GENERAL GRANT AND HIS STAFF ENTERING JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Ulysses S. Grant NHS (White Haven)

Saturday, May 6, 2000

Art in the Park!

Artist/teacher Betsy Ward will present a style of art utilizing the park as a subject. The program is geared for all ages, so come on out and let your creative side loose!

For further information call:
314-842-3298

GRANT'S TOMB – SPECIAL PROGRAMS 2000

April 27 – National Park Service Birthday Celebration of U. S. Grant

April 30 – Sons of Union Veterans Ceremony commemorating Grant’s Birthday

July 2 Presentation ‘Vicksburg, Grant’s Greatest Campaign’

For further information call 212-666-1640
OHIO SITES WILL CELEBRATE GRANT’S BIRTHDAY

Grant’s Birthplace in Point Pleasant and the Grant Homestead in Georgetown will commemorate Grant’s Birthday the weekend of April 29th and 30th with ceremonies, speeches, living history programs and reenactments.

For more details and information contact.
U. S. Grant Birthplace – 800-283-8932
Grant Homestead – 513-378-4222

GRANT COTTAGE SPECIAL EVENTS 2000

May 27 – Opening day for Ulysses S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site at Mt. McGregor, N.Y.
July 22 and 23 – Sons of Union Veterans Encampment
July 23 – Grant Remembrance Day
August 5 – Memorial of the 115th Anniversary of Grant’s Funeral
August 20 – Victorian Picnic

For further information call 518-587-8277
RECOLLECTIONS OF VICKSBURG
By Charles Dana

[Charles Dana, assistant Secretary of War, 1863-65, saw Admiral Porter run the Vicksburg batteries and was with Grant and Sherman through the siege of the city. In his Recollections of the Civil War he recalls Grant’s plan to move to Jackson, Mississippi in order to draw the Confederate forces east of Vicksburg, confuse the enemy, destroy the railroad to Jackson, and finally isolate Vicksburg.]

The new project, so Grant told me, was to transfer his army to New Carthage, and from there carry it over the Mississippi, landing it at or about Grand Gulf, to capture this point, and then to operate rapidly on the southern and eastern shore of the Big Black River, threatening at the same time both Vicksburg and Jackson, and confusing the Confederates as to his real objective. If this could be done he believed the enemy would come out of Vicksburg and fight.

The first element in this plan was to open a passage from the Mississippi near Milliken’s Bend, above Vicksburg, to the bayou on the west side, which led around to New Carthage below. The length of navigation in this cut-off was about thirty-seven miles, and the plan was to take through with small tugs perhaps fifty barges, enough, at least, to transfer the whole army, with artillery and baggage, to the other side of the Mississippi in twenty-four hours. If necessary, troops were to be transported by the canal, though Grant hoped to march them by the road along its bank. Part of McClelland’s corps had already reached New Carthage overland, and Grant was hurrying other troops forward. The canal to the bayou was already half completed, thirty-five hundred men being at work on it when I arrived.

The second part of the plan was to float down the river, past the Vicksburg batteries, half a dozen steamboats protected by defenses of bales of cotton and wet hay; these steamboats were to serve as transports of supplies after the army had crossed the Mississippi.

Perhaps the best evidence of the feasibility of the project was found in the fact that the river men pronounced its success certain. General Sherman, who commanded one of the three corps in Grant’s army, and with whom I conversed at length upon the subject, thought there was no difficulty in opening the passage; but that the line would be a precarious one for supplies after the army was thrown across the Mississippi. Sherman’s preference was for a movement by way of Yazoo Pass, or Lake Providence, but it was not long before I saw in our daily talks that his mind was tending to the conclusion of General Grant. As for General Grant, his purpose was dead set on the new scheme. Admiral Porter cordially agreed with him.

An important modification was made a few days after my arrival in the plan of operations. It was determined that after the occupation of Grand Gulf the main army, instead of operating up the Big Black toward Jackson, should proceed down the river against Port Hudson, co-operating with General Banks against that point, and that after the capture of Port Hudson the two united forces should proceed against Vicksburg.

There seemed to be only one hitch in the campaign. Grant had intrusted the attack on Grand Gulf to McClemand. Sherman, Porter, and other leading officers believed this a mistake, and talked frankly with me about it. One night when we had all gathered at Grant’s headquarters and were talking over the campaign very freely, as we were accustomed to do, both Sherman and Porter protested against the arrangement. But Grant would not be changed. McClemand, he said, was exceedingly desirous of the command. He was the senior of the other corps commanders. He was an especial favorite of the President, and the position which his corps occupied on the ground when the movement was first projected was such that the advance naturally fell to its lot; besides, he had entered zealously into the plan from the first, while Sherman had doubted and criticized, and McPherson, whom Grant said he would really have much preferred, was away at Lake Providence, and though he had approved of the scheme, he had taken no active part in it.

I believed the assignment of this duty to McClemand to be so dangerous that I added my ex postulation to those of the generals, and in reporting the case to Mr. Stanton I wrote: “I have remonstrated so far as I could properly do so against intrusting so momentous an operation to McClemand.” Mr. Stanton replied: “Allow me to suggest that you carefully avoid giving any advice in respect to commands that may be assigned, as it may lead to misunderstanding and troublesome complications.” Of course, after that I scrupulously observed his directions, even in extreme cases. As the days went on everybody, in spite of this hitch, became more sanguine that the new project would succeed.
When General Sherman first learned of the move I proposed to make, he called to see me about it. I recollect that I had transferred my headquarters from a boat in the river to a house a short distance back from the levee. I was seated on the piazza engaged in conversation with my staff when Sherman came up: After a few moments' conversation he said that he would like to see me alone. We passed into the house together and shut the door after us. Sherman then expressed his alarm at the move I had ordered, saying that I was putting myself in a position voluntarily which an enemy would be glad to maneuver a year – or a long time – to get me in. I was going into the enemy's country, with a large river behind me and the enemy holding points strongly fortified above and below. He said that it was an axiom in war that when any great body of troops moved against an enemy they should do so from a base of supplies, which they would guard as they would the apple of the eye, etc. He pointed out all the difficulties that might be encountered in the campaign proposed, and stated in turn what would be the true campaign to make. This was, in substance, to go back until high ground could be reached on the east bank of the river; fortify there and establish a depot of supplies, and move from there, being always prepared to fall back upon it in case of disaster. I said this would take us back to Memphis. Sherman then said that was the very place he would go to, and would move by railroad from Memphis to Grenada, repairing the road as we advanced. To this I replied, the country is already disheartened over the lack of success on the part of our armies; the last election went against the vigorous prosecution of the war, voluntary enlistments had ceased throughout most of the North and conscription was already resorted to, and if we went back so far as Memphis it would discourage the people so much that bases of supplies would be of no use: neither men to hold them or supplies to put in them would be furnished. The problem for us was to move forward to a decisive victory, or our cause was lost. No progress was being made in any other field, and we had to go on.

Sherman wrote to my adjutant general, Colonel J. A. Rawlins, embodying his views of the campaign that should be made, and asking him to advise me to at least get the views of my generals upon the subject. Colonel Rawlins showed me the letter, but I did not see any reason for changing my plans. The letter was not answered and the subject was not subsequently mentioned between Sherman and myself to the end of the war, that I remember of. I did not regard the letter as official, and consequently did not preserve it. General Sherman furnished a copy himself to General Badeau, who printed it in his history of my campaigns. I did not regard either the conversation between us or the letter to my adjutant-general as protests, but simply friendly advice which the relations between us fully justified. Sherman gave the same energy to make the campaign a success that he would or could have done if it had been ordered by himself. I make this statement here to correct an impression which was circulated at the close of the war to Sherman's prejudice, and for which there was no fair foundation.

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LETTER FROM GENERAL SHERMAN TO COLONEL RAWLINS

HEADQUARTERS, FIFTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
CAMP NEAR VICKSBURG, April 8, 1863

Colonel J. A. Rawlins, A. A. G. to General Grant:

SIR, — I would most respectfully suggest, for reasons which I will not name, that General Grant call on his corps commanders for their opinions, concise and positive, on the best general plan of campaign. Unless this be done, there are men who will, in any result falling below the popular standard, claim that their advice was unheeded, and that fatal consequences resulted there from. My own opinions are:

1. That the Army of the Tennessee is far in advance of the other grand armies.
2. That a corps from Missouri should forthwith be moved from St. Louis to the vicinity of Little Rock, Arkansas, supplies collected while the river is full, and land communication with Memphis opened via Des Ark on the White, and Madison on the St. Francis rivers.
3. That as much of Yazoo pass, Coldwater, and Tallahatchie rivers as can be gained and fortified be held, and the main army be transported thither by land and water; that the road back to Memphis be secured and reopened; and as soon as the waters subside, Grenada be attacked, and the swamp road across to Helena be patrolled by cavalry.
4. That the line of the Yallabusha be the base from which to operate against the points where the Mississippi Central crosses Big Black above Canton, and lastly where the Vicksburg and Jackson railroad crosses the same river.

The capture of Vicksburg would result.

5. That a force be left in this vicinity, not to exceed ten thousand men, with only enough steamboats to float and transport them to any direct point. This force to be held always near enough to act with the gunboats, when the main army is known to be near Vicksburg, Haines’ Bluff, or Yazoo City.

6. I do doubt the capacity of Willow Bayou (which I estimate to be fifty miles long and very tortuous) for a military channel, capable of supporting an army large enough to operate against Jackson, Mississippi, or Black River Bridge; and such a channel will be very valuable to a force coming from the west, which we must expect. Yet this canal will be most useful as the way to convey coals and supplies to a fleet that should navigate the reach between Vicksburg and Red River.

7. The chief reason for operating solely by water, was the season of the year and high water in the Tallahatchie and Yallabusha. The spring is now here, and soon these streams will be no serious obstacle, save the ambuscades of the forest, and whatever works the enemy may have erected at or near Granada: North Mississippi is too valuable to allow them to hold and make crops.

I make these suggestions, with the request that General Grant simply read them, and give them, as I know he will, a share of his thoughts. I would prefer he should not answer them, but merely give them as much or as little weight as they deserve.

Whatever plan of action he may adopt will receive from me the same zealous cooperation and energetic support, as though conceived by myself.

I am, etc.,

W.T. Sherman, Major-General
Few persons visit Washington without trying to obtain a sight of General Grant, for no man is so thoroughly looked up to and reverenced by the people of the Union at large, as the great Conqueror of the Rebellion. The General, however, has his hands full with his official duties, and has but little time to devote to “lion hunters”. Consequently it is difficult for any one to obtain an interview with him during his office hours, unless he has some legitimate business to transact with him; and, fortunately for him, the most ardent sight-seer has the decency not to intrude upon him in the privacy of his own home.

The majority of the visitors to the Capital, therefore, being unable to behold the General himself, are forced to content themselves with seeing

HIS RESIDENCE

Which is situated on I Street, near New Jersey Avenue. Strangers can best find it by starting from the Baltimore depot, which is on New Jersey Avenue, and going from the Capitol. A walk of five to ten minutes will enable them to reach I Street. Just on the brow of the hill, to your left as you go up the Avenue, are three large houses of Baltimore pressed brick, with freestone trimmings. They constitute the famous “Douglas Row,” so called in consequence of having been erected by the late Senator Douglas, who resided in the central mansion, which is now the property of one of the churches of the city, and used as a school. Ex-Mayor Wallach resides in the house at the corner of New Jersey Avenue, and the mansion at the other end of the row is that of General Grant. It was purchased and presented to him by a number of prominent citizens, just after the close of the war.

It is located in a very handsome part of the city, and upon high ground, which affords an abundance of pure air. There is a large yard at the side, tastefully laid off, and the street is better graded and paved than most of the Washington thoroughfares. In front, the gigantic Capitol looms up grand and white in the distance, and far above it the blue waters of the Potomac glitter in the sunlight.

The house is double, with a wide hall running from the front entrance to the rear, with two large rooms on each side. Through the open window you catch a glimpse of a large library on the left of the hall, handsomely fitted up, with its walls lined with well-filled book cases. There is an air of elegant repose about the building especially pleasing, and you go away feeling that you have seen not only one of the most noted places in the city, but also one of the most thoroughly comfortable residences in the country.

It is said that the General, in deference to the wishes of his wife, intends remaining at his residence after his inauguration, and using the White House only for the discharge of his official duties, and for ceremonies of State—a sensible resolution, and one which we hope will be carried out.

HIS HEADQUARTERS

The official duties of his present position are discharged by the General at the “Headquarters of the Army,” which, as we have said, are located on 17th St. West, nearly opposite the War Department. The reception-room of this building is a small, square parlor to the left of the street entrance. It is thronged with visitors daily. Some of them have business with the General; others come for office; others, again, to bore him with well-meant but very officious advice; and others, still, merely to pay their respects and offer their congratulations. The General receives them courteously, and dismisses them at the earliest possible moment. Many try to sound him as to his future plans, or his views upon public affairs, but he puts them off blandly, and keeps his own counsel. The newspaper men try his patience sorely, but he is polite to them also, and listens to them in a courteous silence, neither assenting nor dissenting, until, in perfect despair, they, too, take their departure.

When all are gone, and the receptions for the day are over, the General resumes

HIS CIGAR

which he has laid aside during the interviews, with a feeling of deep relief. That cigar of his, like Napoleon’s gray overcoat, and Frederick the Great’s cane, has passed into history, and has become almost a part of the man. It has aided the General to baffle many a well-laid plan to force him to commit himself by some hasty or ill-advised speech, and was no doubt of great assistance to him in his studies of the plans of his campaigns during the war. And when he goes into the White House, it will cheer him amidst the trials of his new position, and still enable him to accomplish that most difficult of all human feats—to “hold his tongue” when it is not necessary to use it.
On the morning of the 31st of January General Grant received a letter sent in on the Petersburg front the day before, signed by the Confederates Alexander H. Stephens, J. A. Campbell, and R. M. T. Hunter, asking permission to come through our lines. These gentlemen constituted the celebrated “Peace Commission,” and were on their way to endeavor to have a conference with Mr. Lincoln. The desired permission to enter our lines was granted, and Babcock was sent to meet them and escort them to City Point. Some time after dark the train which brought them arrived, and they came at once to headquarters. General Grant was writing in his quarters when a knock came upon the door. In obedience to his “Come in!” the party entered, and were most cordially received, and a very pleasant conversation followed. Stephens was the Vice-President of the Confederacy; Campbell, a former justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, was Assistant Secretary of War, and Hunter was president pro tempore of the Confederate Senate. As General Grant had been instructed from Washington to keep them at City Point until further orders, he conducted them in person to the headquarters steamer, the Mary Martin, which was lying at the wharf, made them his guests, and had them provided with well-furnished state-rooms and comfortable meals during their stay. They were treated with every possible courtesy; their movements were not restrained, and they passed part of the time upon the boat, and part of it at headquarters. Stephens was about five feet five inches in height; his complexion was sallow, and his skin seemed shriveled upon his bones. He possessed intellect enough, however, for the whole commission. Many pleasant conversations occurred with him at headquarters, and an officer once remarked, after the close of an interview: “The Lord seems to have robbed that man’s body of nearly all its flesh and blood to make brains of them.”

The commissioners twice endeavored to draw General Grant out as to his ideas touching the proper conditions of the proposed terms of peace; but as he considered himself purely a soldier, not intrusted with any diplomatic functions, and as the commissioners spoke of negotiations between the two governments, while the general was not willing to acknowledge even by an inference any government within our borders except that of the United States, he avoided the subject entirely, except to let it be known by his remarks that he would gladly welcome peace if it could be secured upon proper terms. Mr. Lincoln had directed Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, on January 31, to meet the commissioners at Fort Monroe on February 2. General Grant telegraphed the President that he thought the gentlemen were sincere in their desire to restore peace and union, and
that it would have a bad effect if they went back without any expression from one who was in authority, and said he would feel sorry if Mr. Lincoln did not have an interview with them, or with some of them. This changed the President’s mind, and he started at once for Fort Monroe. The commissioners were sent down the James River that afternoon, and were met at Fort Monroe by the President and Mr. Seward on the 3rd, and had a conference lasting several hours aboard the President’s steamer. Mr. Lincoln stated that peace could be secured only by a restoration of the national authority over all the States, a recognition of the position assumed by him as to the abolition of slavery, and an understanding that there should be no cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war and a disbanding of all forces hostile to the government. The commissioners, while they did not declare positively that they would not consent to reunion, avoided giving their assent; and as they seemed to desire to postpone that important question, and adopt some other course first which might possibly lead in the end to union, but which Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward thought would amount simply to an indefinite postponement, the conference ended without result. After stopping at City Point and having another conversation with General Grant, principally in reference to an exchange of prisoners, the Confederate commissioners were escorted through our lines on their way back to Richmond. I accompanied the escort part of the way, and had an interesting talk with Mr. Stephens. He was evidently greatly disappointed at the failure of the conference, but was prudent enough not to talk much about it. He spoke freely in regard to General Grant, saying: “We all form our preconceived ideas of men of whom we have heard a great deal, and I had certain definite notions as to the appearance and character of General Grant; but I was never so completely surprised in all my life as when I met him and found him a person so entirely different from my ideas of him. His spare figure, simple manners, lack of all ostentation, extreme politeness, and charm of conversation were a revelation to me, for I had pictured him as a man of a directly opposite type of character, and expected to find in him only the bluntness of the soldier. Notwithstanding the fact that he talks so well, it is plain that he has more brains than tongue.” He continued by saying what he said several times in Washington after the war, and also wrote in his memoirs: “He is one of the most remarkable men I ever met. He does not seem to be aware of his powers, but in the future he will undoubtedly exert a controlling influence in shaping the destinies of the country.”

Mr. Stephens was wrapped from his eyes to his heels in a coarse gray overcoat about three sizes too large for him, with a collar so high that it threatened to lift his hat off every time he leaned his head back. This coat, together with his complexion, which was as yellow as a ripe ear of corn, gave rise to a characterization of the costume by Mr. Lincoln, which was very amusing. The next time he saw General Grant at City Point, after the “Peace Conference,” he said to him, in speaking on the subject, “Did you see Stephens’s greatcoat?” “oh, yes,” answered the general. “Well,” Continued Mr. Lincoln, “soon after we assembled on the steamer at Hampton Roads, the cabin began to get pretty warm, and Stephens stood up and pulled off his big coat. He peeled it off just about as you would husk an ear of corn. I couldn’t help thinking, as I looked first at the coat and then at the man, ‘Well, that’s the biggest shuck and the littlest nubbin I ever did see.’” This story became one of the general’s favorite anecdotes, and he often related it in after years with the greatest zest.
MUSEUM NEWS FROM WHITE HAVEN

By Karen Miller

[Karen Miller, Museum Technician at the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site in St. Louis Missouri, discusses the collection at White Haven, its content, development, and use.]

Our two largest collections are a photographic/slide collection and an architectural collection. The slide collection is extensive and documents the preservation and restoration of the site’s historic structures. The architectural collection contains many historic elements that not only record changes to the structures, but provide information on design, construction methods, and materials used. An interesting feature at our site has been the ability to share with the public an ongoing restoration project. These two collections are used by the interpretative rangers in presenting programs, developing tours, and publishing articles concerning the “work in progress.” Since our work is not yet completed, the photographic and architectural collections are expected to grow. Other collections at White Haven include an archival collection, historical objects, some fine arts, and a library.

Central to our mission at the site is the material contained in the archival collection. The bulk of this collection was donated to us by Mr. James F. Casey, a descendant of Emma Dent Casey, Julia Grant’s sister. The core of this collection is about fifty letters written by Julia to her sister. They span from circa 1862 to 1901, only a year before Julia’s death. Each letter is an insight into the daily lives of the two women, sometimes discussing the events of the day, other times reflecting on their close relationship. As a group, these letters create a body of knowledge of these two women as well as a broader view of mid and late nineteenth-century life. This collection is invaluable for interpretation at the site.

Our historical objects collection includes a variety of items ranging from shoes and a silver coffee service, courtesy of the Casey Family Collection, to a few pieces of farm equipment. Like the archival, photographic, and architectural collections, the use of these items in displays and programs creates an added dimension for visitors and brings to life the people, places and events associated with Ulysses and Julia Grant.

Our last collection is our ever-expanding library. It houses both contemporary and historic monographs plus articles, audio and video items, as well as a “vertical file” that contains information on various site-related topics. Used extensively by the staff, it is also open to the public by appointment during the site’s regular hours.

A huge collection of more than 40,000 architectural artifacts from White Haven are currently being cleaned, cataloged, and stored at the National Park Service’s Midwest Archeological Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. These items are the result of numerous digs conducted at the site over the last ten years. Each investigation into the soil produced a record of life at White Haven and added new perspectives to the site’s restoration and interpretation. This collection addresses the wealth, health, social status, political affiliations, freedom and slavery of the people living at White Haven. Objects range from china plates, jewelry, slate tablets and pencils to egg shells, chicken bones and hog’s teeth.

All of these collections are important elements in meeting the mission of this site. The objects are more than just things, they create a living presence, something we can identify with because these objects connect us with the Grants and others who lived here. It is our goal not to simply store away these items, but to use them in as many ways as possible so that everyone can better understand the lives of the Grants and their importance to our history. Traditional exhibits, as well as interactive programs and displays are some methods currently being developed to share these items with on-site visitors.
On April 29, 2000 the U. S. Grant Birthplace in Point Pleasant, Ohio will receive a new marker and red oak tree commemorating the bicentennial of Clermont County. The area has received National recognition with the incorporated village of Monroe Township being named a Millennium Community by Hillary Clinton's "Save Our National Treasures" Committee. Only fifteen communities have been so designated in the state of Ohio, and just thirty nationwide.

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Grant was tone deaf and could not recognize any of the light airs of the time; military music was especially annoying to him.

GRANT'S HUMOR

After the assassination of President Garfield when the family was at Long Branch, the General insisted that Mrs. Grant move the whole family to New York, and he suggested the possibility of doing so within a two-day period. Mrs. Grant protested saying that was impossible. The General retorted "Well, I have moved at least twice that number of people in half the time".