Dear Members,

It has been some time since we sent you a newsletter, but as you can see from our present newsletter, we have been more than a little busy. You know, of course, that Meg Henderson is now director of a library along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and that USGA has a new administrative assistant, Rebecca Houston. We miss Meg a great deal, but we are so fortunate to have Rebecca with us. When you get a chance to meet her, and some of you have already spoken to her on the telephone, you will understand how fortunate we are to have her on our team. We had planned to wait until January 2018 to send this newsletter, but because of our new facility, which houses the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library and the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, we decided we should send you information on all our exciting changes now.

What follows in this newsletter is information on all our recent activities. Consequently, I will not take up more space, but let you read and see all the excitement we have been experiencing.

As always, please feel free to call on Rebecca or me with any suggestions, criticisms, compliments, and so forth. The Ulysses S. Grant Association is your organization, so we are always pleased to hear from you.

Please consult my letter enclosed about our annual meeting in May 2018 here at MSU. Register with us and reserve your hotel room. We are going to have a great gathering. And wait until you see our new USGA facility!

Happy holidays to everyone,

John F. Marszalek
MSU celebrates new home of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library and Williams Collection of Lincolniana

Historians celebrate the grand opening of Mississippi State’s $10 million addition to Mitchell Memorial Library, home of the Ulysses S. Grant Association and the prestigious Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana. Pictured, from left to right, are the former head of MSU’s History Department, Charles D. Lower, world-renowned author, Ron Chernow, and the Executive Director of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, John F. Marszalek. (Photo by Megan Bean)

James Carskadon, MSU Office of Public Affairs

STARKVILLE, Miss.—Mississippi State, statewide and national leaders heralded the opening today [Nov. 30] of MSU’s $10 million addition to Mitchell Memorial Library, home of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library and the prestigious Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana.

Leaders in education, history, libraries and government -- including the Librarian of Congress and the Archivist of the United States -- praised the 21,000-sq.-ft. addition. The facility contains a state-of-the-art museum chronicling Grant’s life and his significance in American history and a gallery dedicated to the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, a recent donation that was considered the largest privately owned Abraham Lincoln collection in America. With hundreds of thousands of historical documents and items housed on-site, the new addition makes Mississippi State a leading destination for research on the Civil War and two presidents who shaped the course of American history.
"The Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana and our remarkable Ulysses S. Grant Collection have made Mississippi State and the Grant Presidential Library a truly national center for the study of the American Civil War," MSU President Mark E. Keenum said.

MSU is one of six universities in the nation housing a presidential library. The Grant Library is managed by the Ulysses S. Grant Association and MSU under the direction of John F. Marszalek, Grant Association managing editor and executive director, and Frances N. Coleman, MSU dean of libraries.

"In 1862, President Lincoln admonished the American people with, 'it is not that we can imagine better, but can we all do better?' said Ulysses S. Grant Association President Frank J. Williams. "I am pleased to say that with these galleries, the collections that support them, the wonderful staff that serve them and the people that use them, we have, in a significant way, done better."

Skip Wyatt of FoilWyatt Architects in Jackson planned the overall facility expansion, and Washington, D.C.-based HealyKohler Design created the interior museum and gallery spaces. The Grant museum contains artifacts and interactive media that allow visitors to engage with the context of the times and discover intimate details of Grant's personal life and beliefs. Brooklyn-based StudioEIS created four life-size statues to highlight different phases of Grant's life.

Thursday’s ceremony featured remarks from Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, Archivist of the U.S. David Ferriero and other U.S. and Mississippi officials.

"I'm here to give a pledge," Hayden said. "You will have the full resources and services of the Library of Congress to supplement and be a partner with you as you try to expand these resources here. We wanted to say that publicly here today."

The Grant Presidential Collection consists of some 17,000 linear feet of correspondence, research notes, artifacts, photographs, scrapbooks and memorabilia. There also are 4,000 published monographs on various aspects of Grant's life and times. The collection housed at Mississippi State is the largest single collection of Grant papers and additional items in the world.

The gallery for the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana displays, on a rotating basis, more than 100 of the 17,000 priceless artifacts and 12,000 books included in the Williams Collection, which the former Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice and his wife, Virginia, have amassed over several decades. The gallery exhibit includes commentary from Williams on the relevance and importance of featured items.

"Lots of people could take credit for what we are celebrating today, but it was a real team effort," Ferriero said. "As MSU quarterback Nick Fitzgerald tweeted on Sunday night, 'a program is bigger than one person. We pride ourselves on our ability to always give relentless effort. The results of that relentless effort are evident as I walk around this campus today.'"


Others speaking at the dedication ceremony were:

-- “Thousands upon thousands will come to see these exhibits,” Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant said. “They will marvel that it is here in Mississippi and they will come to know us better. This is a great day for Mississippi’s future.”

-- “There is no other library like the one we are celebrating today,” U.S. Rep. Gregg Harper said shortly before announcing he would like MSU Libraries to be the home of his congressional papers. “This structure is now a one-of-a-kind collection, including the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, as well as Mississippi State University’s Congressional and Political Research Center, which houses nine congressional collections, including those of many well-known MSU alumni … If it’s OK with Dean Frances Coleman, I would like to be the 10th.”

-- “Today, we’re reminded of the importance of preserving and protecting the papers and artifacts of our shared history, so that we may study it, learn from it and move forward together, stronger and with greater understanding,” said C.D. Smith, president of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees.

-- “This is going to provide opportunities for all of our students in the state of Mississippi and beyond,” MSU Dean of Libraries Frances Coleman said.

-- “We have been fortunate to have people working with us to make sure this project is done right,” said John F. Marszalek, Grant Association managing editor and executive director. “The result is before you now for everyone in the nation to see. Our greatest days are ahead of us.”

For more information, see the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library website at [www.usgrantlibrary.org](http://www.usgrantlibrary.org) the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection website at [library.msstate.edu/williamscollection](http://library.msstate.edu/williamscollection).
Frank and Virginia Williams of Rhode Island gift extraordinary Lincoln and Civil War Collection to Mississippi State University

Former Rhode Island Chief Justice Frank J. Williams, a nationally known Abraham Lincoln authority, along with his wife Mrs. Virginia Williams, will donate an unparalleled private Abraham Lincoln and Civil War collection the couple has amassed over the past 50 years to Mississippi State University.

Allison Matthews, MSU Office of Public Affairs

STARKVILLE, Miss.—An unparalleled private Lincoln and Civil War collection amassed over the past 50 years by former Rhode Island Chief Justice— and nationally known Abraham Lincoln authority—Frank J. Williams will be donated to Mississippi State University.

MSU President Mark E. Keenum and Judge Williams today [June 20] announced the extraordinary gift that Keenum said will transform MSU into one of the nation’s leading destinations for scholars and students of the American Civil War.

Williams, the longtime president of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, was previously instrumental in relocating that group and its own archives—now the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library—to MSU nine years ago. By donating his extraordinary Lincoln collection, Williams has also helped elevate MSU into a presidential research center of national prominence.

Considered the nation’s largest privately owned holding of Lincoln research and display material, as well as the country’s most comprehensive privately owned Lincoln and Civil War
library, the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection boasts rare historical memorabilia; priceless artifacts; original, signed documents; ephemera; books published over a span of 150 years; and both original one-of-a-kind, and early mass-produced, artwork relating to Lincoln and the Civil War era.

The collection, which Judge and Mrs. Williams will officially gift to the Mississippi State University Libraries, has been valued at nearly $3 million.

Committing themselves to providing perpetual support to maintain, study and publicly display highlights from the collection, the Williamses have also offered a promised gift of $500,000 for the creation of the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Research Fund—an endowment to Mississippi State to curate the material in the years to come.

Additionally, the Williamses have pledged to fund a new, annual Frank and Virginia Williams Lecture in Lincoln and Civil War Studies at Mississippi State. And in an extraordinary gesture, they will continue to make acquisitions to add to the collection at MSU.

"Mississippi State University is immensely proud to receive the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana, a truly unique and comprehensive collection that provides unprecedented insight into the life and times of our 16th president and the Civil War era," Keenum said. "With this incredibly generous donation and their guiding hand in bringing what has become the U.S. Grant Presidential Library to our campus, the Williamses have made MSU one of the nation's foremost repositories for research into this pivotal period in our nation's history."

Williams said, "As a longtime supporter of the Ulysses S. Grant Association—which I am so proud to say is now permanently housed at MSU—I believe the college is the perfect repository for the material that my wife and I have spent a lifetime gathering, preserving, studying and making available on request to research scholars among our countless friends in the Lincoln world. MSU's commitment to the study of Grant, the Civil War—and, now, Abraham Lincoln—in the heart of the Deep South takes us a giant step forward in our ever-challenging quest for civility, common purpose and national unity."

"When we brought Grant to Mississippi, some doubters scoffed that neither Civil War scholars nor a Southern campus would welcome the change. But the reverse has been true. I feel privileged to have the opportunity now to invite Grant's commander-in-chief to join his most famous general on a campus that is so manifestly committed to scholarship, research and interpretation of this historical period and its greatest figures," he said.

Williams has notched a long and acclaimed career in Lincoln studies and organizational leadership. He has served as president of the Lincoln Group of Boston, the Abraham Lincoln Association, and for the past 21 years, as founding chairman of The Lincoln Forum, a national organization that hosts an annual November symposium at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. As president of the Grant Association, Williams spearheaded the successful negotiation to bring the Grant papers to MSU in 2008 from their former home at Southern Illinois University. In 2012, the Ulysses S. Grant Association designated the holdings at MSU as the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library.

The Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana comprises more than 17,000 items, including artifacts, photographs, statues, paintings, popular prints, broadsides, philately, collectibles and miniatures, as well as numismatics. Nearly 100 original manuscripts and the entire, legendary Claude Simmons collection, which consists of a dozen bankers' boxes of Lincoln-related materials and scrapbooks, also is included. In addition, the gift includes some 12,000 published volumes (many of them exceptionally rare), separated into two collections: the Lincoln Book and Pamphlet Collection and the Civil War Collateral Book and Pamphlet Collection, comprehensively covering historical writing on the Civil War era from 1860 to the present, and including nearly every title ever published on Lincoln.
Williams, 76, said he began his Lincolniana collection as a sixth-grade student in his native Rhode Island. "I used my lunch money—all 25 cents a day—to buy used Lincoln books. That’s how I started collecting," Williams said. "With the encouragement and help of Virginia, this passion has never abated."

His early interest in Lincoln, sparked by daily exposure to a portrait of the 16th president hanging in his Rhode Island classroom, evolved into a deep admiration of the 19th century’s most prominent historical figure and also inspired Williams to follow in Lincoln’s footsteps and pursue a career in law. Lincoln’s legacy remains inspirational, he said, "because of his exemplary character, his strong leadership in crisis, his unwavering political courage, and the fact that he trusted his own judgment, even after he made mistakes, which we all do. Lincoln continues to be ranked by historians as our greatest-ever president, and he should continue to be studied and appreciated in the future."

Asked to name his best-loved Lincoln artifact, Williams emphasized that while he has been able over time to acquire more and more precious items, "it’s really difficult to put a finger on one particular favorite, when you are entrusted with, and love, so many of them."

He said that among his most treasured pieces are a first edition, first printing of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, signed by Lincoln as President in 1863, as well as a full-length Lincoln portrait by James Montgomery Flagg, creator of the iconic Uncle Sam "I Want You" military recruiting posters for both World Wars. Also among the most prized items is an early copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, printed in miniature for distribution by Union soldiers in the South. Williams said that although many copies were printed during the Civil War, very few have survived. Single copies are valued at up to $20,000. Among the statuary to be donated are superb early casts of the Lincoln busts from life by Leonard Wells Volk (1860) and Thomas Dow Jones (1861).

Williams is a graduate of Boston University and Boston University Law School, and earned a Master of Taxation degree from Bryant University. A longtime jurist in the Rhode Island court system, he served on the state’s Superior Court beginning in 1995 before ascending to the Supreme Court bench in 2001, serving as chief justice until his retirement in 2009. A veteran of the U.S. Army, he served three years in Germany and one year in Vietnam, for which he was highly decorated by both the U.S. and the Republic of Vietnam. He was appointed by President George W. Bush to the U.S. Court of Military Commission Review, the military appeals court responsible for adjudicating detainment cases in Guantanamo, and served as its Chief Judge from 2007 to 2009.

Virginia Williams is a Texas native and graduate of North Texas State University. She served as a teacher overseas for the U.S. Department of Defense, and met her husband during their mutual time in military service. She was a kindergarten teacher in the Cranston, Rhode Island, public schools for nearly three decades, and has been deeply involved with The Lincoln Forum since its inception.

Frank J. Williams is also an acclaimed author whose books include "The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views" (with Edna Greene Medford and Harold Holzer; Louisiana State University Press, 2006); "Judging Lincoln" (Southern Illinois University Press, 2007); and, with William D. Pederson and featuring a chapter by MSU Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History John F. Marszalek, "Lincoln Lessons: Reflections on America’s Greatest Leaders" (Southern Illinois University Press, 2009). His most recent book is "Lincoln as Hero" (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), and he is currently at work on a companion volume, "Grant as Hero."

A popular lecturer, Williams not only speaks semi-annually at The Lincoln Forum, but appears as well at Civil War Round Tables, Lincoln Groups, college campuses, and other organizations, writes often for magazines and newspapers, and teaches at both the Roger Williams School of Law and the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

In 2006, MSU’s Pre-Law Society awarded Williams its prestigious Distinguished Jurist Award, and in
In 2006, MSU’s Pre-Law Society awarded Williams its prestigious Distinguished Jurist Award, and in 2011, Williams gave Mississippi State’s fall commencement address. He told graduates that young leaders of America, "are charged with an important duty – the preservation of democracy." He is also the winner of the Illinois Order of Lincoln, that state’s highest honor, presented during the bicentennial year of 2009. Williams served as well on both the national U.S. Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission (appointed by then-Mississippi Senator Trent Lott in his role as Senate Majority Leader), and as a board member of its successor organization, the Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation.

At MSU, the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana will be housed in the new $10 million addition to Mitchell Memorial Library, scheduled to open later this year. More than 100 items from the collection will be showcased in a nearly 1,200-square-foot gallery, organized around themes such as family, politics, the law, the presidency, the Civil War, slavery, assassination, and Lincoln in popular culture. The new space will be designated as the gallery for "The Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana." The library addition will also house the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, the Ulysses S. Grant Association, and the Congressional and Political Research Center.

"The Mississippi State University Library is indebted to Frank and Virginia Williams for entrusting this unique and precious collection of Lincolniana to our care," said MSU Dean of Libraries Frances Coleman. "Our goal is to display its great treasures on a rotating basis while making the entire archive available to researchers throughout the world by cataloging each piece, digitizing the unique materials, and developing a website for the collection."

John Marszalek, who in addition to being an MSU professor emeritus serves as executive director and managing editor for the Ulysses S. Grant Association and the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, said Williams is one of the nation’s leading Lincoln scholars and his collection is the best private collection in the nation.

Marszalek emphasized, "This donation of this priceless material to MSU, when linked to our marvelous Ulysses S. Grant collection, will make MSU and the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library a true national center for the study of the American Civil War."
Holzer shares insights during first Frank and Virginia Williams Lecture on Abraham Lincoln and Civil War Studies at MSU

Prominent Abraham Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer delivers the inaugural Frank and Virginia Williams Lecture on Abraham Lincoln and Civil War Studies at Mississippi State University. (Photo by Beth Wynn)

James Carskadon, MSU Office of Public Affairs

STARKVILLE, Miss—Harold Holzer, a leading authority on Abraham Lincoln, shared insights on the public perceptions of Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant during the inaugural Frank and Virginia Williams Lecture on Abraham Lincoln and Civil War Studies at Mississippi State University.

The Thursday [Nov. 30] lecture was held at MSU’s Old Main Academic Center. Holzer, the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of Hunter College’s Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, gave a presentation titled “The General vs. the President: Lincoln, Grant and the Battle for Civil War Memory.” The lecture was among several events held to celebrate the grand opening of the new addition to MSU’s Mitchell Memorial Library, which houses the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library and the Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana.

“I’m very honored to be the first Frank and Virginia Williams lecturer here at Mississippi State University,” Holzer said.

The author/editor of more than 50 books, Holzer is a prolific writer, lecturer and frequent television guest. He has written more than 560 articles and reviews in scholarly journals and for the popular press. Holzer was appointed by former President Bill Clinton to co-chair the U.S. Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, a post he held for 10 years. George W. Bush awarded Holzer the National Humanities Medal in 2008. In 2013, Holzer wrote an essay on Lincoln for the official program at Barack Obama’s second inauguration.
On Thursday, Holzer discussed the iconography of Grant’s and Lincoln’s images during and after the Civil War as their stature in the American political pantheon rose to a heroic level, similar to the many popular images of George Washington as "Father of His Country."

"There are so many stories in these pictures – and behind them," Holzer said.

He explained that both men were savvy manipulators of their own visual status and leveraged it for political support.

The Williamses, sponsors of the lecture series, recently gifted their extraordinary private Lincoln and Civil War collection amassed over the past 50 years to Mississippi State University. The Frank J. and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolnia boasts rare historical memorabilia; priceless artifacts; original, signed documents; ephemera; books published over a span of 150 years; and both original one-of-a-kind and early mass-produced artwork relating to Lincoln and the Civil War era.

"I’m a Bulldog now," said Frank Williams during his introduction of Holzer.

The Rhode Island native and former Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court and Holzer have been friends and collaborators for more than 40 years.
MSU Grant historians to release first fully annotated version of former president’s influential memoirs

Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library historians, from left to right, Louie P. Gallo, John F. Marszalek, and David S. Nolen, this month will release “The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition,” published by Harvard University Press. (Photo by Megan Bean)

James Carskadon, MSU Office of Public Affairs

STARKVILLE, Miss.—Although Ulysses S. Grant’s personal memoirs have remained in print for more than 130 years, the American nonfiction classic is being fully annotated for the first time in a new book by historians at the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University.

"The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: The Complete Annotated Edition" will provide modern context for the historical memoirs when it is released Oct. 16 by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. John F. Marszalek, MSU Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and Ulysses S. Grant Association Executive Director and Managing Editor, edited the book, along with Grant Association assistant editors David S. Nolen and Louie P. Gallo. The annotated version of Grant’s memoirs contains over 2,000 footnotes that provide additional information and place the former president’s thoughts in the context of when he was writing.

"The great thing about this book is it lets Grant speak for himself, but it lets a modern reader get more insight," Marszalek said. "If we can make this piece of literature clearer to the modern audience, then we’ve accomplished something significant."

Grant completed his memoirs at the Mt. McGregor retreat in New York, days before his death in 1885 and at a time when he had lost all of his money in a Ponzi scheme. The memoirs, sold door-to-door by former Civil War soldiers, would go on to be hailed as one of the most important works of American nonfiction in the 19th century. Grant’s writing style, which was concise and written in approachable language, has helped his memoirs remain accessible to audiences for generations after his death.
The Mt. McGregor retreat, later named the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site, was recently named New York's 24th Literary Landmark. Nolen was the keynote speaker for a ceremony at the cottage commemorating the designation.

“It was an incredible honor to go and be a part of that ceremony and that event,” Nolen said. “I thought it was very fitting that the site should have that designation. When you think of the memoirs being completed there, Grant really made some difficult and painful decisions along the way right there in that spot, for what became a classic in American literature.”

The annotated version of Grant's memoirs has been in the making for over 50 years. Former Ulysses S. Grant Association President John Y. Simon wrote in 1967 that the project would begin once the association had completed its compilation of The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant. With the 32nd volume of Grant's papers completed earlier this decade, the Grant Library team at Mississippi State began working on a modern version of Grant's memoirs. The annotated version contains a preface by Grant Association President and former Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank J. Williams.

"Grant's writing style is very unpretentious and plain, but in a good way," Gallo said. "I think that translates over the years, because anybody can pick it up and read it. It's just an easy read and the story is so intriguing. It's interesting to see his perspective on these huge events in American history. We identify every person Grant mentions in the book, which helps preserve some additional memories. I hope this is the edition to end all editions of Grant's memoirs."

MSU Libraries will host a book signing on Oct. 20 at 3 p.m. The authors will hold book signings and discussions this month at Starkville Public Library and Square Books in Oxford. An additional book signing will take place when the new Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University officially opens with a celebration on Nov. 30.


Click to Buy The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant: Fully Annotated Edition

(The book will also be on sale at the annual meeting. The editors will be signing copies.)
MSU-based Ulysses S. Grant Association announces bicentennial commission

The new Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, housed in Mississippi State's Mitchell Memorial Library, will officially open with a celebration on Nov. 30. (Photo by Russ Houston)

James Carskadon, MSU Office of Public Affairs

STARKVILLE, Miss.—The Ulysses S. Grant Association is set to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the former president’s birth after officially forming a bicentennial commission to commemorate the occasion.

The commission will organize a series of events and celebrations planned for 2022 to commemorate Grant’s April 27, 1822 birth in Clermont County, Ohio. A bi-partisan U.S. Senate resolution was passed in 2015 placing the Mississippi State University-based Ulysses S. Grant Association in charge of the national bicentennial celebration.

"The Ulysses S. Grant Association is honored that the U.S. Senate chose it as the organization to plan the 2022 celebration of U.S. Grant’s birth in 1822," USGA Executive Director and MSU Professor of History Emeritus John F. Marszalek said.

Former Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice and USGA President Frank J. Williams will chair the commission. Michael J. Devine, retired director of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and
USGA board member, worked with senators to pass the resolution, which acknowledges Grant’s significance as a two-term president and Civil War general.

"His story is the American story of how you have the right to rise," Williams said. "We will work hard as a commission to help all Americans recognize the importance of this historical figure."

The inaugural meeting of the commission concentrated on the organization and establishment of goals, activities and committees. The commission will meet again when the new Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at MSU’s Mitchell Memorial Library is officially opened with a Nov. 30 celebration.

MSU is one of six universities to house a presidential library. The Grant Library has become an important destination for Civil War and Grant scholars. The authors of many recent and forthcoming works on Grant have visited MSU to conduct their research, Marszalek said.

"There is an enormous renaissance in Grant studies in recent years, and the activities of the Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University have played an important role in this flood of publications," Marszalek said. "Grant's historical prominence and stature continues to grow, and Mississippi State University can feel proud of its role in making this happen."

Along with Williams as chair, members of the commission include: Vice Chair Ulysses Grant Dietz, New Jersey museum curator and Grant descendant; William "Brother" Rogers, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History's Programs and Communications Division; Stuart Rockoff, director of the Mississippi Humanities Council; Sarah McCullough, coordinator of cultural affairs, MSU’s Mitchell Memorial Library; Edna Greene Medford, Howard University professor of history; and Stephen Middleton, MSU professor of history. Marszalek will serve as an ex-officio member of the commission. The recorder is Rebecca Houston, USGA senior library associate.
A Book Review of Ron Chernow’s “Grant”

By: Frank Williams

When both academicians and the general public ache for leaders with a genuine path forward, this book appears at an apt time. Grant, as Ron Chernow beautifully narrates, is a kind of anti-hero who evolved by taking advantage of "the right to rise"—demonstrating that ordinary people sometimes perform extraordinarily.

Chernow’s volume, along with other recent biographies by Jean Edward Smith and Ronald White, Jr., go a long way in restoring Ulysses S. Grant’s luster and reputation. Ironically, until Grant’s death in 1885, he was more popular than his Commander-in-Chief, Abraham Lincoln, yet his reputation and legacy precipitately then fell for decades. Fortunately, these three biographies now restore the man and leader. For example, the C-SPAN survey of presidents earlier this year place Grant in the number 22 position (the middle of the pack) up from 33 in the 2000 poll. In an effort at full disclosure, I was honored to have read the manuscript even before it became page proofs and came

renewed appreciation for Grant’s character and leadership, not to mention his unique personal and political skills used to command armies and lead our nation during the difficult years of Reconstruction.

The author makes Grant relevant in a time when partisanship is rampant and denigrated. But this volume and Charles Calhoun’s new book on the Grant presidency, demonstrate that political ruthlessness can be used to advance America’s highest ideals.

Chernow clearly shows that Grant was in sync with Lincoln, especially in insuring freedom for all. President Grant sent his Attorney General to the South with instructions for the United States attorneys to bring charges and indict those who were thwarting the Civil War amendments to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 which, in part, the amendments were intended to confirm and ratify.

This biography is chock-full of examples that demonstrate Grant’s three essential qualities of leadership: courage, resiliency, and empathy. Winston Churchill said, "Courage is rightly esteemed ... the first of human qualities ... because it is the quality that guarantees all others." Unless Grant had possessed the courage to turn defeat into victory, as in the Battle of Shiloh, it remains uncertain whether the Civil War would have ended when it did with over 750,000 lives – North and South – lost. Nor, would there have been gains in reconciliation and confirmation of rights during Reconstruction if Grant had lacked courage. He possessed a confidence in his own judgment and an unyielding adherence to his own beliefs. As Chernow shows, Grant had an obsession with his own character, but in a self-effacing way. During the Civil War, he relentlessly questioned his duties as a general and, during his presidency, whether he was fulfilling his obligations to all Americans, white or black.

Grant recognized that it was his burden to act even in the face of great uncertainty and opposition, including those who sought his removal from command for binge drinking. Chernow states that Grant was an alcoholic, something that could be treated medically today, but reviled in Grant’s time. But Grant, according to Chernow, was a functioning alcoholic who virtually shed the affliction by the time he took the presidential oath.
Grant faced thorny questions regarding the status of the freedman after the war. In addition, the North was riven by racism that ran the gamut from a rabid desire to eliminate freed slaves entirely from the continent to "merely" disgust at the idea of blacks and whites having anything like a shared common life in postwar America.

He also possessed the resiliency to see through to the end what he set out to do as General and President. The author demonstrates this was a quality that Grant possessed his entire life. It is clear that Grant was a resilient leader who was not deflected from his essential aims by politics, opposition, losses, or interim failure. He was able to adopt new tactics, regroup and reassess, as well as reevaluate the proper means to an end. While overly loyal in instances, Grant understood that people were often animated more by venal self-interest than any larger consideration. For his entire presidency, Grant would govern a country that, in many ways, continued to be "a house divided."

It is clear from this biography that Grant also possessed empathy. President Grant recognized that over 200,000 African Americans had enlisted and their service helped swing the war toward Northern victory. As Abraham Lincoln said to a friend, "If they stake their lives for us, they must be promoted by the strongest motive – even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept." Grant agreed with this and did his best to see it through. The failure of Reconstruction resulted not from Grant's attempts at peace and reconciliation – the President had to deal with the South's recalcitrance, his military, Congress, the courts, and an entire culture that would take more than a century to change. Grant recognized a shared humanity between himself and African Americans. Despite deep cultural differences, they both aspired to fundamentally the same things: earning through one's labor, enjoying the fruits from that labor, controlling one's own life, and believing in "the right to rise." Ulysses S. Grant was an uncommonly good man.

Destined to be a classic biography, the author's details of battles in which General Grant was involved are worthy of inclusion in any military history of the Civil War. Along with Grant's alcoholism with which he had to cope throughout the war, Chernow's description of this illness is masterful as is his comparison of General Grant and General Lee. What is intriguing are Chernow's descriptions of every major character involved in Grant's life – his much loved and loving wife Julia, his braggadocio father Jesse, Abraham Lincoln, Mary Lincoln, Benjamin Butler, Chief of Staff Henry Halleck, General George P. McClellan, General Ambrose Burnside and Grant's particular friend, General William T. Sherman. Chernow's insights are right on the mark in nearly every chapter. This biography confirms again Ron Chernow's masterful talent.

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Ulysses S. Grant Association Annual Meeting  
May 6-8, Starkville, MS

Register now!

Dear Members and Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Association,

Please join us for the 55th annual meeting of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, which will be held at the Courtyard Marriott in Starkville and the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.

Registration for the meeting and for accommodations at the hotel must be taken care of as listed below. Packets for all those who have registered will be available on Sunday, May 6, 2018, 3-5 p.m. at the headquarters hotel. At this time, members will also be able to purchase U.S. Grant merchandise.

The formal program will begin with a cash bar reception at the hotel at 6 p.m. followed by a bus ride and dinner at MSU’s Colvard Student Union. Our dinner speaker will be our own, Frank Williams, USGA president, who will speak on the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana that Frank and Virginia have donated to MSU and is housed in a separate gallery next to the gallery commemorating Ulysses S. Grant.

On Monday, May 7, 2018, the USGA’s exciting program will begin at 8:30 a.m. when we board buses at the hotel to travel to the Grant Presidential library. There we will enjoy a tour of the Frank and Virginia Williams Lincolniana Gallery and Ulysses S. Grant Gallery, led by Justice and Mrs. Williams, John Marszalek, and the USGA staff. We will then have a panel discussion on the planning and construction of our new facility. Members of the panel will include the project architect, the supervisor of construction, Stephen Cunetto, Mitchell Memorial Library coordinator of the project, and Ryan Semmes, the project archivist.

For lunch, we will travel by bus to the Veranda, one of Starkville’s finest restaurants and participate in a table-by-table discussion of the new Grant facility.

On Monday afternoon, we will hear a discussion about the childhood and youth of descendants of the famous general and president. Participants will be Ulysses Grant Dietz and other Grant descendants.

From 3 to 4 p.m. in the Mitchell Memorial Library, a panel consisting of John Marszalek, David Nolen, and Louie Gallo will describe the lengthy process that led to the publication of the new edition of the Grant memoirs by Harvard University Press.

At 4:15 p.m., buses will take us back to the headquarters hotel for some down time before the buses take us to the home of MSU President and Mrs. Mark Keenum for a 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. reception. Buses will then take us back to the Mitchell Memorial Library for a catered dinner, the presentation of the John Y. Simon Award, and the dinner speaker, MSU President Mark Keenum, who will speak on "Stephen D. Lee, First MSU President, and the Grant Family.” At the end of the program buses will return everyone to the headquarters hotel.
The following morning, the USGA Board of Directors will meet at 7:15 a.m. and buses will take the Board to the Templeton Room for the annual meeting of the Board of Directors. At 8:45 a.m., buses will bring the membership to the Grisham Room for the annual membership meeting. The annual meeting will adjourn by 10 a.m.

A new feature this year is a post-meeting visit, by bus, to Duffy Neubauer’s Starkville Artillery Museum, one of the nation’s finest such institutions. There Duffy will present a program on U.S. Grant and Civil War Artillery. Buses will return members to the hotel in time for the noon check out.

Those who wish to have a post-meeting lunch and tour the campus and the community will receive information to help plan such a self-guided tour.

INFORMATION ON TRAVEL AND REGISTRATION:

The closest airport is Columbus Mississippi (GTR). Vans will pick up and deliver USGA members from this airport. Other nearby airports are Memphis (MEM) 2 ½ hours away by car, Jackson, Mississippi (JAN) 2 hours away, and Birmingham Alabama (BHM) 3 hours away. Rental cars are available at all these locations. Each member is responsible for his/her own arrangements.

- Early Bird: Through February 1: $250 per member and guest
- Regular: February 1- March 31: $275 per member and guest
- Late: April 1-30: $300 per member and guest
- There will be no registration after April 30

You may also register for the meeting on our website: www.usgrantlibrary.org AND you may pay online with a credit card or PayPal. OR you may send registration information and a check to Rebecca Houston, USGA, P.O. Box 5408, Mississippi State, MS 39762

Refunds will be available --- A full refund will apply until March 31, 2018. From April 1 to 15, 2018, the refund will be one-half the appropriate registration fee. There will be no refunds after April 15, 2018.

Each registrant to the annual meeting must arrange his/her own hotel accommodations. USGA has reserved a block of room at the Courtyard Marriott, just off the MSU campus. A room for two costs $125 plus tax and includes a hot breakfast each morning. To make a room reservation, please call the Courtyard Marriott, (662) 338-3116 and be sure to mention the USGA block of rooms. You can also make your room reservation by clicking on this link: Book your group rate for US Grant Assoc Because MSU graduation is taking place on Saturday, May 5, early registration is not covered by the block.

For further information, please feel free to contact Rebecca Houston at 662-325-4552.

Everyone on the USGA staff looks forward to another great meeting.

Cordially,

John F. Marszalek
How can you make a gift to the U.S. Grant Presidential Library?

1. Cash: You can deduct cash gifts up to 50% of adjusted gross income. On a $10,000 cash gift in a 28% tax bracket, you can save $2,800 in taxes. You can also make a multiple-year cash pledge, deducting cash pledged over a period of years.

2. Bequest through Will: It is very simple to give of your estate. You can make a gift bequest — after others have been provided for — of a dollar amount, specific property, a percentage of the estate, or the remainder to the Ulysses S. Grant Association.

3. Outright Gift of Real Estate: One of the most overlooked gift forms is of real estate. A gift of land, a house, or vacation home is a perfect gift. You will impact generations — and receive a tax deduction for the full fair market value, as well as avoiding all capital gain taxes.

4. Retirement Accounts: Retirement Account Funds (IRAs) beyond the comfortable support of yourself or your loved ones may be given (such as life insurance proceeds) to the Ulysses S. Grant Association by proper beneficiary designation. Those 70 1/2 and older can make qualified charitable distributions (QCBs) from your IRAs (limited to $100,000 per year); these donations are not included in individual income or allowed as a charitable deduction. Subject to annual review by Congress.

5. Personal Property (Collections, Royalty Rights, etc.): Gifts of personal property are always welcome, including collections, royalty, and mineral rights. Charitable tax deductions are available in the year of the gift.

6. Appreciated Stock: Appreciated stock (held more than one year) makes an excellent gift. Avoid all capital gain taxes, receive a tax deduction, and deduct up to 30% of your adjusted gross income.

7. Bonds, Mutual Funds: Bonds and mutual funds are similar to cash in their tax treatment. State Municipal, and U.S. Government Bonds are welcome.

8. Gift of Life Insurance: It is easy to make a significant gift by naming the Ulysses S. Grant Association beneficiary to receive all, or a portion, of the proceeds of an existing life insurance policy. You will receive a tax deduction for the cash surrender value, thus reducing your tax liability in the year of the gift.

9. Real Estate with Life Tenancy: Receive a substantial income tax deduction by giving (deeding) your home or farm to the Ulysses S. Grant Association now. You can continue to live there, maintain the property as usual, and even receive any income it generates. At your death, the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library will convert your property into cash to support the goals of its organization.

10. In-Kind Gifts: Gifts of goods or services are welcomed by the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library with prior approval by the Executive Director.
11. Charitable Gift Annuities: These gifts provide the Ulysses S. Grant Association with lifetime income. They do not require a large donation. In exchange for an irrevocable gift of cash, stock, bonds or, in some cases, other assets, a donor will receive fixed income payments for life (or two lives) as well as a charitable income tax deduction in the year of the gift. When the annuity terminates, the remaining assets will be directed towards the U.S. Grant Association.

Interested in giving to USGA?

Direct donations to USGA may be made on our website: http://www.usgrantlibrary.org/usga/donate.asp. Or, if you would like to schedule a personal consultation on various options of how you can make an impactful philanthropic investment in the U.S. Grant Association, please contact us. We thank you for your support!

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 rhouston@library.msstate.edu.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!