RESTORING WHITE HAVEN

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Ulysses S. Grant is one of the most
commemorated individuals in American history.
When we think of this great man, we often
remember his heroic deeds in the Civil War or
his public service as our 18th President of the
United States. It would be rare for most people
to think of Grant and make an instant connection
to St. Louis. But the staff at Ulysses S. Grant
National Historic Site in St. Louis would like to
change that.

What many do not realize is that Ulysses S.
Grant's connection to St. Louis is nationally
significant. Grant's White Haven home was
authorized on October 2, 1989 as a unit of the
National Park Service, "to preserve and interpret
for the benefit and inspiration of all Americans a
key property associated with the life of General
and later President Ulysses S. Grant and the life
of First Lady Julia Dent Grant..." 1 White Haven's
historic 9.65 acre core is being preserved from
the original 1,000 acre plantation.

Ulysses S. Grant was associated with the
property his whole adult life, which is unique in
many ways. It was there where he met his wife
and became engaged, where three of their four
children were born, and where he farmed and
supported his family in the unstable years before
the Civil War. By the end of the war, Ulysses S.
Grant had acquired the remaining 800 acre
property from his father-in-law, Colonel
Frederick Dent, with the hopes of retiring there
and raising horses. Grant retained ownership of
the property until shortly before his death in
1885, therefore, each aspect of Grant's adult life
can be tied to the White Haven plantation. Five

1 Enabling legislation of Ulysses S.
Grant National Historic Site, Public Law 101-
106, 101st Congress.

Following the Grant era, the property went
through various phases of ownership, including
three generations of the Wenzlick family from
1913 to 1985. The Wenzlicks made the first
significant changes to the property since Grant's
ownership by completely remodeling the main
house in 1940 and relocating the barn in 1962.
By 1985, through efforts from a local group
called Save Grant's White Haven, the third
generation of Wenzlicks sold the remaining 9.65
acres to the State of Missouri and St. Louis
County, who administered the property until the
National Park Service acquired it.

Between 1990 and 1995, the staff at Ulysses S.
Grant NHS conducted historic research to
explore the association and relationship of the
Grants to the White Haven plantation. Also,
physical investigation was conducted to examine
the existing conditions of the remaining historic
structures. With this process, photo
documentation, planning, development, and
preparation of treatment alternatives and
proposal design drawings were implemented to
decide and prepare for the future of the site.
From the consensus of local and regional
participants involved, the treatment alternative
that was chosen was to restore the property back
to the way it looked in 1875 during Grant's
ownership and Presidency.

The restoration began in January 1995 on the
main house. Phase I dealt with removal of the
modern conveniences and interior finishes to
assess the condition of the structure and to
become aware of possible structural damage to
the resource. This included plaster, asbestos,
crown molding, bathroom fixtures, cast iron
plumbing pipes, kitchen appliances and all
utilities.

Phase II consisted of chimney, foundation and
first floor structural stabilization. In order to
accomplish this phase, the historical architects
and maintenance crew at the site teamed up with
the Williamsport Preservation Training Center (WPTC). They brought to the project NPS specialists skilled in masonry and carpentry. They began with demolishing all non-historic portions of the main house which were put on by the Wenzlicks in 1940. The first and second floor porches were carefully removed for the stabilization to be re-installed at a later date. At this point, a trench was dug around the perimeter of the house down to the beginning of the foundation. The house was then lifted on the east side and supported by steel beams. This allowed workers to knock out modern concrete blocks and replace them with a solid concrete wall foundation. Stone was then laid to emulate the original foundation. New sill beams, some hand-hewn by the crew, were installed to support the first floor. The house was set back on its new foundation. On the west side, the stone foundation was re-pointed with a mortar mixture consistent with the historic stones. All three chimneys were relaid at the tops, reusing the original stones that were marked and labeled as they had come off during initial investigation. Once the stabilization was complete, the crew could then work on transforming the house to its 1875 appearance.

Phase III dealt with removal of more modern features including 20th century dormers and windows, and rebuilding the porches. During this process, workers were able to replace the asphalt roof with a historically accurate cedar shingle roof.

Phase IV began in February 1997 and is still going on at the present time. This phase will conclude the exterior restoration. It involves rebuilding an addition to the back of the house, the missing East Wing, the "modern" kitchen, the mud room and the back porch. Windows, doors and siding for these additions were fabricated by the park from documentation from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1940 before the original structures were demolished. Also during this phase comes the most drastic change of all: Paris Green paint. In 1874, Grant ordered materials to have his house painted green. The Dent family named the plantation White Haven after their former home in Maryland, not because of the color. It was painted white by the Wenzlicks. Recently, a lead abatement project was conducted on the house to remove all of the white, lead-based paint. The original siding was then cleaned and primed with Paris Green.

After three years, the exterior restoration, which is the most costly and tedious, is near completion. Upon receipt of further congressional funding, the interior restoration will begin.

The staff at Ulysses S. Grant NHS is excited and proud of the work being conducted at the site. They invite you to visit this park in progress to experience the beauty and history of the Grant's at White Haven. The site is open daily from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. For more information or to receive details on the monthly special events, you may call (314) 842-3298 or write to: National Park Service, 7400 Grant Road, St. Louis, MO 63123.
To the Editor of The Shoe and Leather Reporter.

Dear Sir,- A few months ago I received a letter from you, asking me to furnish a few notes of my early life for your paper. And as I have always been engaged in the leather business, I offer that as my only excuse for obtruding the incidents of my eventful life on your readers.

My father was a Connecticut man. After serving through the Revolutionary War, and losing his wife, he and his son, Peter moved to Western Pennsylvania about 1790. He was then about 42 years of age. On the 4th of March, 1792, he married Rachel Kelly. I was the second child of that marriage, and was born Jan. 23rd, 1794.

In April, 1790, my father moved to the Northwestern territory, and settled in what is now Columbiana County, Ohio. Five years after, when the Western reserve began to be settled, my father, having a partiality for Eastern people, moved to the reserve and settled in Deerfield, now Portage County. The country was new, the people all very poor, and the necessaries of life extremely scarce. In April, 1805, my mother died. She being the support and dependence of the family, her death was the signal for a breaking up of the family circle. Myself and an older sister were permitted to shift for ourselves. The five younger children were cared for by kind strangers, until they were able to take care of themselves. For the next two years and a half, it was as much as I could do to get a bare support.

Late in the fall of 1807, when I was nearly fourteen years old, I went to live with Mrs. Tod; her husband was one of the judges of the supreme court of the State, and was absent on his circuit in the Southern part of the State; he was not to return until April. Up to this time I had never attended school, but Mrs. Tod agreed, if I would stay until the judge came home, to give me two months schooling. I had more work to do than two such boys ought to do, and had but little time to attend school, but I learned to read with facility.

When the judge came home, he said that if I would stay and work for him until winter he would give me three months' schooling. I accepted this offer, and at the close of my engagement had gone through the double rule of three and could write a fair hand; these were my graduating attainments.

Mrs. Tod was then about 35 years of age, and a more beautiful and highly accomplished lady I never saw, and she was, withal, a most excellent woman. She had five children. The fourth, David, then about two years old, and one of the best and most amiable little fellows I ever saw, was afterwards Governor of Ohio. The family was extremely poor, and the children lived exclusively on mush and milk. That was no new thing to me. Indeed, I had never dreamed of anything better to raise children on. The only difficulty was in getting enough of that. When the cow failed of her milk, we were put on short rations, and when she went dry, we sometimes used sweetened water as a substitute for milk. The first night I was at Mrs. Tod's I was put in the little log kitchen to make my supper with the judge's children. But that was all right with me, for as I have said before, I had never thought of anything better to feed children on. There an incident occurred that fixed my destiny for future life, and perhaps had something to do with the taking of Fort Donelson. But as I have not room for that story now, I will have to make that incident the subject of another letter.

Yours, etc. J.R. Grant
Covington, Ky., 1868
WASHBURNE HOUSE OPENING

November 5, 1997 marked the opening of Elihu B. Washburne House in Galena, Ill. The 1843 mansion was bought by the state of Illinois 30 years ago. Renovations have recently been completed and are authentic to the era. Washburne, a congressman from Illinois from 1852 until 1869, became a friend and mentor of Ulysses S. Grant and supported Grant throughout his military career. Visitors to the site can visit the library where Washburne and presidential candidate U.S. Grant awaited news of the 1868 election results. A telegraph had been set up to keep the candidate and friends up to date. In 1869 President Grant appointed Washburne Secretary of State. He resigned this position and was appointed U.S. Minister to France on March 16, 1869 where he served until 1877.

The Washburne House is located at 908 Third Street. It is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Admission is free.

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Upon graduation from West Point, Grant had no intention of keeping the military as his career and planned instead on being a professor of mathematics.
This three-piece silver set was given to Ulysses and Julia Dent Grant by Julia’s father, Colonel Frederick Dent, in honor of their 25th wedding anniversary. The set includes a teapot and a sugar and creamer. Each item has ivory accents on the handles and is inscribed with a “G” surrounded by the dates 1848 and 1873. This gift was donated to the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site by James F. Casey, a descendant of Julia’s youngest sister Emma Dent Casey. National Park Service Photo by Bill Meyer.
Fifty dollar bills with a new look are now in circulation. The redesigned bill with added security and low vision features was issued in the fall of 1997 and will gradually replace the 46.5 billion dollars in $50 notes that are currently in circulation.

The new bill features a larger illustration of the familiar etching of Ulysses S. Grant and adds a hidden image of him as well. When the bill is held up to the light, a watermark of Grant's face to the right of his portrait can clearly be seen. This watermark is one of several new security devices that have been developed to guard against counterfeiting.

Advanced graphic reproduction technology – the advent and availability of sophisticated color copiers, scanners, and printers – necessitated that the Treasury Department take steps to ensure the security of the nation's currency. Besides the watermark, the new bill utilizes several other security devices, such as an improved security thread, micro-printing in the collar of Grant's shirt and a numeral 50 printed in color-shifting ink. The security thread is visible when held up to the light and is sensitive to ultraviolet light; the words "USA 50" and a flag running along the strip are visible with a magnifying glass. The words "United States of America" can be seen in the border of the collar of Grant's shirt. The numeral on the lower right-hand corner of the bill changes from green to black when viewed from different angles.

Other new features of the bill provide for those with vision impairment as well as for use in low light situations. A large dark numeral 50 on a light background on the lower right-hand corner of the back of the bill and the larger picture of Grant on the front make it easier for those with visual disabilities and milder forms of vision impairment to readily identify the bill's denomination.

The redesigned $50 bill retains the familiar look and feel of American currency, but it offers the general public, especially Grant enthusiasts, much more to look at and examine.
My first knowledge of General Grant was gained at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and I early obtained an insight into the value of that military maxim: "Never underrate your opponent." On the day before the battle of Baker's Creek, that rendered it inevitable that the fortified city on the Mississippi River must surrender or stand a siege, I was looking after the transportation trains near Big Black River, and fell in with General Loring and his staff. I took the liberty of asking a few questions about General Grant, who was known to have crossed the river, and was therefore for the first time in reach of our forces in the State of Mississippi. Loring said there was "only one thing to fear, and that was his taking the alarm and crossing the river behind his two fleets, before the Confederates could get at him."

On the day of the battle, the next, this one-armed general twice failed to obey the order to support the division to which I belonged, General Stevenson's, on the plea of flanking the enemy, and at last secured his own retreat to join General Joseph E. Johnston, while we were safely bottled for capture in Vicksburg.

I do not criticize General Loring – who has proven himself a hero on so many fields from Mexico to Egypt – I notice the fact that we of the South underrated General Grant from the outset, and the purpose of this article is to show that, as a general, he is underrated yet, North and South.

I so wrote, when, in 1864, I edited the Augusta (Georgia) Daily Constitutionalist, and while the most of army correspondents in the South were predicting that "Grant is about to butt his brains out against the fortifications of Petersburg." I so wrote when in his first Presidential campaign after the war, it became a sort of Democratic fashion to belittle General Grant. I said: "It is not much to the credit of the South if we were defeated by a weak and incompetent man," and reminded friends of the proverb, "Great let me call him, for he conquered me."

As a prisoner of war in his hands at the fall of Vicksburg, until the parole of the whole army, I learned to appreciate his courtesy to the vanquished, and it was with no desire to appear in print that I wrote to Whitelaw Reid of the Tribune asking national prayers for him before he died; for my note to Mr. Reid was entirely a private one.

The next occasion on which I personally saw the personal force of General Grant appear in results, was when, on the 23rd of October, 1863, he was sent to relieve Generals Rosecrans and Thomas, who were bottled in Chattanooga, very much as we Confederates had been in Vicksburg. Although present, I prefer to give the situation as others saw it, and will quote from the official report of General Grant, as appears in the "Rise and Fall of the Confederacy," by Mr. Jefferson Davis. General Grant says: "Up to this period our (Federal) forces were practically invested, the enemy's (Confederate) lines extending from the Tennessee River above Chattanooga to the river at
and below Lookout Mountain below the town, with the south, back of the river, picketed nearly to Bridgeport. This in force being fortified in Chattanooga Valley at the foot of and on Missionary Ridge and on Lookout Mountain, and with a brigade in Lookout Valley. True, we held possession of the country north of the river, but it was from sixty to seventy miles over the most impracticable roads to army supplies. The artillery horses and the mules had become so reduced by starvation that they could not be relied upon for moving anything. An attempt at retreat must have been with men alone, and with only such supplies as they could carry. A retreat would have been almost certain annihilation, for the enemy, occupying positions within gunshot of and overlooking our very fortifications, would, unquestionably, have pursued. Already more than ten thousand animals had perished in supplying half rations to the troops by the long and tedious route from Stevenson and Bridgeport over Waldron's Ridge. They could not have been supplied another week."

Thus, the generous victor of July 4, 1863, who had trusted the Confederates to go home and support their starving families, was called upon to do that for the army of Tennessee, which the Richmond authorities had failed to do for General J. C. Pemberton in the West. It may be remembered that on the 12th of October, 1863, Mr. Jefferson Davis, then President, had visited the battle-field of Chickamauga, and that General Longstreet with a force (stated by Vice-President A. H. Stephens in his War Between the States, at about five thousand, but by E. A. Pollard in his Lost Cause, at eleven thousand men) from the army of North Virginia, had soon afterward been detached from General Bragg's command and sent against General Burnside, intrenched at Knoxville. This cut off General Grant from his nearest reinforcement, and put the great lieutenant of Lee in his rear, in case of retreat. Again Grant was underrated, and the thought of his capture was uppermost. In proof of this I quote from the official report of General Bragg, commanding the Confederate forces. After speaking favorably of the movement of Longstreet, he says: "At the same time our cavalry in large force was thrown across the river to operate on this long and difficult route." (Stated by General Grant to be from sixty to seventy miles by wagon). "These dispositions faithfully sustained, insured the enemy's (Federal's) speedy evacuation of Chattanooga for want of food and forage." In speaking of the army as Generals Rosecrans and Thomas left it to General Grant, General Bragg adds these significant words: "We held him at our mercy and his destruction was only a question of time."

Now I hold that to extricate an army from that situation in three days, and in a month to entirely reverse the whole aspect of the campaign in the West, and recover all that was lost at Chickamauga required not merely a blind and stupid hurling of masses of men at an enemy, but generalship of the highest order. What then are the facts? General Grant appeared in Chattanooga on the 23rd of October, 1863, among starving men and animals. On the night of the 26th, three days later, there were fifty pontoons with twelve hundred men on them, floated for three miles down the river directly in front of the pickets of General Bragg, and they were not discovered until they landed at the ferry near Lookout Valley. They at once seized the valley hills and covered the Brown's Ferry road. A concealed camp of three thousand men was ready opposite, and in forty hours the heights west of Lookout Creek were lost, the river had been bridged by 10 A.M., General Hooker had entered the valley at Nauhatchie, General Palmer had crossed from the north at Whiteside, and a whole army corps was on the southern side. The practical siege was over, and Grant was not captured but on the offensive. On the 25th of November, the battle of Missionary Ridge was fought, of which Mr. Davis spoke as: "The mortification of the first defeat that ever had resulted from misconduct by the troops." A. H. Stephens wrote: "Bragg's army was completely routed. This was the greatest disaster which attended the Confederate arms in a pitched battle, during the war: not so much in the

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loss of men (about 3,000) but in the loss of ground and demoralization of broken columns.'

Mr. Stephens said to me in his own house: "That movement by General Grant is equal to the exploits of Hannibal and of Napoleon in the invasion of Italy, and places him among the great generals of all places and times."

These are some of the reasons why we should respect the late chieftain; now I shall give one or two reasons why we of the South should love him.

One of these I presume was in the mind of General Joseph E. Johnston when recently speaking to a reporter just prior to serving as pall-bearer to his great antagonist. It came to me from a witness — a great statesman now dead. President Andrew Johnson had placed Mr. Davis in irons in Fortress Monroe, and I do not know whether he had sent for General Grant or not, but the latter was at the White House. Mr. Johnson demanded of General Grant at what time Generals Lee, Johnston, Beauregard, and the others could also be arrested and imprisoned. Said my informant: "General Grant had a habit of sitting with face down as if thinking, and it was only when he had need to look his man in the face that he did so. The time had come, and I never before understood how a man could resemble a roused lion; a still, terrible anger. He did not raise his voice, and it may have been a shade lower than common, as he said — I think I have the words rightly — 'Mr. President, so long as these men remain at home and observe the terms of their parole, you never can do so. The army of the United States stands between those men and you."

If this be true, and I have never had reason to doubt it, and if the one instance in history where a great civil war victory was followed by no confiscations and no executions for treason, be due to General Grant, then we of the South own him more than respect.

My opinion here is again confirmed by Mr. A.H. Stephens, who describes his interview with General Grant at City Point, near Hampton Roads, February 1, 1865, as follows: "We were here with General Grant two days... The more I became acquainted with him, the more I became thoroughly impressed with the very extraordinary combination of rare elements of character which he exhibited. During the time he met us frequently and conversed freely upon various subjects — not much upon our mission. I saw, however, clearly that he was very anxious for the proposed conference to take place, and from all that was said I inferred — whether correctly or not I do not know — that he was fully apprised of its proposed object. He was, without doubt, exceedingly anxious for a termination of our war and the return of peace and harmony through the country. It was through his instrumentality mainly that Mr. Lincoln finally consented to meet us at Fortress Monroe, as the correspondence shows."

Cleveland concluded his article with a facsimile of a letter Grant had written to him on the death of Alexander H. Stephens which he said was another example of the kindness that Grant felt toward the people of the South. The following is a transcription of that letter.
New York City,
June 14th, 1883

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 14th of May enclosed to me by General Longstreet, in which you ask a few words from me expressing my estimate of the late Honorable Alexander H. Stephens, reached my office during my absence in the West. Since that time I have been in my office but three or four days. Finding an accumulation of letters which I am not yet through, the disposal of is my apology for not answering you at an earlier day.

I never had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Stephens until he, with Mr. Hunter and Judge Campbell, visited my headquarters at City Point, Va. during the last year of the Civil War. I had however known him well by reputation for many years, and placed a high estimate upon his character and ability as well as statesmanship. Our personal acquaintance, though we differed so widely in matters affecting our common country, only served to increase my admiration for the man. As I understand, without being a man of large means, he devoted largely from what he could earn to the greatest good of the greatest number. Through him many a deserving young man has found the means of acquiring a fair education to give him a start in the world, and in most cases, if I am correctly informed he has been compensated for his generosity by seeing those who had this favor conferred, do honor to their benefactor.

In all his public utterances Mr. Stephens impressed me as a man who was never afraid to speak his honest convictions without regard to whether they would be popularly received or not. To the day of his death I retained the high estimate of his life and character formed before I knew him, increased by a personal acquaintance.

Very Truly Yours,
U. S. Grant

Rev. H. W. Cleveland
Atlanta Ga.

Cleveland, H. W. "General Grant’s Military Abilities, Magazine of American History With Notes & Queries. 14 (1885) pp 341-350