As we hope you can see from the articles in this newsletter, the staff of the Ulysses S. Grant Association’s Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library continues to work hard on serving our members and trying to make certain that the Association continues to be the leading Grant organization in the world.

Without doubt and true to our history, the major work of our staff remains the documentary editing of Grant’s writings. As you know, we have completed the publication of thirty-two volumes of The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant through the auspices of our long-time partner, Southern Illinois University Press. We have also digitized and placed on our website thirty-one of the thirty-two volumes. The final volume will appear one the website sometime in the fall of this year.

We have also digitized the original one hundred thirty letters written by Ida Honoré Grant to her mother, sister, and other family members in Chicago, while she was living in Vienna in the early 1890s when her husband, Frederick Dent Grant, served as the U.S. minister to Austria-Hungary. With our excellent student help, we have done first run transcription and collation of all 2,398 manuscript pages in these letters. Our students are presently researching material for the biographical dictionary which will accompany the digitized originals and transcriptions online. They are producing good work, and, under the tutelage of our staff, they are gaining an education in documentary editing.

We are also working on what may be the most difficult editorial project in the history of USGA: preparing the scholarly edition of the famous Grant memoirs. This is proving to be a challenging and labor-intensive project. There is absolutely no doubt that Grant himself was the driving force in the writing of this masterpiece. (Mark Twain wrote absolutely none of it.)

Grant worked with his son Fred, his Civil War aide Adam Badeau, his stenographer Nobel E. Dawson, and a variety of other individuals.

• Continued on page 2 •
This story can fit 175–225 words.

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to a targeted audience. Newsletters can be a great way to market your product or service, and also create credibility and build your organization's identity among peers, members, employees, or vendors.

First, determine the audience of the newsletter. This could be anyone who might benefit from the information it contains, for example, employees or people interested in purchasing a product or requesting your service.

You can compile a mailing list from business reply cards, customer information sheets, business cards collected at trade shows, or membership lists. You might consider purchasing a mailing list from a company. If you explore the Publisher catalog, you will find many publications that match the style of your newsletter.

Next, establish how much time and money

In Brief...

NHPRC awarded the Ulysses S. Grant Association funding for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. In October, we will begin the third year of our three-year NEH grant. Many thanks to both federal organizations who make it financially possible to continue our editorial projects!

Congratulations to Grant Presidential Library faculty members Ryan Semmes and David S. Nolen, who were recently granted tenure at Mississippi State University!

Plans continue to construct a new space for the Grant Presidential Library at MSU Libraries! Construction will begin May 2015 and is scheduled for completion by early 2017. Watch for more details in the next newsletter.
Historic Monument’s Uncertain Future
By John F. Marszalek

Its location is one of the best in Washington, just below the U.S. Capitol, looking out on the mall, the first monument built on that green space. Its construction lasted from 1909 to 1922, and it was dedicated on April 27, 1922, the birthday of the man it was built to honor.

The seventeen-foot bronze statue of Ulysses S. Grant on his favorite horse, Cincinnati, is the largest equestrian statue in the United States, and one of only twenty-seven presidential monuments in the nation. Grant, after all, was the most revered historical figure of the Civil War, second only to Lincoln.

Yet Washington D.C.’s Ulysses S. Grant Memorial in this sesquicentennial of the Civil War is a disgrace to the man it is meant to honor and to the nation that built it. It is being called “the poor stepchild of local monuments” in Washington, a “very anonymous monument.” One government official lamented that it is “amazing how little is known about the monument or the man.” One writer has even called the monument the “Ugly Betty” of U.S. Presidential monuments.

What has happened? In a word: neglect. As is the case with all such monuments, the brass has leached into the Vermont marble. It looks, as a Washington Post reporter phrased it, “as though a careless house painter had let buckets of paint spill” on it. The regular waxing that should take place regularly has not been done to this major American monument since probably the 1990s. No one even seems to know.

Several years ago, a movement began to rescue this national icon. Judith Baar Topinka, Comptroller of the Sate of Illinois, and her staff, led by Chuck Hagopian, began contacting political and historical leaders. Illinois senator Richard J. Durbin (D) and Mark Kirk (R) have written letters to the National Park Service demanding restoration. So have Chicago aldermen and a variety of other organizations. Ulysses S. Grant Association President Frank Williams and Executive Director John Marszalek have written for the USGA. Frank Scaturro, who led the fight to save “Grant’s Tomb,” wrote on behalf of the Grant Monument Association.

At the time of those first letters, the Grant Monument was under the control of the National Park Service. The stated reason nothing was done to preserve Grant was because all such funds had to be put into saving the Washington Monument from the effects of the earthquake.
In more recent times, however, control of the monument has gone from the National Park Service to the Architect of the Capitol.

What can members of the Grant Association do? Everyone can contact the Architect of the Capitol and their state senators and congressmen insisting that the Grant Monument be preserved. To contact the Architect of the Capitol, complete the form at https://www.aoc.gov/contact-form. Copies of all correspondence to and from officials should be sent to: Chuck Hagopian, Office of Judith Baar Topinka, State of Illinois Comptroller, Suite 15-500, 100 W. Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60601.

Grant’s Tomb was almost lost, yet it was saved and today has been restored to its original brilliance. It would not have happened without public insistence. Grant’s monument in our nation’s capital can be saved too. Let’s do it NOW.

Aboard the American Queen from New Orleans to Memphis
By Frank J. Williams, Ulysses S. Grant Association President

On May 9-17, 2014, The Ulysses S. Grant Association and The Lincoln Forum co-hosted, with Forum member Charlene Corris of Custom Travel Concepts, their second Civil War and Abraham Lincoln cruise upon the grand American Queen. Historian guides, Frank J. Williams, John F. Marszalek, with Lincoln interpreter George Buss, provided lectures and discussions along the route of travel from New Orleans to Memphis, with visits to Vicksburg, St. Francisville, Natchez and Helena.

Virginia Williams presented a bonus illustrated lecture on “A Trip to the Outback?” John Marszalek presented “William T. Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant—Friends Forever” and Frank J. Williams presented “Grant’s Overland Campaign in 1864” and “Peace Proposals Almost Caused Lincoln’s Defeat at the Polls and a Retreat From Emancipation.” George Buss, as President Lincoln, hosted a one-man performance for all of the passengers and staff on board the American Queen as well as subjected himself to a press conference moderated by John Marszalek and Frank Williams. Presentations by Marszalek also included “Ulysses S. Grant at Vicksburg” and “Lincoln the War President,” and Williams presented “Lincoln, Grant, McClellan: A Comparison” and “Lincoln in Film Through the Ages” with PowerPoint film clips beginning with D.W. Griffiths’ Birth of a Nation.

The next Civil War and Abraham Lincoln cruise on the American Queen, with Williams, Marszalek and Buss, will be held October 17-25, 2015, with some proceeds going to The Ulysses S. Grant Association and The Lincoln Forum. For details and reservations, contact Charlene Corris of Custom Travel Concepts (866-956-4440) or email her at histours@aol.com.
Is the National Park Service Necessary?

By Timothy S. Good

When viewing a map of all the 401 units of the National Park System, one may well point to an obscure site and ask, “Why was this place preserved?” In reply, I could quote the law that established the park, or refer to the Organic Act – the law that created the National Park Service in 1916, or suggest a particular book.

I have admittedly wrestled with this question throughout my career. Today, if I was asked, I would not speak of any law or any book, but of a document which was not passed by any United States Congress nor signed by any President of the United States – a document that predated the United States Government: the Declaration of American Independence. The sites that currently comprise the National Park Service are all part of the system because the American people, through their elected representatives, have determined that these sites are critical to answering the most fundamental question: “What is an American?”

We hold two naturalization ceremonies each year at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site. At the conclusion of my opening remarks I say, “I especially encourage you to learn about your national parks, for two reasons. First of all, because you may visit them. You can walk through the home of Abraham Lincoln, stand in the hall where we declared our independence, or touch the names of American heroes on a black wall in Washington, DC. But secondly, and most importantly, these places also serve as reminders. Whether it’s a sunken battleship in Pearl Harbor, or an iron lady in New York, or a school in Little Rock, Arkansas, or the home of the 18th president of the United States in St. Louis, Missouri, these places all remind us of who we were, of who we are, and most importantly, as I look out at the audience today, of who we hope to be.”

Some may argue that certain sites should not be within the park system; others may assert that additional places should be included. The discussion among the American people will continue for as long as this republic endures. And that is a good discussion.

Whenever one of us has the opportunity to visit one of the 401 sites, or to simply learn about them through a book, a pamphlet or the internet, we should first recognize that these places are a manifestation of the phrase “all men are created equal.” These sites work together as a collage, a tapestry representing America as its citizens have chosen to portray their country. In that respect, these sites collectively answer that most fundamental question: “What is an American?”

Timothy S. Good is the superintendent at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site in St. Louis, Missouri. He has served in the National Park Service for twenty-four years at nine different sites ranging from Washington, DC to Nebraska.
Board Member Profile: Claire Telecki
By Meg Henderson

Claire Telecki is not only a long-time board member and active participant in the Ulysses S. Grant Association; she is also a descendant of U.S. Grant. Although she is busy between traveling and spending time with her family, she graciously set aside time to interview with the Dispatches From Grant staff for this issue of the newsletter.

Q: Tell me a bit about background and your family.
A: I was born in Utica, New York at the end of World War II. My mother and her sister, Edith Griffiths, were waiting out the end of the war while my father and uncle were stationed in Europe. We were all together in the Grant house in Clinton, New York – I, my two brothers, and our Griffiths cousins. I suspect that was a raucous time, but I don’t remember.

From there we moved on to Washington, D.C., while my father, Paul Ruestow, was assigned to the Pentagon, and we were near my Grandfather Grant (Ulysses S. Grant III) for five years. Then my father was sent to Japan to head up logistics for the Air Force during the Korean War. The three and a half years we spent in Japan were very happy years for me. As a child, I was oblivious to the war that was going on (most of the time) and fascinated by a country that was surprisingly welcoming and very different from home.

After Japan, I lived at various air force bases until I graduated from Vassar College and started a publishing career at Harper & Row Publishers. I married acquisitions editor George Telecki and then started my most important career – mother to my daughter Nicole. I worked in publishing while Nicole was in school. When Nicole graduated from high school, I graduated from Hofstra Law School and practiced law in New York City as a litigation associate handling securities cases and white collar crime. I left the New York City law practice and worked for a company that tutored law students in substantive law school courses at a number of law schools around New York. I specialized in constitutional law, criminal procedure and evidence. This I truly loved.

In 2008, I retired to take up my second most important career – grandmother. I commuted monthly to Los Angeles to help with three grandchildren under two. This I also loved. Since then, I have found retired life busier than ever before. I spend my time in volunteer work, travel, family and my addiction – sneaking off to catch an independent movie.

Q: When and how did become involved in the Grant Association, and what led you to decide to serve on the board of directors?
A: I came to the USGA board some time ago for one reason alone – John Y. Simon asked me. I wasn’t particularly interested in the Civil War at that time, but John Y. Simon was a hero in my family. I was in awe of what he had accomplished in the publication of volume after volume of the papers and his extraordinary editing style.

My mother and grandfather were very grateful that his work was bringing enlightenment to the subject of Ulysses S. Grant, spawning a stream of new biographies that tended to set the record straight. I was ready to do anything John Y. Simon asked me to do to help him and the USGA.
Little did I know how much I was going to enjoy and learn from this experience.

Q: Do you feel that your involvement in the Grant Association has made a difference in your life, in any way?

A: My time as a member of the USGA has been very rewarding on a number of levels. First, I am being educated. The USGA has been an advanced degree in a critical area of American history. I have learned so much about the Civil War and its leaders from the USGA and from its members.

Second, I have been privileged to work with very talented leaders from John Y. Simon to Frank Williams to John Marszalek. I was fortunate to be on the board with Frank at the helm when we lost our beloved John Y. Simon. Frank Williams was an example of leadership I will never forget. He brought us through a very difficult time, found our new director and our unlikely, but enveloping, new home in Starkville. Frank was masterful, and Dean [Frances] Coleman and John Marszalek rescued us and made us feel that we had come home.

Third, through the USGA I have attended many annual meetings in very interesting places. What stands out most are the wonderful people I have met at these gatherings. I love meeting so many accomplished people from different parts of the country and different careers coming together to share their knowledge.

Q: Are you still involved with the Grant Monument Association? How did you get involved, and what is your role there?

When the condition of Grant’s Tomb was at its lowest ebb in the early 1990s, a young college student called me. He wanted to apprise me of the tomb’s deterioration. His name was Frank Scaturro. Now he is known to many in the USGA as a John Y. Simon prize recipient. This young man would prove to be mature beyond his years and determined to stop the deplorable conditions at the tomb. He, with lawyer Ed Hochman, spearheaded a tenacious campaign to force the National Park Service to restore the Tomb and then maintain its refurbished condition.

The original organization that built the Tomb was the Grant Monument Association. With the help of Oren Root, a last surviving member of the original organization, Frank established the current Grant Monument Association as a successor to the original. Since that time, the GMA has monitored the management of the Tomb, witnessed the building of a visitors’ center, and sponsored educational events at the Tomb. Since the new organization was established, I have sat on the Executive Board with my cousin, Ulysses Dietz, and marvel at the accomplishments of Frank and the GMA. Feel free to check out our website: www.grantstomb.org.

Q: How do you feel, personally, about being a descendant of Ulysses S. Grant? Do you think that your heritage has shaped the way you see yourself or your family in any way, and has your perception changed over time?

I must preface this by saying that I have always been amazed that people are interested in us just because we are descendants. The great things that U.S. Grant did really means nothing about us as people. His greatness by no means elevates us.
However, being a Grant descendant has always been a source of pride for me. After all, we grew up in a family with a tradition of loyalty and service to our country. My great-grandfather Frederick Dent Grant and my grandfather Ulysses S. Grant, III followed family tradition, attending West Point, serving in the Army and then in many other public service positions. My mother and her sisters married army officers, two of whom were West Point graduates and career officers. I grew up knowing that my grandfather revered his grandfather and, according to my mother, my great-grandfather Fred spent half of his life, of his own volition, paying back funds to people who had lost their investments in the Grant-Ward collapse. In our family, there were simple values that I could trace back to Grant and Julia Dent — honesty, loyalty to country, industriousness, compassion, love of family, and sense of humor. I learned these from my parents and at my grandfather’s knee, and I think perhaps he learned them at his grandfather’s knee when he was very young.

What has changed over the years in my perception of being “Grant kin” is that I have developed a greater knowledge of and sense of respect for Ulysses I, owing to all I have learned about him from the USGA.

The parameters of “Grant kin” has also changed. I grew up with a circle of cousins who were Fred descendants. We gathered as children at my grandfather’s home in upstate New York. Through the USGA and other Grant-related organizations and events, such as the family reunion organized by the NPS staff at Whitehaven in 1998, I have come to know many more Grant descendants – from as far as Normandy and California. Yes, our Sartoris cousins are all French! I have found them all to be people who seem to share dissimilar histories but values similar to those with which I was raised. On meeting them, the feeling of “family” is almost always instant. I thank my involvement in “things Grant” – the USGA, Galena, White Haven – for this great gift of expanded family.

Q: In your opinion, what is the Grant Association’s mission or role today, and why do you believe we are relevant?

A: Of course, the stated mission of the USGA is to conduct research into the life of Ulysses S. Grant and preserve the knowledge of his importance in American history – both important goals and both goals the organization has furthered since its inception.

To me, the USGA and the Presidential Library far exceed this mission statement by: (1) providing a place where students and authors can access and study materials that give new and important insights into U.S. Grant, as well as the time in which he lived; (2) educating all, from current and future scholars to those who just want to understand our history about U.S. Grant, the Civil War, and the circumstances that brought it about; (3) creating a place for reconciliation between North and South in the welcoming and open-minded atmosphere of Mississippi State University. Many of you may recall Frank Williams touching on this subject at the 2014 St. Louis meeting in his luncheon comments on the “Lost Cause.” This is an important contribution the new USGA can make through the Presidential Library. To me, the Presidential Library and its home at Mississippi epitomize Grant’s famous words: “Let us have Peace.”

Q: What are some of your hopes for the future of the Grant Association?

I hope to see growth in membership and growth in programs. Above all, I hope to see growth in financial support that will enable the Presidential Library to be a permanent fixture, supported by an endowment. That is the end result that will ensure that the USGA’s hard work will succeed and continue.
General Grant in the Far East: April 30-September 3, 1879
By Joseph Prezio, M.D., USGA Member

General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant were on the final leg of the two year trip around the world and their final stops in the Far East were China and Japan. He was the most famous living American and was received in all of the countries he visited as a world celebrity. General Grant was very mindful that his trip was not as an official representative of the United States Government but, as he emphasized more than once on the trip, he was visiting as a private citizen. The Chinese welcomed him with open arms, and the Japanese officials were well aware that his prestige and stature would be a public relations coup for their government that would enhance their status around the world.

General Grant was unaware of the competing claims of both governments for the Ryukyu Islands. The Japanese had just forcibly removed King Sho Tai of the Ryukyu Islands and claimed complete sovereignty over the islands long claimed by China. Both countries hoped to capitalize on Grant’s visit to push for their respective claims by inference: to use Grant as a spokesman for their respective positions because his opinions would weigh heavily on the world.

Grant was met with great enthusiasm by 100,000 Chinese in Shanghai and then proceeded to Tientsin on the U.S. warship Ashuelot. China asked for help on their behalf with the Ryukyu problem, and General Grant said that he would do anything he could do in the interest of peace. He again emphasized to the viceroy Li Hung Chang (Li Hongzhang) and the regent Prince Kung that anything he would do or say was not as an officer of the state but merely as a private citizen. Grant, in his usual manner, listened carefully and said little. After many ceremonial dinners and meetings, the General informed Prince Kung that he was only a traveler and that he would inform himself on the subject and converse with the Japanese to hear their side of the issue.

The Grants finally left China on the U.S. warship Richmond for Japan and arrived in Nagasaki on June 21, 1879. The Japanese were waiting for him and had prepared a “royal welcome” as a “Guest of the Nation.” Their stay in Japan was full of ceremonies and festivities but also with numerous conversations and meetings with Japanese government officials and the Emperor Meiji. Grant's visit was a private one, but the Meiji government viewed it as an important diplomatic opportunity. The Emperor met Grant on the Fourth of July and was impressed with Grant as they discussed many issues in private conferences. His advice was welcomed and absorbed by the Emperor. Grant’s behavior and deportment as well as his words earned him the United States great respect and gratitude among the ministers and officials of the Japanese Government. Grant left Japan with sound advice to both sides: negotiate, avoid war, Do not involve foreign powers in your deliberations, and stay out of debt. He wrote identical letters to the Chinese and Japanese officials with his advice suggesting how the Ryukyu problem might be resolved. Both governments responded with their thanks.

As a token of appreciation the Emperor arranged for a final celebration in Ueno Park on August 25, 1879 and invited General and Mrs. Grant to plant two memorial trees, a "hinoki" (Lawson cypress) by the General and an evergreen “gyokuran” (Magnolia grandiflora) by Mrs. Grant.

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The Grants had previously planted a cedar tree at the Zojoji Temple at Shiba in Tokyo on July 15, 1879. The Grants then left Japan on September 3, 1879, the last leg of a two and a half year global tour. Grant’s advice did help to avoid war in 1879, only to appear as a conflict over Korea in 1895. Li Hung Chang, the Chinese viceroy, visited the grave site of General Grant in 1896 to pay his respects. The Emperor of Japan died in 1912, but the Japanese did not forget their American friend, and the trees planted in 1879 were growing strong and tall.

August 1929, on the 50th anniversary of the planting, the Japanese erected a memorial to General Grant. Viscount Shibusawa and Baron Masuda, two of the original reception committee in 1879 who welcomed the Grants, erected the monument. They did so near the two trees planted by General and Mrs. Grant.

Colonel James G. McIlroy, the U.S. Army military attaché in the U.S. Embassy, attended that ceremony and wrote: “The moving spirit back of this memorial was the venerable and distinguished Japanese man of big business, Baron Shibusawa . . . our charge’ d’affaires told me that my ten year old daughter had been chosen for the honor of unveiling the memorial. This [was] because my father had served under General Grant in the Civil War. . . . The program ran off beautifully and when it was time for us to perform I turned to her and said, ‘Jane we are going up on the stage and you come with me and do what I tell you to do.’ Soon we told her to pull and out came the nice memorial to General Grant. Pictures appeared in the Japanese and American papers.”

In 1935 a memorial service was held at the site, and General Grant was recognized as a benefactor of the new Japan.

During World War II, despite the heavy air bombardment of Tokyo by U.S. planes, the trees and the memorial survived the bombings. It is ironic that the Grant memorial was untouched just as the General was unscathed by the bullets and artillery shells that whizzed by him during many a Civil War battle while he sat quietly sitting on a log, whittling away on a stick and calmly giving orders to his staff. Beginning in 1946, the Japanese municipal authorities sponsored a service at the monument on American Memorial Day.

I began the search to find out the status of the monument and the trees. I contacted the American Embassy in Tokyo by email, and they were most cooperative in providing me what they knew about the situation. It seems that services were held on a regular basis until about 2007, although the exact year they stopped is not clear. U.S. forces in Japan attended the ceremony, and the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet band provided the music. The U.S. Embassy, to their regret, was not involved in these activities. On the Japanese website I found a photo of the monument decorated with flowers as if a service were being prepared. The date of the photograph is not known but predates 2007. The Japanese officials contacted by the U.S. embassy admitted that the website had not been updated in a long time.

A search of the internet showed a reference to the site in 2009 by an American visitor Dana Blankenhorn, who stumbled onto the site while visiting Ueno Park. His photos showed the site covered with tarps sheltering homeless citizens in the shade of General Grant’s trees. He found a large statue of a Japanese general astride a horse and the site surrounded with tarps and people. The Grant memorial is right behind that statue and at the entrance of the zoo.

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The American Embassy contacted the Japanese authorities at my request to determine the status of the site, and they indicated that the tarps are long gone and the Ueno Park green office cleans up the park every spring after cherry blossom viewing season ends.

Thanks to the efforts of the US Embassy in Tokyo, a staff member went to the site recently and, on July 28, 2014, reported the following: “The Grant Memorial is not in ideal condition for a memorial, but it is not out of tune with the general state of disrepair in Ueno Park in the summer months. There are no homeless people or trash on the site or around it, and the newer sign is still very readable. However, the text on the bronze plaque is wearing away, and the planting bed is overgrown. The fencing in the photo protects the greenery behind the memorial where the trees that the Grants planted stand.”

I am hoping that readers of this article who has been to the site since 2009 would contact me to share their findings. Like the Grant Memorial site in Washington, The Grant Cottage Historic Site on Mt. McGregor, and Grant’s Tomb at the Grant National Memorial Monument in NYC, and all such sites, we need to be assured that the Japanese monument is being maintained for future generations to appreciate the significance and contributions of General Grant to the history of this country and the world.

References:
The Mountain Cottage That Made History
By Tim Welch, President, Board of Trustees, Friends of Grant Cottage

In the middle of the 19th century, Saratoga Springs was known as the place where the rich and famous came north by rail from New York City. Each summer, well-heeled would play the horses, gamble at one of six casinos around Saratoga Lake, sample its healing mineral waters, and participate in its high society. Mount McGregor, located a few miles north of the Spa City, offered cool, clear air and spectacular vistas of the city and the distant mountains to anyone who would venture up its wilderness trails.

The mountain got its name from Duncan McGregor, a lumberman who bought a thousand acres of land, including the summit and eastern slope. McGregor used the lumber from his sawmill to build a small hotel on the summit, the Mountain House. It opened in 1878 and quickly became a popular destination for visitors seeking relief from the summer heat and looking at the beautiful views.

By the early 1880s, bigger and better plans were being made for Mount McGregor. W.J. Arkell, a businessman from Canajohaire, and Joseph W. Drexel of New York saw the area as a perfect location for a new Adirondack resort. Together they formed the Saratoga, Mount McGregor Improvement Company. They quickly started work on what later became the Saratoga, Mount McGregor, and Lake George Railroad. The narrow gauge railroad line was completed as far as Wilton on July 17, 1882, and service began June 4, 1883 to the top of Mount McGregor. The same year, the original Mountain House was moved a few hundred feet south of the summit for use as a boarding house as work began on a larger summer hotel to be called the Balmoral. In the summer of 1884, the Balmoral opened its 300 guest rooms to glowing reviews. Added attractions included an elegant restaurant, an adjacent art gallery, as well as the railway to bring visitors to the door. All this helped the Balmoral, and Mount McGregor began to compete with Saratoga as a popular vacation spot.

In the spring of 1885, Drexel bought Duncan McGregor’s Mountain House and planned to renovate it for his family’s use.

This was a happy year for the Drexel family but the most terrible year for the family of Ulysses S. Grant. In the summer of 1884, “the Hero of the Civil War,” “the Savior of the Union,” the two-term president, and the most famous person in the world at that time learned that he did not have long to live. Faced with financial ruin and inoperable throat and tongue cancer, Grant was in a race with death to finish his memoirs, which he wrote to provide for his beloved wife, Julia.

A few years earlier, the former president had invested through his son in a Wall Street firm called Grant & Ward. It turned out to be a Ponzi scheme where partner Ferdinand Ward embezzled from U.S. Grant over $250,000. Grant was now broke and dying.

The famous author and publisher Mark Twain had offered Grant an advance of $25,000 to write his memoirs and a generous 70% of all book sales. Until his current predicament, the General had refused to write his memoirs because he thought it would represent a form of profiteering from the war, and he did not consider himself a “literary man.” Grant was well along in the drafting of his memoirs at his townhouse in New York City when the summer’s heat and his advancing disease made it nearly impossible for him to work. In the spring of 1885, his doctors urged him to move from New York City to a cooler and drier area.

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When Drexel heard this, he offered use of the cottage to the General and his family. On June 16, General Grant and his family arrived by train and soon settled into a routine of life at the resort. The General spent his days on the wide porch enjoying the cool air and the company of his family while he continued writing.

By the time the General came to Mount McGregor, the pain of his cancer had become so great that he found it very difficult to eat or speak. He came to rely on the bathing of his affected area with a solution of cocaine and water applied by his doctor. Grant also found it difficult to sleep in a conventional bed because when he laid down, he had a tendency to choke. That's why he preferred to work on the final revisions of his book while sitting in the “Sick Room” on an overstuffed chair with his legs propped up on the opposite chair.

During his final five weeks, thousands of people traveled up the mountain to catch a glimpse of this great man, and, if possible, pay their respects to the General. Grant sometimes made trips to the Eastern Overlook to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Hudson Valley as so many people had before him. To the north was Ft. Edward, a key location in the French and Indian War, to the east lay the Saratoga Battlefield where victory represented the turning point of the Revolution, and the Bennington Battlefield, also from the Revolutionary War.

On July 23rd, three days after finishing the proof-reading of his memoirs, Ulysses S. Grant died at Drexel Cottage. As preparations were being made in New York City for his interment, Grant’s mourning family remained at the Cottage and received condolence messages and visitors there. A detachment of veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic (or GAR) arrived from Saratoga to pitch their tents and guard the family’s privacy.

On August 4, a funeral service was held at the Cottage, and several floral arrangements used for that event remain in place to this day. The next day, the same train that brought the family to the mountain started the slow, sad trip back to New York City. It stopped in Albany, and the General lay in state at the State Capitol Building with a funeral cortège up State Street. The train continued on to New York City where on August 8, millions of people lined the streets for the largest funeral parade in that city’s history. Julia Grant, the grieving widow, could not bring herself to appear in public and remained at the Cottage until August 31.

Mr. Drexel planned to preserve the Cottage to honor Grant. In keeping with his wishes, the executors of his estate established the Mount McGregor Memorial Association. In 1890, the cottage was opened as a historical site known as Grant Cottage, and the caretakers showed many visitors through the rooms that were kept virtually identical from when General Grant was its most famous occupant.

Left: August 6, 1885 as Grant’s funeral procession moves up State Street to lie in state at Albany’s recently completed Capitol building.

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In 1985, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation announced their intention to close Grant Cottage. They intended to place its contents in storage and lease the cottage to the New York State Department of Corrections to use as office space. To many, it was unthinkable that such a unique and historically significant site should be lost. Petitions were sent to the state, and in 1989, a group of interested local citizens formed a not-for-profit organization called the Friends of Grant Cottage.

The Friends is a volunteer organization that has a unique relationship to the Department of Parks & Recreation. While the State of New York owns the cottage, the Friends have assumed the responsibility of managing and staffing the facility. Every year, volunteers guide visitors through the cottage, sharing the story of General Grant’s life there.

Visitors can see the Sick Room where the General finished his memoirs, the chairs on which he slept, and many personal effects on display. The Reception Room is where the Grants received many who came to pay their respects to him. This room also contains the bed in which General Grant, surrounded by his family, passed away.

The Dining room remains adorned with floral arrangements that were sent for the funeral of the General. Everything remains as it was in the summer of 1885. Down the path to the Eastern Overlook, visitors can see the grandeur of the mountains and valley which Grant saw nearly a hundred and forty years ago.

Special events are held throughout the summer, such as Grant Remembrance Day in July. Various historical reenactments are held through the season ranging in topics from Victorian life to interpretations of some of the people associated with the cottage.

A new challenge to the historic site occurred this July when New York Governor Andrew Cuomo closed the Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility. As a result, Grant Cottage will also lose its guard station, water, sewer and electrical service. Friends of Grant Cottage are working with the state Parks department to make other arrangements for securing utilities, with assurance that the cottage will remain open to the public now and into the future.

After all, this is the place where General Grant fought and ultimately won his last and greatest battle. In the summer of 1885, he conquered both throat cancer and poverty. Less than a year after he died, royalties from the book sales netted to the equivalent of $11 million in today’s dollars. U. S. Grant Cottage is a special moment of the past, preserved for the present and future generations to come.
Eicher Gives Large Book Collection to Grant Library
By Meg Henderson

David Eicher, editor-in-chief of Astronomy Magazine, was the owner of one of the largest private collections of Civil War books, totaling 4,126 titles. He recently donated these books to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. While he is best known for his expertise on stars, planets, and galaxies, his knowledge of Civil War history is beyond that of the average history buff.

Eicher’s interest in the Civil War is personal. He began the collection in the early 1980s after receiving papers and relics handed down from his father, John Eicher, who was an organic chemist at Miami University and a lifelong student of the Civil War. These had belonged to Eicher’s great-great grandfather, Darius Wetzel, who served in the 74th Ohio Infantry and fought under Grant and Sherman.

“My great-grandfather was an engineer, and a lowly private, and survived many battles, from Shiloh to Vicksburg, the Atlanta campaign, and on through to the March to the Sea and the parade in Washington,” Eicher said.

Eicher credits his interest in history to his father, who took him to many Civil War battlefields and other historic sites as a child and taught him about his ancestor who fought in the war.

“Being a professor, my dad could take us on long summer trips, and as a youngster we often visited Civil War and other historic sites,” Eicher recalled.

“This will sound really nerdy,” he added, “but among my favorite publications were reference books like the O.R., and also sweeping sets like Battles and Leaders, along with the photographic works that allowed traveling back in time in one’s mind. I also was proud of collecting, on a very limited budget, some interesting books signed by or owned by some of the colorful participants of the war — Winfield Scott Hancock, P. G. T. Beauregard, and others.”

After a lifetime of building his collection, Eicher chose to give his treasured books to the Grant Library for two reasons. The first is his personal connection to Grant through his ancestor, Darius Wetzel, who fought under General Grant’s command, and through his home state of Ohio.

“Darius Wetzel lived until 1903 and always spoke of Grant as the war’s greatest figure,” he said. “And during my most intense period of writing about the Civil War, producing The Longest Night, The Civil War in Books, Dixie Betrayed, and other works, the folks in the Grant Association were always wonderful and generous to me, in particular my friends John Simon and Frank Williams. There was no better group of people in the field of Civil War history, I believe.”

“And we believe,” said USGA President Frank Williams, “that David Eicher’s relative would be pleased with his great-grandson’s generosity to USGA.”
USG III Furniture Donated to Grant Library
By John F. Marszalek

The Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library has become the major depository of Grant Family documents and artifacts. Donors want their gifts made available to visiting scholars and to visitors who come here from around the nation and the world. And they want to be sure that their gift is preserved for future generations.

The most recent donation to the Grant Presidential Library is a breakfront, a piece of furniture that had once been in the possession of Ulysses S. Grant III and his wife, Edith Root, daughter of Theodore Roosevelt’s secretary of war and later secretary of state, Elihu Root. It was crafted around 1900 by the nation’s leading furniture manufacturer, A. H. Davenport of Boston.

Davenport accomplished some major work at the same time that the breakfront was being manufactured. It furnished the State Dining Room at the White House in 1902, when Roosevelt was president of the United States. In 1909, when President William Howard Taft first used the oval office, the desk that he and a number of later presidents used was a Davenport. The project which gained the company the opportunity to work in the White House was its nineteenth century production of over two hundred pieces of furniture for the famous Iolani Palace in Honolulu.

The Davenport breakfront was donated by Carolyn, Henry, and Charles Siegel of New York City and California. The Siegels had purchased this furniture in the 1950s, but they could no longer maintain it because they were selling their family home. Thanks to the cooperation of Dean Frances Coleman, Glen Berry, Meg Henderson, and others in the Mitchell Memorial Library, the breakfront was transported from California to Mississippi. Today, it sits in the Grant Library exhibit room and is filled with White House china previously donated by Grant descendants in San Diego. In the future, this piece and other artifacts will be exhibited on the new floor to be built at the top of the Mitchell Memorial Library.

According to Grant descendant, New Jersey museum curator, and Grant Association vice president for acquisitions, Ulysses Grant Dietz, Davenport furniture has long been a favorite of the Grant family, and, to this day, it is present in several of their homes.

Frank J. Williams, President of the Grant Presidential Library, said: “We thank the Siegel family for donating this wonderful piece of historic furniture. We are even more excited because, increasingly, we are the location of choice for Grant artifacts.”

Carolyn Siegel expressed the family’s happiness that this piece of furniture has found a home in the Grant Presidential Library: “We are honored that something we treasured for so long and has such a historic past has found a perfect place to be preserved and to be viewed far into the future.”
HOW CAN I DONATE?

Donate your books and artifacts. The Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library accepts books on the subjects of U.S. Grant’s life and the Grant family, Grant’s Presidency, and the Civil War. We also accept artifacts and memorabilia on the subjects of U.S. Grant and family. For inquiries, please email mhenderson@library.msstate.edu or call 662-325-4552.

Make a financial contribution to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library. You may contribute to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library Fund either by contacting the MSU Foundation at 662.325.7000 or sending a payment directly to the Grant Library at P.O. Box 5408, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

The Ulysses S. Grant’s Exhibit Room is completely furnished with artifacts given by generous donors. Exhibits are changed regularly to display the growing collection.
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!

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In the Next Issue...

New space for USGPL at Mississippi State University

Scholarly Edition of Grant’s Memoirs

What is the role of NHPRC and NEH?