COMMENORATING MRS. ULYSSES S. GRANT

Julia Dent Grant 1826-1902
JULIA DENT GRANT COMMEMORATION

Saturday, December 14, 2002 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant). To commemorate the day The Grant Monument Association and the National Park Service will present ceremonies at the General Grant Memorial (Grant’s Tomb) at 12:00 PM that day. For further information contact Frank Scaturro at 212-504-6476.

GRANT’S HOME IN GEORGETOWN, OHIO

The boyhood home of Ulysses S. Grant in Georgetown, Ohio is now owned by the State of Ohio. The home is locally staffed and maintained by the U.S. Grant Homestead Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Grant history. The organization is focused on Grant’s boyhood home and the school he attended as a youth, also located in Georgetown, Ohio.

The Association has recently produced a 2003 U.S. Grant Homestead Calendar with sketches of Grant and Civil War battle scenes by internationally acclaimed wildlife artist John A. Ruthven. (John and his wife, Judy, are the former owners of Grant’s boyhood home.) The limited edition calendar is being sold for $10 through the Homestead Association, P.O. Box 451, Georgetown, Ohio 45121. For further information call 1-800-892-3586. Visit the Boyhood Home website at http://usgrantboyhoodhome.org

NEW EDITION OF AROUND THE WORLD WITH GENERAL GRANT

The book Around the World With General Grant has recently been reprinted by the Johns Hopkins University Press. John Russell Young, a reporter for the New York Herald, who accompanied Julia and Ulysses Grant on their world tour, wrote this unique account of their journey, which was originally published in 2 volumes in 1879. The new edition contains an introduction by Michael Feldman, and is available in a one volume hardcover edition.
The following excerpts from the San Francisco Chronicle, 1879, describe some of the outfits that Julia wore while touring the country with Ulysses. The excerpts were transcribed and edited by Nancy Winkler.

When they arrived in San Francisco: Mrs. Grant was neatly and tastefully attired in black. Her bonnet was of black silk, with a depending gauze veil that protected her face, and adorned with a white ruching [pleated lace] and a yellow rose in front and a small dainty knot of yellow flowers behind. She wore a long cloak trimmed with bead-work and feather-like fringe, white kid gloves and a plain black silk walking suit. (September 21, p.1.)

Mrs. Grant was tastefully attired in a rich combination of black velvet brocade and camel’s hair, with a cascade of point lace at her throat, and earrings of jet, cameo and pearls. (September 23, p. 3.)

At a masked ball: The procession had entered and made one or two rounds of the floor before General Grant and Mrs. Grant made their appearance accompanied by Governor Irwin and Mayor Bryant. ... Mrs. Grant wore a dark-blue silk dress, simply made, with diamond jewelry. The ladies of the party were, most of them, in the dress required at morning receptions. The gentlemen all wore full dress, including General Grant. (September 26, p. 3.)

Riding in the Yosemite Valley: The General led the way, enveloped in his linen duster. Mrs. Grant followed as close behind as his ambitious rate of speed would permit. She wore a straw hat, a brown traveling suit and lemon-colored kid gloves. (October 6, p.3.)

At a fancy reception: Mrs. Grant was elegantly attired in a rich white satin with low corsage [bodice of dress] and sleeves. The long train was simply trimmed with two narrow knife-pleatings of satin. An overdress of rich point de Venice was gracefully draped, and a festooned covering of the lace covered the low waist; a fringe of pearls falling above her brown hair was arranged in Pompadour style, with frizzes [tight curls], and ornamented with a brilliant diamond butterfly. Earrings of diamonds and pearls, and a necklace of large pearls, with pearl and diamond clasp in front, completed a costume which was marked for its extreme elegance and taste. (October 9, p.1.)

At another fancy reception: Mrs. Grant was attired in a rich robe of ivory satin de Lyons, with long train satin brocaded with gold; the front was of the same superb brocade, and crossed by a draping of the satin bordered with silk fringe, which formed panniers at the sides. The bottom of the front breadth was quaintly finished with large drooping tassels of white silk. The corsage was high at the back, with square neck in front with elegant filmy laces. Her hair was tastefully arranged in puffs, and frizzes in front, with shell comb, and she wore solitaires in her ears and a large diamond brooch and diamond bracelets. Her dress was quiet but extremely elegant. (October 22, p. 1.)
In 1901, as the wedding day of her granddaughter, Vivian Sartoris approached, Mrs. Grant was moved to reminisce about her marriage to Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant in 1848. *The New York Evening Journal* printed the following recollection on Saturday, June 1, 1901.

**Great General’s Widow Tells of her First Trip from Home**

A certain quaint simplicity and a charming almost child-like candor are the two characteristics of Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, widow of the great General and President and grandmother of the beautiful young Vivian Sartoris.

As she sat tranquilly in her luxurious suite in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, chatting smilingly of the days “when I was a girl,” it was hard to remember that she was speaking of the “40’s” and of the times when slavery was at its height.

“Never shall I forget when I came down the staircase that hot August evening in my wedding gown,” said Mrs. Grant, laughing softly. “And I felt just as happy at that moment,” continued Mrs. Grant, “as if I had been married in church, as girls are now, with a great crowd of people to see me. It wasn’t the fashion then, by the way, for girls to be married in church. They were always married from their own homes, and in what would be thought now, I suppose, rather too informal a way.

“I remember, for instance, that Lieutenant Grant – he was just a poor lieutenant then – called to see me on the morning of the day we were to be married. And never shall I forget how the family, especially the girls, teased him about it.

“‘Oh, it isn’t proper for you to see her now,’ they said. ‘No one must see her today, not even the bridegroom. You must wait until tonight.’

“He didn’t, however,” said Mrs. Grant, laughing heartily; “no, indeed.”

When asked what was General Grant’s gift to his bride-to-be Mrs. Grant looked first puzzled and then a bit indignant.

“What did he give me?” she said. “Why, he couldn’t give me the sort of things the bridegroom gives the bride nowadays. He was only a poor lieutenant, you must remember, getting one hundred dollars a month. No, he didn’t give me a single jewel. He brought me his miniature, however, in a little gold case, and though the picture in some way got lost, I have the case still. As you may imagine, it is one of my dearest possessions.
"In place of jewels, my gown and veil were caught with jessamine – the real cape jessamine of the South, and my favorite flower.

"I had three bridesmaids," continued Mrs. Grant after a slight pause. "They were my sister, afterward Mrs. Sharp, and Sally Walker and Julia Boggs. They were dressed in white too, but their gowns were not so beautiful as mine. In fact, I never saw a wedding gown I thought so lovely as my own. Then, we had a bride cake, which I cut, and, let me see, who got the ring? Somehow I can't remember that. One of the bridesmaids, I think though.

"When we left the cruiser for our wedding trip the guests all threw bouquets of flowers after us, as is the old Southern custom, instead of rice, and then – then," said Mrs. Grant, her eyes widening and deepening, "my husband took me for a trip up the Mississippi in one of those beautiful, great steamboats. Oh, it was wonderful!" and Mrs. Grant, with a happy little sigh, relapsed into a reminiscent silence.

When she began to talk again she said, as if to explain the silence:

"You see, I had never been away from home before in my life, so that this trip up the river was one of the things I can never forget."
The devotion of Mrs. Grant was touching. At Mount McGregor it was remarked that while as careful as any one not to tax him when he needed rest, she was never beyond easy call and had no thought apparently but for his comfort. We are told that her greeting was the first to cheer him after the doctor’s treatment. It was her chair that was drawn close to his. Whenever he wanted company she was a part of it, and many hours in his last days were spent with her alone. Often they could be seen together when not a word was spoken, mere companionship satisfying them. Visitors seeing them thus were wont to remark that it was as though nothing so well suited them as that their last days should be as were their first, sufficient for each in the company of the other. So anxious was she to be at his side that she would not leave the house of the cottage at any time for any purpose, even declining to go to the hotel, at Mount McGregor, with the family for her meals. And when the General was confined in his sick-room or needed absolute rest and seclusion at any time she would retire, and comfort herself with prayers in his behalf. She firmly believes that her intercession caused him to be spared so long.

Nothing in connection with the death of General Grant has appealed to the minds of his countrymen with such impressive pathos as the condition, in regard to a place of burial, that his wife must be laid by his side. He wished that she, who had been his faithful consort in life, should be his companion in the tomb. An obscure sepulcher, with her sleeping by his side, was to him more desirable than a stately mausoleum, even at West Point, the scene of his boyhood years, the place of his military training.

It has been well said, with reference to this desire of his, that there was more than the natural affection of a true-hearted husband in this final wish of General Grant. There was the sense of justice and of fair and honorable dealing so characteristic of the man. Mrs. Grant had been with him in the struggles of his earlier career. Her father had assisted him when he was in straits for means to make a livelihood. Her love was not of the kind which flies out at the window when poverty comes in by the door. She had sustained him in his rude efforts to gain a subsistence at farming, and when duty called him to the war and fame came as the recognition of duty well-performed, she reared his children while he was fighting the battles of his country. He knew that his little ones were safe in her charge, and no fretting or domestic care brooded over him in the camp and on the march. Certainly large credit is due Mrs. Grant for the great deeds which her husband accomplished, and Grant’s honest, manly nature recognized that she who was with him in the humble homestead, near St. Louis, and in the President’s house in Washington, should share in the honors of his glorious tomb.

There are natures which need a true woman’s fostering sympathy to insure their best development, and Grant’s was one of them. All the more appropriate, therefore, that she, who was with him in storm and sunshine, who eased the weight of his vast responsibilities, and strengthened his commanding soul with the thought that he had a home as well as a country to fight for, when the inevitable summons shall come to her, should sleep the last sleep by his side.
The Grant Relic Collection

[The following excerpt was transcribed and edited by Marie Kelsey from *The Collector*, pp. 252-253, Vol. 4, No. 16, 1893.]

The collection of Grant relics deposited in the National Museum at Washington, says *The Star* of that city, is a large one, numbering upward of 300 different articles, and besides having an immense historical value the collection has a very considerable intrinsic worth.

**Grant's Tour Around the World**

On his famous tour of the world that ended with his arrival in San Francisco in the early fall of 1879 General Grant was the recipient of many handsome testimonials. Kings and princes had vied with each other in the magnificence of their presents, and in many of the countries that he visited the freedom of the leading cities was tendered to him in caskets of precious metal, many richly jeweled. All these are in the collection, and are placed side by side with the worn and battered army saddle that he used throughout the entire war, and the simple match box that he carried for years and that still contains a few unused matches. Here are all his commissions ranged in order from the parchment that made him a lieutenant to his commission as general of the United States service, and the certificate of his election as President of the United States.

**Sword Presented to Grant in April 1864**

Occupying a prominent position as a matter of course in a collection of this sort is a complete set of the swords that were presented to General Grant at various times, as well as those that he carried throughout the war. One of the handsomest of the swords is the one that was presented to Grant when he was lieutenant-general by his friends in New York at the great fair held in that city in aid of the United States Sanitary Commission, in April, 1864. The blade of the sword is etched on a gold ground to within about a foot of the tip, the design on the front including a soldier bearing colors, military trophies and a delicate tracery. The pommel is a spirited piece of sculpture in gilded silver, the helmeted head of Crawford’s statue of Freedom, her helmet decorated with five-pointed stars, two of which are set with rubies, two with diamond, and the central one with a sapphire. The grip is of oxidized silver with bas-reliefs, and the scabbard is of sterling silver.

**The Sword of Donelson**

The sword of Donelson, the one that General Grant usually carried when in action, is one of the most highly prized relics in the collection. The blade is narrow, of the rapier form, and is etched with figures of soldiers, sailors and military trophies. The pommel is gilded and capped with oxidized silver, ornamented with four masks in bas-relief. The grip is of carved ivory, and the guard is a slender bow of gilt. The sword knot is the regulation gold cord, terminating in an acorn. The dress scabbard is gold-plated, the central portion of which is embellished with a chased arabesque design, and the upper half decorated with oak leaf designs in bas-relief. The service scabbard is of steel, banded and tipped with gold that is wrought in the same designs as are on the dress scabbard.
Model of One of the Tables of Appomattox

There is a small gold model of the McLean table, on which General Grant and Gen. Robert E. Lee signed the terms of surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, April 9, 1865. For the marble top of the old-fashioned mahogany table has been substituted a plate of glass, beneath which, carved from gold, are various patriotic and symbolic devices. This was presented to General Grant by an ex-confederate, who expressed the hope that "coming from an ex-confederate it might prove the harbinger of an era of good-will between all sections that would make the whole country great and prosperous."

Other objects in the collection are: An aerolite, part of which passed over Mexico in 1871; an Arabian Bible; silver menu and card of the farewell dinner at San Francisco, Cal.; silver menu of Paris dinner; horn and silver snuffbox; gold cigar-case, presented by the second King of Siam; silver trowel used by General Grant in laying the cornerstone of the American Museum of Natural History, New York; field glasses used by General Grant during the war; medal from Congress (gold) for opening the Mississippi; medals (gold, silver, and bronze); badges of armies and corps; three silk papers (Louisville Commercial Daily Chronicle, and Burlington Hawkeye) printed for General Grant; commissions as a member of the Sacramento Society of Pioneers, as honorary member Loyal Historical Society, Military Order of the Loyal Legion and as a member of the Aztec Club; certificates of membership in various bodies; elephant tusks, presented by the King of Siam; Coptic Bible, presented by Lord Napier, who captured it with King Theodore of Abyssinia; sporting rifle; Roman mug and pitcher; gold-handled knife, presented by the miners of Idaho Territory; six pieces of jade stone, presented by Prince Koon of China; knife made at Sheffield for General Grant; gold pen used by General Grant; iron-headed cane, made from the rebel ram Merrimac; silver-headed cane, made of wood from old Fort Duquesne, Pa.; gold-headed cane, presented to General Grant as a tribute of regard for his humane treatment to the sick and wounded during the war; gold-headed cane, used by General Lafayette and presented to General Grant by the ladies of Baltimore, Md.; carved wood cane from the estate of Sir Walter Scott; hat ornaments used by General Grant at Belmont and Fort Donelson; bronze vases, presented by the Japanese citizens of Yokohama; small elephant tusks, from the Maharajah of Johore; old cloisonné jars, presented by Li Hung Chung; elaborate cabinet of Mexican onyx; antique Chinese porcelain jars; very old crackleware bowls; an arm of an idol., said to be 1,000 years old; a picture of General Scott, by Page; a marble bust of General Grant and pedestal, and a painting of General Grant and family.

How This Collection Came in to the Possession of the Government

The way in which this interesting collection came into the possession of the Government is of itself an interesting piece of history. Just before the failure of the New York firm of Grant & Ward, of which General Grant's son was a member, and in which he himself was a silent partner, and before it was realized in what desperate straits the firm was, the opinion was held that if a sum of money could be raised at once the ruin might be averted. To this end General Grant went to Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt and as everyone knows, the bank was swept away and with it practically all of the General's property as well. General Grant, to make good as far as he could the loan made him by Mr. Vanderbilt, turned over to him his valuable collection. After General Grant's death Mrs. Vanderbilt returned the collection to Mrs. Grant, and she in turn presented it to the National Museum in 1886.
Grant's Saddle
The Grimsley saddle that Grant used during almost the entire war was deposited with the museum by Colonel Markland, to whom it was presented in 1865. The saddle shows signs of hard usage for years, but it is just as the general left it, and is fitted with all the necessary equipments. Beneath it in the case is the autograph letter of General Grant, presenting the saddle to Colonel Markland.

Grant's Uniforms and Insignias of His Rank
There are regulation shoulder straps that were attached to his uniforms as he rose steadily to the highest rank in the army, a string of fifteen gilt coat buttons that were cut from General Grant's uniforms during the war by Mrs. Grant as mementoes of his different battles, and a coat and epaulets worn by General Grant, given to the War Department by Colonel Grant.

Addresses of Welcome in Little Cases Called Caskets
A mere enumeration of the many addresses of welcome that were presented to General Grant during the progress of his trip around the world would make too long a list, but from the standpoint of historical interest they are invaluable. Many of them were given in handsome cases, the most interesting, if not the most valuable, being the one he received at Stratford-on-Avon. It is made of wood from the mulberry tree planted by Shakespeare at New Place. The center of the lid is a carved raised panel bearing Shakespeare's coat-of-arms, wreathed with two small branches of mulberry bearing leaves and fruit. The casket in which was presented the honorary freedom of the city of London is a massive gold box. One panel contains a view of the Capitol, and on the right and left are the general's monogram and the arms of the Lord Mayor. On the other side is a view of the entrance to the Guildhall. At the end are two figures, also of gold, representing the city of London and the republic of the United States. At the corners are double columns, wreathed with corn and cotton, and on the cover a cornucopia as a compliment to the fertility and prosperity of the United States. The cover is surmounted by the arms of the city of London, and in the decorations are interwoven the rose, the shamrock, and the thistle. The casket is supported by American eagles in gold, standing on a velvet plinth decorated with stars and stripes.

One of the most unique of all the written testimonials that General Grant received was an original address from Kuroda Kiyotaka, Minister of Colonization of Japan, in which he acknowledges the receipt of a swift and beautiful stallion, bred and presented by General Grant to the Emperor of Japan, and also transmitting on behalf of the emperor a valuable set of Japanese coins. This set is also in the collection, and is said to be the only one of the sort in the world, with the exception of the one in the Japanese treasury.
Suggested reading by Marie Kelsey

Butler, Jean Fuller. "Julia Boggs Dent Grant in First Person." In Greetings From Our First Ladies: First Person Talks of 52 First Ladies, Wives and/or Presidential Hostesses, 131-38. Published by The Author, 1995. Posing as Julia, the author tells her touching life story.


Ross, Ishbel. The General's Wife, the Life of Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1959. Julia Dent marries young Grant and lives one of America's greatest love stories in this highly detailed work.


"Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant Dies in Washington." New York Times, 15 December 1902, p. Two columns on her life and who was at her bedside when she died.