Ulysses S. Grant Life Story Outline

by Frank Scaturro of the Grant Monument Association

Grant's Later Years, 1877-1885

A. Grants on their World Tour, 1877-1879.
1. The Grants covered many countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia, where they were greeted by crowds and dignitaries, and given treatment usually reserved for kings and emperors.
   - This treatment, which contrasted with the reception of former presidents Van Buren and Fillmore on their trips, reflected the unprecedented respect the U.S. had recently acquired throughout the world.
   - During the trip, several world leaders consulted Grant on various situations their nations faced.
2. When he returned home, a large contingent of the Republican Party was eager to nominate him to a third term as president.

B. The 1880 Nomination Attempt.
1. The "Stalwart" faction of the Republican Party, discontent with Hayes and the abandonment of the South, supported the nomination of Grant for a third term while the "Half-Breeds," the "Reform" faction that opposed any resumed intervention in the South, supported James G. Blaine.
2. Grant maintained a strong lead in the Republican National Convention until the bitterly divided party settled on a compromise "dark horse" candidate, Representative James A. Garfield of Ohio, who narrowly won the election.
C. In 1881 the Grants Move to New York City, to 3 East 66th St.
1. Grant became president of the Mexican Southern Railroad Company and was interested in encouraging commerce between the two nations.

2. Grant invested the family's money in the Wall Street banking firm of Grant and Ward.
   - Grant himself had little substantive involvement in the firm. His son, Ulysses, Jr., was the Grant primarily involved.
   - The firm prospered until 1884.

3. Negotiated reciprocal-trade agreement with Mexico between 1882 and 1883, though the treaty was not ratified.

4. Amid revelations of partner Ferdinand Ward's improper speculative tactics, which backfired, the firm went bankrupt, leaving the Grant family thousands of dollars in debt.

D. Personal Memoirs and Death.
1. Approached by admirer Mark Twain in 1884, Grant decided to write his memoirs to help alleviate his family's financial loss.

2. While writing, Grant discovered that he had inoperable cancer of the throat, which doctors attributed to his habit of smoking cigars and to the stress caused by the collapse of Grant and Ward.
   - He endured great pain swallowing and eventually would have to sleep sitting up.
   - He continued writing his memoirs despite the growing agony caused by the cancer.

3. On March 3, 1885, President Chester A. Arthur nominated Grant as four-star general to be put on the retired list, thus assuring him of a pension.

4. In June, Grant was moved to a cottage owned by Joseph W. Drexel at Mount McGregor, New York, just north of Saratoga Springs, to avoid the heat of New York.

5. He completed his Memoirs on approximately July 19, 1885, and Grant died on July 23 at age 63.

6. Although Grant died penniless, the Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant shattered sales records, paid off his debts, and made his family wealthy.
   - The Memoirs are considered one of the finest works of literature of its kind in American history.
   - Often considered among the greatest military autobiographies ever written, the Memoirs have been compared to Julius Caesar's Commentaries.
E. Julia Grant's Later Years
1. Julia Grant lived 17 more years, dividing her time between Mount McGregor, New York City, and Washington, D.C. She spent most of her time with her family, which came to include great grandchildren.
   - She became the first First Lady to write her memoirs, although the manuscript was not published until 1975.
   - She became an open supporter of the Republican Party, Susan B. Anthony, and the cause of women's suffrage.

2. Julia died in Washington, D.C., on December 14, 1902, at the age of 76. She is entombed next to her husband in the Monument dedicated to him at Riverside Park, New York City.

Please return to the Students page in LibGuides for the other segments of Grant’s life history.

- Grant’s Early Years, Through the Start of the Civil War, 1822-1861
- Grant During the Civil War, 1861-1865
- Grant as General-in-Chief, After the Civil War, 1865-1869
- Grant’s Presidency, 1869-1877

Further reading: Ulysses S. Grant Chronology, at the Ulysses S. Grant Association website.

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