CAMPAIGNING 1868 STYLE

THE MAN OF WORDS,  THE MAN OF DEEDS
WHICH DO YOU THINK THE COUNTRY NEEDS?
### READY REFERENCE CALENDAR

Have you ever wondered what day of the week a particular event occurred during General Grant's life? Check the Ready Reference Calendar with 200 years of dates from 1753-1952. For instance: General Grant was born on a Saturday.

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Note: The letters in the list of “Years from 1753 to 1952” refer to the table with the Months, the figures in which refer to the same figures at the head of the table of Days. For example: To know on what day July 4th, 1900, will fall, look for 1900 in the table of Y ears. The letter g is attached. Look for the same letter in the table of Months, and in a parallel line under July is the figure 7, which directs to column 7 in the table of Days below, in which it will be seen that July falls on Wednesday.
The Rev. Michael J. Cramer was married to Mary Frances Grant, youngest sister of Ulysses S. Grant. His book, U.S. Grant: Conversations and Unpublished Letters, published in 1897 is drawn from memoranda relating to his conversations with Grant, as well as on family letters that came into his possession. In a chapter about Grant's conscientiousness he wrote that Grant disliked talking against others—a character trait that he shared with his mother, Hannah Grant. Cramer went on to describe the following incident to illustrate Hannah's character:

"On one occasion the ladies' benevolent society of the church of which Mother Grant was a member met at her house for the purpose of making some garments for the wife and children of a drunkard who consumed all his earnings by drink. The subject of their conversation, among other things, was the vile character of said drunkard. According to their remarks there was not a single redeeming trait left in that man. When all had had their 'say-so', Mother Grant looked up and said, "Well, Mr. A. was a good fiddler, anyhow"."
The phrase "Let Us Have Peace" is linked forever to Ulysses S. Grant. These are the only words engraved on the outside of his Tomb and it is easy to assume that these are words he must have spoken to attentive crowds of Americans who turned out to cheer their hero. If not that, perhaps he said it to General Robert E. Lee at the surrender table when the two met at Appomattox. It has also been said that these words constitute the last line of Grant's Personal Memoirs. These suppositions are all in error. Getting closer to the truth is the notion that Grant spoke these words at the Republican presidential nominating convention held in Chicago in 1868 when his name was placed in nomination. But this too is not quite correct. Rather, these words constitute the last line of a formal letter Grant wrote accepting the nomination. Here is the body of that letter:

Washington, D.C., May 29, 1868

General Joseph R. Hawley, President National Union Republican Convention:

In formally accepting the nomination of the National Union Republican convention of the 21st of May instant, it seems proper that some statement of views beyond the mere acceptance of the nomination should be expressed.

The proceedings of the convention were marked with wisdom, moderation, and patriotism, and I believe express the feelings of the great mass of those who sustained the country through its recent trials. I endorse their resolutions.

If elected to the office of the President of the United States, it will be my endeavor to administer all the laws in good faith, with economy, and with the view of giving peace, quiet, and protection everywhere. In times like the present it is impossible, or at least eminently improper, to lay down a policy to be adhered to, right or wrong. Through an administration of four years, new political issues, not foreseen, are constantly arising, the views of the public on old ones are constantly changing, and a purely administrative officer should always be left free to execute the will of the people. I always have respected that will, and always shall. Peace and universal prosperity, its sequence, with economy of administration, will lighten the burden of taxation, while it constantly reduces the national debt. Let us have peace.
A NICE FAMILY PARTY.

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

Reticence has long been associated with Ulysses Grant. Although he was an avid listener, in the relaxed company of friends, he could actually be a raconteur.
Fighting It Out On The Line

While Gen. Grant was en route from Springfield to St. Louis, a crowd eagerly pressed around the train while it was stopping at Alton. Somebody stepped upon somebody's toes, and a fight ensued, which spread like an epidemic through the crowd assembled. The train moved off, leaving them to "fight it out on that line." A gentleman in the crowd cried out, as the train left, "I never knew Gen. Grant to go anywhere but what he got up a big fight."

NEW SIGN FOR GRANT COTTAGE

A new highway sign is now in place for Grant Cottage at Mt. McGregor, New York. The sign will announce the exit for the Cottage on north and southbound traffic on Interstate 87, the Adirondack Northway, at exit 16.
By 1870, Republicans had a majority in Congress. With a Republican in the White House they didn’t have a unified cause of any kind, and old fault lines deepened. Not all Republicans responded to events in the south in the same way. Even Republicans in the north and west (“midwest” to us today) were splitting along racial and liberal lines. "Radical" refers to the faction of the Republican Party which wanted a strict Reconstruction policy toward the ex-Confederate states and insisted on full rights for the freed slaves. The liberals were the ones for whom Reconstruction was no longer a priority.

It was inevitable that new issues would emerge in the Republican Party and that there would be an adjustment of power. The founders of the party, many of them dedicated abolitionists, found themselves sharing power with a new group, most of which were concerned with other issues. With the original goals achieved, Republicans found themselves divided on other issues. With a weak Democratic opposition in Congress, Republicans had the luxury of bickering among themselves. The divisions grew deeper and deeper. Dissatisfactions weren’t all about Grant; any Republican in the White House would have had to face eroding party unity.

Even having lost the war, and with Reconstruction governments in place in their states, southerners still intended to go on running their own affairs with as little interference as possible. The collapse of the Confederacy had not destroyed but strengthened southerners’ belief in state rights and a sense of devotion to the south. They resisted Reconstruction to maintain a large measure of regional autonomy. This was the state of affairs Grant found when he assumed the Presidency.

Not only in southern states was the Republican Party splitting. In Missouri in 1871 a Republican, Benjamin Gratz Brown, won the governor’s chair running against another Republican. Brown called himself a Liberal Republican. Carl Schurz had helped the liberal movement and was elected by the liberal-leaning, anti-Grant Missouri legislature – not the populace – to a seat in the U.S. Senate. For his part in splitting the party in Missouri, Grant called Schurz “an infidel and an atheist.” He complained that what Schurz had done had lost Missouri to the Republican Party for the next two years, until the next election. He was concerned because Reconstruction could only succeed if the Republican Party remained united.
In Missouri the opposition to the administration was based upon a dislike for the tariff, which eastern Republicans regarded as necessary to protect industry, and western Democrats were intent upon destroying. If the western Republicans could conciliate the Democrats by lifting the disabilities which a radical state constitution had imposed on ex-Confederates, Democrats might cooperate and send tariff reformers to Washington. Western Republicans sympathized with the Democrats over tariff reform; it was more a regional issue than a party issue.

The disabilities upon ex-Confederates, which originated in the Fourteenth Amendment and passed in 1868, stated that anyone who had been a state or federal elected official, then joined the Confederate Army or government, was barred from state or federal elected offices. Some argued that this disqualified the best candidates, those with prior political experience.

Grant had been a disappointing choice for President in 1869 according to Senator Charles Sumner. Sumner and the General had maintained amicable, if distant, personal relations, but temperamentally and intellectually they had almost nothing in common. Sumner held against Grant his vote for Buchanan in 1856, though Grant had not been an active Democrat. He also recalled that Grant’s report on the conditions in the south in late 1865 had encouraged Andrew Johnson in his Reconstruction program. He considered it even worse that Grant was willing to serve as Secretary of War ad interim in 1867 when Johnson suspended Stanton. Sumner failed to understand that Grant was trying to protect the interests of the Army, especially those soldiers still stationed in the south. Sumner doubted if Grant had the freedmen’s interests at heart. Other Republicans were willing to try the soldier in the White House, and he had popular support as well. It was only Grant’s open break with Johnson which reassured Sumner of his political ideology. But he still viewed him with some suspcion.

By this time Sumner and Schurz were pretty thick. They stuck together and encouraged others to join them in opposing Grant. They not only opposed Grant over issues, but over patronage, the very thing they claimed they wanted to “reform.” Sumner especially rankled at the shift of power back to the executive branch after the repeal of the Tenure of Office act, since he had been in the Senate so long.

Another “reformer” was James Garfield, Representative from Ohio. Like Schurz, he had opposed the repeal of the Tenure of Office Act and demanded that the administration respect his patronage demands. He flew into a rage when President Grant appointed a postmaster in Garfield’s district without Garfield’s permission.

Editor Charles Dana thought that with Grant in the White House he could secure the lucrative post of Collector of New York, head of the Custom House. When that wasn’t forthcoming, Dana turned against him. He refused to give Grant credit for any accomplishment of his administration. He would credit a Cabinet member but not the president who had appointed him and who directed policy. In one such attack Dana insisted that any economy of the administration was due “very much to Mr. Boutwell [Secretary of
the Treasury] and not at all to General Grant” although Boutwell was following Grant’s stated policy.

For Grant, Reconstruction was a moral issue, and though he wanted meaningful civil service reform, it did not carry the same moral imperative. If the two conflicted, he would choose Reconstruction. Polarization of the liberals and the stalwarts (Grant’s supporters) forced him to side with the stalwarts who had not abandoned Reconstruction as the liberals had. True civil service reform at this time was impossible, as Congress just would not pass a strong comprehensive reform bill. The stalwarts were not interested in civil service reform because they liked things as they were, but even the liberals did not seem to take reform seriously. They would not renounce patronage and call on others to do so. Admittedly there were other issues that divided the two factions, but for Grant Reconstruction was the most important issue and he would follow it wherever it would take him.

Another issue of the campaign was revenue reform. The Civil War had seen income and licensing taxes come in, and some of them were still being collected. Grant’s administration was able to reduce taxes even while reducing the national debt because the government no longer had the expense of fighting the rebellion. It did, however, have to pay those 53,000 employees, pay pensions, and pay off the bonds sold to finance the war. Reformers wanted a further reduction in taxes. They confused the issue by denouncing the administration for rising state taxes in the south. They claimed that the Republican state and local governments in the south were unfair in legislating property taxes which fell on the landed class and hardly at all on blacks. These taxes were levied for necessary public works.

Reformers also opposed Grant on the annexation of Santo Domingo, one of two nations occupying the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. (Today it is called the Dominican Republic; the other nation on Hispaniola is Haiti.) Grant wanted to use Santo Domingo as a haven for hard-pressed black citizens; he also wanted to give the navy a handy base from which to keep an eye on the canal he hoped would be built across Central America someday. Political troubles in that country, however, put off many members of Congress. However, Grant was determined to overcome all obstacles and asked key senators for their support.

Another issue was the settlement of the Alabama Claims. The warship Alabama had been built in Britain for the Confederacy, which used it to seriously disrupt American commerce on the high seas during the Civil War. Charles Sumner wanted Britain to cede Canada to the United States in reparations for the direct and indirect claims of damages. (The indirect claims were related to Sumner’s belief that the Alabama had lengthened the war by two years. He wanted reparations for all war expenses for those last two years.) Understandably, this upset the British. Grant believed it was more reasonable to claim direct damages only; he was most interested in an apology from Britain for violation of neutrality, and in providing a precedent for nations to follow in the future. In this way he wanted to promote peace between nations.

The split of the Republican party was finally made public in September of 1871. In a speech in Nashville, Carl Schurz launched Liberal Republicanism as a national movement. The platform he outlined included reform, but also called for universal amnesty, an end to federal
intervention in the south, and a return to the “local self-government” by men of “property and enterprise.” As Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton remarked years later, “when certain men talk about local self-government by the people, they mean the white people.” Schurz then turned around at a meeting in St. Louis speaking highly of Grant and emphasizing his loyalty to the Republican party. But Grant saw through this and fought back. He began purging Schurz’s appointees, and he wrote a friend, “It looks to me as if Mr. Schurz was not making much out of his new departure. It will be gratifying to see such disorganizers as he is defeated.”

In January 1872 the Republican National Committee met in Washington. They decided to hold the National Convention at Philadelphia in June. The Committee reviewed Grant’s first administration and concluded that the 1868 platform had been fulfilled: all the states were back in the Union (the last three former Confederate states now had Representatives and Senators in Congress); the laws had been enforced; the vote was guaranteed to all adult male citizens, regardless of race; amnesty had been extended to most of the former rebels; foreign complications had been solved. Appearing in the Republican press at this time were expressions of loyalty to Grant. “There has never been a President in the White House who has been more uniformly fair to all races and classes of men” wrote one paper. Others declared their support for Grant by asking who was ready to trust the Democrats with power. Not all Republicans agreed. James Garfield noted that Grant was “the second choice of most of our people, and they are not agreed on a first.” Whitelaw Reid, managing editor of the New York Tribune, admitted an “instinctive dislike of men of General Grant’s caliber and character” and supported his boss, Horace Greeley, in denouncing Grant.

Charles Sumner made his famous anti-Grant speech on May 31, just one week before the Republican National Convention. He launched into a four-hour oration, packed to overflowing with evidence of Grant’s greed for personal power. He charged Grant with as many sins as he could think of, repeating them three or four times, and making such points as: the Republican Party has been seized by the President; there were 42 counts of nepotism; Grant has accepted gifts; he is semi-military in character; he is the great Presidential quarreler; he is guilty of seaside loiterings; the Tenure of Office Act should not have been repealed. Sumner had struck to kill. For four hours he freely quoted literature, ancient history, and the Bible to back up his assertions. He quoted from Shakespeare to condemn Grant’s quarrelosomeness; to prove Grant’s arrogance, he recited two different translations of the same verses of Juvenal. His accusations were general; he did not offer any specifics.

Grant did not “throw his hat into the ring” or discuss whether he would accept renomination. He felt strongly that the office should seek the man, not the man the office. He would wait to see if the nominating convention offered him the nomination, and then he would accept or decline.