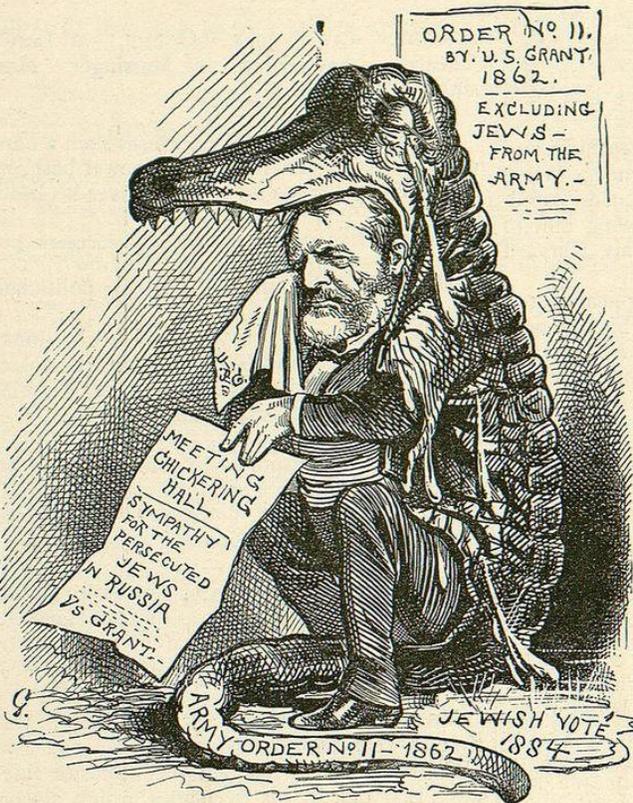
By Walter E. Busch

If you wanted to have controversy during the Civil War, just create a General Order. Number it as 11. Sit back and wait. Historians hear of few general orders of that war that caused controversy. However, it seems that if they know about them, the order was numbered eleven. What were these orders and what were the issues?

In December, 1862, Grant was busy trying to take the river port of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Grant disliked war profiteering. As the Union armies headed south, Northern businessmen followed buying up anything (mainly cotton) they could find. Apparently, Jesse Root Grant, the General's father, was not aware of his son's feelings. He brought three businessmen, the Mack brothers, from Cincinnati, Ohio, down to visit his son. The Macks had offered Jesse a share from cotton profits if he would introduce them to his son in order to help them obtain the necessary business permits for the war zone. Upon learning of the reason for the trip, Grant had the Macks physically removed

from the area. Unfortunately for Jesse, he did not count on his son's reaction. Even more unfortunate for the General, he vented his anger at the "race" of the businessmen instead of specifying profiteers. The Macks were Jewish.¹ Grant immediately issued the following General Order Number 11:

THEN AND NOW.—1862 AND 1882.



"OH, NOW YOU WEEP, AND I PERCEIVE YOU FEEL THE DINT OF PITY. THESE ARE GRACIOUS DROPS."

HDQRS. 13TH A. C., DEPT. OF
THE TENN.,
Holly Springs, December 17,
1862.

The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department [of the Army of Tennessee] orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.

Post commanders will see that all of this class of people be furnished passes and required to leave, and any one returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending

them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permit from headquarters.

No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade permits.

By order of Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant: JNO. A. RAWLINS, Assistant Adjutant-General.²

The order did not just affect Jewish businessmen. Any Jewish person within the boundaries of the Army of the Tennessee was to be expelled. Even more absurdly, the order did not specify that Jewish soldiers were exempt. When Jewish community leaders brought the order to the attention of President Lincoln, he directed that it be immediately revoked. Grant revoked it on January 24, 1863.³ Throughout the rest of his life, it was a political embarrassment, but more importantly he was truly sorry for it. He had meant to throw out war profiteers and particularly those bought in by his father.

Earlier in the year, Major-General David Hunter attempted to benefit people with his order and still caused President Lincoln problems. Hunter, a staunch abolitionist, had previously freed slaves in newly conquered rebel territories. He decided that since martial law existed in the areas under his command, he had the right to free the slaves in those domains. On May 9, 1862, he issued his General Order Number 11. It stated:

HDQRS. DEPT. OF THE SOUTH,
Hilton Head, Port Royal, S.C., May 9, 1862.

The three States of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, comprising the Military Department of the South, having deliberately declared themselves no longer under the protection of the United States of America, and having taken up arms against said United States, it became a military necessity to declare martial law. This was accordingly done on the 25th day of April, 1862. Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three States, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.

By command of Maj. Gen. D. Hunter: [ED. W. SMITH,] Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.⁴

Kenneth Davis commented on President Lincoln's reaction, thus: "Lincoln still wanted this to be a war for the Union, not emancipation." Lincoln worried that if slaves in conquered territories were freed, the border states might secede. The task of preserving the Union and conquering the Southern states would then become more difficult. On May 19, 1862, President Lincoln overruled Hunter's order, and, in doing so, stated that he reserved that exercise of power for himself.⁵ Seven months later, on January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued his own Emancipation Proclamation which announced that slaves "...within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforth and forever free..."⁶

Then there was General Thomas Ewing's General Orders, No. 11. If you are a Missourian, you have hear something about this. President Truman liked it to Nazi Concentration Camps. But then, Harry did have Confederate sympathies.

In August, 1863 about 2 months after assuming command of the Border District, General Thomas Ewing issued his order. He governed a district comprised of the first tier of counties on either side

of the Missouri-Kansas Line. As he was attempting to root out Confederates from his district, a band of guerrillas raided Lawrence, KS, killing many men and boys and doing considerable damage. The cry of Kansans for action was great.

Ewing, the brother-in-law of General William T. Sherman, had already been at work attempting to clean up the border. He had troops covering many towns. He took the women of some guerrilla leaders and put them in confinement so they wouldn't supply the enemy. He issued other orders driving out known sympathizers from his district and confiscating their property, especially their slaves. In short, he was using what Mark Grimsley described as the "hard hand of war"⁷ on the border district. He was forcing the guerrillas' hand.

Now, however, Quantrill met up with other Confederate troops and convinced all to raid Lawrence. Ewing was forced to take further action. Action he had already contemplated. He issued the following order, removing all citizens from Missouri counties unless they lived near Union forts.

General Orders }
No. 11. }

Hdqrs. District of the Border,
Kansas City, MO., August 25, 1863.

I. All persons living in Jackson, Cass, and Bates Counties, Missouri, and in that part of Vernon included in this district, except those living within 1 mile of the limits of Independence, Hickman's Mills, Pleasant Hill, and Harrisonville, and except those in that part of Kaw township, Jackson County, north of Brush Creek and west of the Big Blue, are hereby ordered to remove from their present places of residence within fifteen days from the date hereof. Those who, within that time, establish their loyalty to the satisfaction of the commanding officer of the military station nearest their present places of residence, will receive from him certificates stating the fact of their loyalty, and the names of the witnesses by whom it can be shown. All who receive such certificate will be permitted to remove to any military station in this district, or to any part of the State of Kansas, except the counties on the eastern borders of the State. All others shall remove out of this district. Officers commanding companies and detachments serving in the counties named, will see that this paragraph is promptly obeyed.

II. All grain and hay in the field or under shelter in the district from which the inhabitants are required to remove within reach of military stations, after the 9th day of September next, will be taken to such stations and turned over to the proper officers there, and report of the amount so turned over made to district headquarters, specifying the names of all loyal owners and the amount of such produce taken from them. All grain and hay found in such district after the 9th day of September next not convenient to such stations will be destroyed.

[Two more sections not printed]

By order of Brigadier General Ewing:

H. Hannahs
Acting Assistant Adjutant General.⁸

The order was upheld as necessary by both General Schofield and endorsed by President Lincoln and stayed in effect until November, 1863. However, the order is claimed by many to have removed 20,000 people from the counties and is the cause of it being "The Burnt District." In reality, the displaced people were well under 10,000 because prior to the order, many towns had been burned,

post offices closed, and people already had moved because of other issues. The population losses in the Missouri counties affected by the order match those of nearby counties in which the order was never a factor.



Bingham's Painting in the Cincinnati Museum of Art photo: Sumner Hunnewell

The order was immortalized in a propaganda painting by George Caleb Bingham and the controversy for good and bad followed Ewing the rest of his life. Some claim that it cost him an election to be Ohio's Governor. Such stories are very far from the truth.

So, Hunter issued an order that was bad only because Lincoln thought the timing inappropriate to free slaves. Grant order certainly had its ugly aspects to it. Ewing's order was a military necessity, but caused grief and hardships. We have to wait until after the war, in 1868, for there to be a good General Orders, No. 11.

On May 5, 1868, General Logan issued the order below.

General Order No. 11

**Headquarters, Grand Army of the Republic
Washington, D.C., May 5, 1868**

I. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and

whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form or ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose, among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than by cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their death a tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the Nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of free and undivided republic.

If other eyes grow dull and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain in us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed, gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choicest flowers of springtime; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us as sacred charges upon the Nation's gratitude,--the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

II. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to call attention to this Order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.

III. Department commanders will use every effort to make this order effective.

By command of:

JOHN A. LOGAN, Commander-in-Chief.

N. P. CHIPMAN, Adjutant-General.⁹

Logan's order has served as a clarion call to all Americans to remember the sacrificed of their war dead. As years passed, we have had to remember the dead of other wars as well. We remember, memorialize and indeed celebrate Memorial Day. We celebrate because we are free due to the deeds of American soldiers. Every time we pray to God or reflect on our live, we should pause to give thanks for the sacrifices of those who died for us. LEST WE FORGET!

Endnotes:

- 1 Lutz, Stephen D. "Grant's Ignoble Act." America's Civil War Vol. 12 No. 6: (Mar. 2000): 50-56. Leesburg, VA: Primedia Special Interest Publications, page 50-54.
- 2 Official Records. The Civil War CD-ROM: The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Version 1.5 CD-ROM. Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 1996. Citation: 1-28/2, 424.

- 3 Lutz, 56.
- 4 OR 1-14, 341.
- 5 Davis, Kenneth C. Don't Know Much About The Civil War: Everything You Need To Know About America's Greatest Conflict But Never Learned. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1996. page 243.
- 6 K. Davis, 274.
- 7 Grimsley, Mark. The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians 1861-1865. New York, NY: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995. page 119.
- 8 Source: OR 1-22/2: 473
- 9 Taken from www.suvcw.org website

Note: All Ewing material taken from my previous research and book soon to be published again with a new title as Lincoln's Brat: The Controversial General Thomas Ewing.