



# HARDSCRABBLE

Newsletter of Ulysses S. Grant Camp #68, St. Louis, MO



Vol. 2018, Issue #2 – May 2018

## Commander's Corner



We are off to a good start in 2018 With the dissolution of the Sherman Camp we have now assumed responsibility for the Sherman Memorial event. Considering that Sherman was both born and died in February, I believe we should use a different day to remember him. Make your opinions heard. We are also looking to use our U.S. Grant Camp Speakers' Bureau to raise awareness of our group and hopefully increase attendance. If you know a school or a group that would appreciate such speakers, let them know about our bureau. I look forward to seeing you at the future events and our Camp meetings.

*Bob Amsler*  
Commander

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## Editor's Note....

It took a while for Spring temperatures to hit the St. Louis area, but not the Grant Camp. It has been an active year for the Camp so far and the next few months look equally active. There's something for everybody, so please consider getting involved!

*John Palmer*  
Editor



# 56<sup>th</sup> USCT Remembered at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

On Saturday, May 5, eight members of the Grant Camp joined Sarah Cato and members of the St. Louis African-American Genealogical Society to honor the memory of the 175 members of the 56<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops (USCT) buried at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. The color guard was provided by members of the Cleveland High Naval JROTC.

The regiment was organized at St. Louis in August 1863 as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Arkansas Volunteer Infantry (African Descent) and assigned to the VII Corps. The regiment was dispatched to Helena, AR, where it was initially utilized for garrison and guard duty. The regiment was re-organized at Helena on March 11, 1864 and re-designated the 56<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry. The 56<sup>th</sup> was commanded by Col. Carl Bentzoni, a Prussian-born officer who trained the unit for combat.

The unit lost 4 officers and 21 enlisted men to wounds sustained in combat and 2 officers and 647 enlisted men

to disease. A large number of these deaths occurred during a cholera epidemic that struck in August 1866 while the regiment was waiting to muster out at Jefferson Barracks Military Post in St. Louis. A total of 175 of these men are buried together in a mass grave beneath the monument.



Members of the SUVCW and the St. Louis African American Genealogical Society at the 56<sup>th</sup> USCT Monument



## College Campuses and the Civil War: The University of Mississippi

We continue our look at college campuses that were impacted by the Civil War. In the last issue, we began this series by looking at the University of Alabama. In this issue, we move one state to the west and focus on the University of Mississippi or "Ole Miss" as it is more commonly known. Back in August 2017, the editor had an official campus/admissions visit to the University of Mississippi in Oxford, MS. Much like the case of the University of Alabama, the editor did not know the extensive Civil War related history of this institution.



The Mississippi Legislature chartered the University of Mississippi on February 24, 1844. The university opened its doors to its first class of 80 students four years later in 1848. For 23 years, the university was Mississippi's only public institution of higher learning, and for 110 years it was the state's only comprehensive university. When the university opened, the campus consisted of six buildings: two dormitories, two faculty houses, a steward's hall, and the Lyceum at the center. Constructed from 1846 to 1848, the Lyceum is the oldest building on campus. Originally, the Lyceum housed all of the classrooms and faculty offices of the university. The Lyceum is now the home of the university's administration offices. The columned facade of the Lyceum is represented on the official crest of the university, along with the date of establishment.



The Lyceum: (L) in 1861 and (R) in 2017

In 1854, the university established the fourth state-supported, public law school in the United States, and also began offering engineering education. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, classes were interrupted when almost the entire student body (135 out of 139 students) from the University of Mississippi enlisted in the Confederate army.

Three different times during the Civil War, the University of Mississippi campus buildings were used as a hospital for sick and injured soldiers. The first time was by Confederate soldiers after the Battle of Shiloh, then by General Grant's Federal troops during his occupation of Oxford, and lastly by General Forrest's troops when Federal troops retreated to Memphis after Van Dorn's raid on Holly Springs.

With the vast majority of the University of Mississippi students leaving to join the Confederate army, the Governor of Mississippi, John J. Pettus, and the Board of Trustees appointed two professors, Dr. Eugene W. Hilgard and Dr. A. J. Quinche, along with Burton Harrison, a student, to care for the University buildings while the campus was closed. They set up a residence, with their families, in the building now known as the Barnard Observatory.

Dr. Eugene W. Hilgard was the also the Geologist of the State of Mississippi from 1857 to 1873. He had been hired as a professor at the University after graduation from Heidelberg University in Germany at age twenty where had earned a summa cum laude Ph.D. Dr. A. J. Quinche was a professor of Latin and Romance languages and a native of Minnesota. He had come to the University from Illinois when he had been a friend of General Grant's family. Mr. Burton Harrison was from Aberdeen and he had promised his mother that he would not join the other students in service to the South until after the winter. He would later become the personal secretary to President Jefferson Davis with the assistance of L. Q. C. Lamar.

The use of the University of Mississippi campus buildings as a Confederate hospital was first proposed by T. W. Caskey, a Presbyterian minister. He had been appointed by Governor Pettus to find a suitable place for a hospital after the fall of Fort Donelson in February of 1862. Since another battle was imminent, with Federal troops advancing on Mississippi, a place in northern Mississippi was needed.

Immediately after the battle of Shiloh, on April 6-7, 1862, word was brought to Oxford and the University that a great number of sick and wounded soldiers would be sent there by railroad. When this news reached Oxford, excitement ran high in the town. The people of Oxford



## College Campuses and the Civil War: The University of Mississippi

gathered mattresses, beds, cots, bedding, and everything that could be spared to comfort the soldiers. On the campus, the selected buildings were prepared for the wounded and sick. The chapel, Lyceum, three dormitories, and other residence buildings formally used by professors were readied for use. The building known as the magnetic observatory was to later be used as the morgue. This building would later be called the “Dead House”.



(L) The “Dead House” as it appeared prior to removal in 1958;  
(R) Campus sign marking location of the “Dead House”

During this time, the post surgeon was Dr. T. D. Isom of Oxford. Dr. Gillespie of Grenada and other doctors from Oxford assisted him. The university depended on the ladies of Oxford for nurses. One convalescent soldier and a slave were assigned to each nurse. Many convalescent soldiers were taken to homes of Oxford residents. They were assigned by twos to families wishing to take them in. Mrs. M. C. Neilson had the only sewing machine in Oxford and it was used from dawn to dusk making garments for the soldiers. Even the young girls and little children were allowed to help in making bandages and scraping lint to be used in the dressing of wounds.

In early December, 1862, General Grant made his entrance into Oxford. The wounded soldiers were moved to the south to Grenada and other field hospitals that had been established. The university was spared the torch due to Dr. Quinche’s friendship with the Grant family and Dr. Hilgard’s suggestion to General A. J. Smith that the University could be used for “war purposes” very much like the Confederates.

Grant’s army remained in Oxford for three weeks and left the town and University on Christmas Day, 1862. Grant had learned how to supply his troops from the land around him. When they left Oxford the weather was intensely cold, with mud, sleet and rain everywhere, and the country literally devastated for ten miles in all directions of Oxford. General Van Dorn had raided Holly

Springs and General Forrest had cut off Grant’s line of communication from Memphis.

After the Federal retreat from Oxford, General Forrest would use the buildings on campus from time to time for his soldiers. This would continue until the burning of Oxford in August, 1864. After that time the buildings were no longer needed. The battles were going on elsewhere and the University of Mississippi had served its “war purpose” for both the North and the South.

But what about the University of Mississippi students? The students would form the bulk of Co. A, 11<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Infantry and become known as the “University Greys”. The Greys were one of the more storied units under the Army of Northern Virginia and would serve in some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Probably the most famous engagement of the University Greys was at Pickett’s Charge during the Battle of Gettysburg, when the Confederates made a desperate frontal assault on the Union entrenchments atop Cemetery Ridge. The Greys penetrated farther into the Union position than any other unit, but at the terrible cost of sustaining 100% casualties—every soldier was either killed or wounded.

Historians agree that the Rebel charge by the boys from Mississippi was the high water mark of the Confederacy. During the height of the July 3rd cannonade preceding Pickett’s Charge, a stretcher was carried into a Confederate aid station somewhere behind the fighting. Surgeon LeGrand Wilson of the 42nd Mississippi, saw a head raised and recognized University of Mississippi student Jeremiah Gage. The following is the surgeon’s writing and Jeremiah Gage’s letter home.



Jeremiah Gage as a UM student (L) and as a Private in The 11<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Infantry (R)





## College Campuses and the Civil War: The University of Mississippi

*"The first to arrive, borne on a litter, was a princely fellow and favored son of the 11<sup>th</sup> Mississippi. I saw in an instant a condition of terrible shock. He laid back the blanket and exposed his lower abdomen, torn through left to right by a cannon shot. Without the slightest change of voice, he asked, 'Doctor, how long have I to live?' A very few hours I replied. 'Oh, my darling mother,' he said. 'Quick, I want to write.' After finishing his letter, he said, 'Doctor, I'm in great agony. Let me die easy.' I handed him a cup of black drop, a concentrated dose of opium. He feebly waved the cup, saying, 'Come around boys, and let us have a toast. I drink the toast to you to the Southern Confederacy and to victory!' In about an hour, passing hastily, I lifted the cover from his face, to find him sleeping painlessly."*

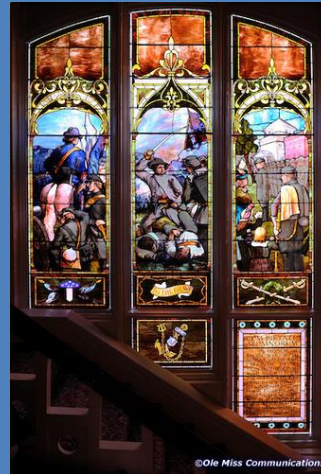
Jeremiah Gage's letter did reach its destination.

*My dear mother,  
This is the last you may ever hear from me. I have time to tell you that I died like a man. Bear my loss as best you can. Remember that I am true to my country and my greatest regret at dying is that she is not free and that you and my sisters are robbed of my worth, whatever that may be. I hope this will reach you and you must not regret that my body cannot be obtained. It is a mere matter of form anyhow. This is for my sisters too as I cannot write more. Send my dying release to Miss Mary....you know who.*

*J.S. Gage  
Company A  
11<sup>th</sup> Mississippi  
(this letter is stained with my blood)*

Gage was buried on the Gettysburg battlefield and his remains were removed along with many other Confederate dead from Gettysburg and reinterred at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, VA. Gage's original letter resides in the Civil War collection at the University of Mississippi.

The exploits of the University Greys are memorialized in the form of a stained glass window located in Ventress Hall on the University of Mississippi campus. Also, a monument to Confederate dead was placed on the Circle at the formal entrance to the University of Mississippi by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1906.



**Stained glass window at Ventress Hall (L) and monument to Confederate dead on the Circle (R)**

The university re-opened shortly after the Civil War ended. During the post-war period, the university was led by former Confederate general A.P. Stewart, a Rogersville, Tennessee native. He served as Chancellor from 1874 to 1886. The university became coeducational in 1882 and was the first such institution in the Southeast to hire a female faculty member, Sarah McGehee Isom, doing so in 1885.

The university was not spared any of the desegregation turmoil that occurred during the Jim Crow era, when segregation was established law in the Deep South. The Ole Miss riot of 1962 is recognized as a flashpoint in the Civil Rights Movement. The riotous protests that occurred on campus left two dead and dozens injured. Rebellious students protested against the admission of James Meredith, the university's first African American student, whose enrollment was inspired by the inaugural address of the 35th President of the US, John F. Kennedy. The protestors gathered in a centralized location on campus near the Confederate monument at the Circle. At that time, the white Democratic establishment vehemently opposed integration despite the 1954 US Supreme Court decision that ruled segregation unconstitutional. The university's then president, William David McCain was among the opposition, and served as a longtime leader and promoter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

In 2008, the site of the riots, known as Lyceum-The Circle Historic District, was designated as a National Historic Landmark.



## Grant Camp Honors and Educates at 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lincoln Tomb Observance

Members of the Grant Camp attended the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual Lincoln Tomb Observance in Springfield, IL on April 14. This event, sponsored by the SUVCW and MOLLUS, commemorated the 152<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's death.

On April 15, 1865, the day President Lincoln died, a group of Springfield citizens formed the National Lincoln Monument Association and spearheaded a drive for funds to construct a memorial or tomb. Upon arrival of the funeral train on May 3, Lincoln lay in state in the Illinois State Capitol for one night. After funeral and burial services the next day, his coffin was placed in a receiving vault at Oak Ridge Cemetery, the site Mrs. Lincoln requested for burial. In December, her husband's remains were removed to a temporary vault not far from the proposed memorial site. In 1871, three years after laborers had begun constructing the tomb, the body of Lincoln and those of the three youngest of his sons were placed in crypts in the unfinished structure.

In 1874, upon completion of the memorial, which had been designed by Larkin Goldsmith Mead, Lincoln's remains were interred in a marble sarcophagus in the center of a chamber known as the "catacombs," or burial room. In 1876, however, after two Chicago criminals failed in an attempt to steal Lincoln's body and hold it for ransom, the National Lincoln Monument Association hid it in another part of the memorial, first under wood and other debris and then buried in the ground within the tomb. When Mrs. Lincoln died in 1882, her remains were placed with those of Lincoln, but in 1887 both bodies were reburied in a brick vault beneath the floor of the burial room.

By 1895, the year the State acquired the memorial, it had fallen into disrepair. During a rebuilding and restoration program from 1899–1901, all five caskets were moved to a nearby subterranean vault. Following completion of the restoration, State officials returned them to the burial room and placed that of Lincoln in the sarcophagus it had occupied in 1874–76. Within a few months, however, at the request of Robert Todd Lincoln, the President's only surviving son, Lincoln's remains were moved to their final resting place - a concrete vault 10 feet (3.0 m) below the surface of the burial room. It has undergone little change since that time.

The Lincoln Tomb was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 19, 1960, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.

In 1957, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War organized the first Lincoln Tomb Ceremony and held the event each year on April 15. In 2007, the event was changed to fall on the Saturday closest to April 15 in order to draw greater attendance.

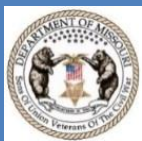
For the 2018 event, in addition to speeches by SUVCW and MOLLUS leadership and musical interludes by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Illinois Volunteer Regimental Band, wreaths were placed by a number of organizations, including U.S. Grant Camp #68. After the main event, many attended the luncheon at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Springfield. The guest speaker was our own Camp Commander Bob Amsler, who enlightened the audience with his presentation, "Railroads: Coming of Age in the Civil War."



Wreath Presentations at Lincoln's Tomb



Camp Commander Bob Amsler Presenting at the Luncheon



## Spring Department Meeting Highlights

The Spring Department business meeting was held on Saturday, March 10 at the State Capitol in Jefferson City. A number of topics and/or issues were discussed, including:

- Locations for Department Encampments in 2020 and 2021 were discussed. Motions were made and passed to have the 2020 Department Encampment in Kansas City and the 2021 Department Encampment in Jefferson City.
- Changes to the Department by-laws largely connected to preparing for a 501c3 tax determination were discussed and approved. These changes will be sent to Camps for review prior to a vote at the Department Encampment.

- October and March business meetings – motion was made and passed to move the meeting location away from the State Capitol until construction is completed.
- Motion was made and passed to purchase a new wreath for the Department ceremonial activities.
- Resolution presented by Westport Camp supporting the candidacy of Dale Grandell for Department Commander.
- Bryan Bradford from Tigers Camp announced his candidacy for Department Commander.

After the meeting, a number of attendees retired to a favorite Mexican restaurant in Jefferson City for food and fellowship.

## Upcoming Events....

- May 28 – Memorial Day Ceremonies @ Jefferson Barracks
- Jun 2 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Missouri Dept Encampment @ Bennett Springs State Park, Lebanon, MO
- Jun 11 – Camp Meeting at Frailey's Grill
- Jul 9 – Camp Meeting at Frailey's Grill
- Jul 21 – Grant Remembrance Program @ U.S. Grant National Historic Site
- Aug 9-12 – 137<sup>th</sup> National Encampment @ Sheraton Hotel, Framingham, MA
- Sep 10 – Camp Meeting at Frailey's Grill



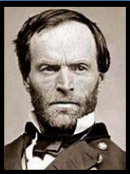
## Welcome New Member!

The Brothers of U.S Grant Camp #68 would like to welcome **William H. Green** from Pattonsburg, MO as a new member of the Camp! Brother Green has actually been a member of the SUCVW since 1996 and is transferring into the Grant Camp from William T. Sherman Camp #65, which recently surrendered their charter. He derives his membership from his ancestor, John McComas, who served in Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> West Virginia Light Artillery.

McComas enlisted in Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> West Virginia Light Artillery on October 1, 1861. This unit supported numerous operations in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia throughout the war. It also participated in a number of small engagements and both battles of Kernstown in 1862 and 1864. Towards the end of the war, the unit was assigned to the defense of Washington, DC. McComas was discharged as the unit was mustered out of service on June 28, 1865.

After the war, McComas moved west to Colorado. He died on August 13, 1920 at the age of 75. He is buried in Kent Cemetery in Denver, CO. He is included in the SUCVW Graves Registration database.





## Grant Camp Takes Point for Sherman Commemoration at Calvary Cemetery

On Sunday, March 25, the Grant Camp hosted the annual commemoration at the Gen. William T. Sherman gravesite at Calvary Cemetery in north St. Louis. Until this year, this commemoration had been coordinated by William T. Sherman Camp #65; however, per General Order #12, Camp #65 surrendered its charter. As such, the Grant Camp, being the only other Camp in the St. Louis area, agreed to take over the ceremony. For 2018, the ceremony was moved from late February to late March to reduce the risk of interference from bad weather.

The ceremony also including placement of flowers and a wreath laying by the various organizations present at the event. Discussion will be held at future Camp meetings about a more permanent date for this annual event.

The event brought together members from several Camps, including Grant Camp #68, Fletcher Camp #47, Wilhelmi Camp #17 and a number of former members of Sherman Camp #65. The 4<sup>th</sup> Military District, SVR, also provided support. The procession started at the cemetery entrance and moved to the Sherman gravesite. A ceremony was conducted that included an address by Grant Camp Commander Bob Amsler.



Grant Camp Commander Bob Amsler Speaking at the Sherman Commemoration at Calvary Cemetery



## U.S. Grant Camp #68 2018 Officers

- Commander – Bob Amsler
- Senior Vice Commander – Sumner Hunnewell
- Junior Vice Commander – Bob Aubuchon
- Secretary/Treasurer – Walter Busch
- Council - Bob Petrovic
- Council - Mike Hudson
- Council - Jim Stebbings
- Patriotic Instructor - Martin Aubuchon
- Chaplain - Fr. Vincent Heier

### Membership Inquiries?

Please contact Junior Vice Commander Bob Aubuchon at [baubpowder1@gmail.com](mailto:baubpowder1@gmail.com).



## U.S. Grant Camp #68 Meeting Information

- Meeting Dates: 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month (no meeting in August)
- Meeting Time: 7:00 pm (many members gather for dinner prior to meeting at 6:00 pm)
- Meeting Location: Frailey's Southtown Grill  
4329 Butler Hill Rd.  
St. Louis, MO

