THE GRANTS EMBARK ON A WORLD TOUR

by Donna Neralich

In the weeks following the end of Grant’s final term of office as President he and Julia arranged their private affairs and engaged passage for themselves and their son, Jesse on the steamship Indiana. Grant sold part of his stocks, converted some of his goods into cash and entrusted his financial affairs to his son, Ulysses, who had recently begun a business career. According to Grant’s biographer Hamlin Garland, “Grant had not more than twenty-five thousand dollars with which to make the trip, and with this amount he had three and sometimes four persons to provide quarters for. The length of his trip, he smilingly said, depended on how long this money held out.”

The Indiana, one of the only American steamships crossing the Atlantic Ocean at the time, was scheduled to sail from Philadelphia to Liverpool on May 17, 1877. In preparation for the trip the Grants arrived in Philadelphia on May 9, and were the guests of George W. Childs, owner of the Public Ledger. There Grant passed the time with many of his friends in Philadelphia and was honored with several extravagant receptions, including one at the Union League Club of that city. Another magnificent reception took place at the residence of George Childs on the evening before Grant’s departure, where Grant was serenaded and Childs’ house brilliantly illuminated.

An elaborate send-off took place on the morning of May 17 as Grant boarded the Magenta, the cutter that would bring him to the steamship. Here the General attended a luncheon where he was honored by the presence of many distinguished persons including William Tecumseh Sherman, Hamilton Fish, George Childs, and Horace Porter. Several speeches and toasts were made in Grant’s honor.

While on board the Magenta Grant received a telegram from President Hayes wishing him a successful voyage and safe return, to which he replied: “Mrs. Grant joins me in thanks to you and Mrs. Hayes for your kind wishes and your message received on board
this boat just as we are pushing out from the wharf. We unite in returning our cordial
greetings and in expressing our best wishes for your health, happiness, and success in
your most responsible position.”

Sherman stated his thoughts on Grant’s upcoming journey saying, “General Grant leaves
here today with the highest rewards of his fellow citizens, and on his arrival on the other
side there is no doubt he will be welcomed by friends with as willing hands and warm
hearts as those he leaves behind. … While you, his fellow citizens, speak of him and
regard him as Ex-President Grant, I cannot but think of him as the General Grant of Fort
Donelson. I think of him as the man who, when the country was in the hour of its peril,
restored its hopes when he marched triumphant into Fort Donelson. After that none of us
felt the least doubt as to the future of our country, and therefore, if the name of
Washington is allied with the birth of our country, that of Grant is forever identified with
its preservation, its perpetuation. It is not here alone on the shores of the Delaware, that
the people love and respect you, but in Chicago and St. Paul, and in far off San Francisco,
the prayers go up today that your voyage may be prosperous and pleasant, and that you
may have a safe and happy return.”

After the Mayor of Philadelphia extended his good wishes and expressed his heartfelt
farewell Grant modestly replied, “Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen: I feel much overcome with
what I have heard … I feel overcome by the sentiments to which I have listened and
which I feel I am altogether inadequate to respond to. I don’t think that the compliments
ought all be paid to me or any one man in either of the positions which I was called upon
to fill. That which I accomplished – which I was able to accomplish – I owe to the
assistance of able lieutenants. I was so fortunate as to be called to the first position in the
army of the nation, and I had the good fortune to select lieutenants who could have filled
my place maybe better than I did. I do not, therefore, regard myself as entitled to all the
praise. I believe that my friend Sherman could have taken my place as a soldier as well as
I could, and the same will apply to Sheridan. And I believe, finally, that if our country
ever comes into trial again, young men will spring up equal to the occasion, and if one
fails, there will be another to take his place. Just as there was if I had failed. I thank you
again and again, gentlemen, for the hearty and generous reception I have had in your
great city.”

At the same time that General Grant was aboard the Magenta, Mrs. Grant and some of
the wives of the dignitaries were aboard the Hamilton which accompanied the Magenta
as it proceeded down the Delaware to overtake the Indiana, which was already on the
way down the river.

Julia described the scene colorfully in her memoirs: “The wharves along the Delaware
were literally lined with people whose shouts filled the air. The river was crowded with
shipping and all sorts of small craft, all gaily decked with flags and bunting and crowded
with enthusiastic people…” With her usual good-natured wit she recalled, “The ladies
had been telling me all the way down the river that they were going to kiss the General
goodbye. How disappointed he looked when I told him of their intentions! He seemed to
regret it deeply and declared that he missed all that was good and pleasant.”
The officers and crew of the *Indiana*, a first class luxury steamer, succeeded in offering unsurpassed service and accommodations to Grant and his family. The General thoroughly enjoyed his meals and his cigars proving himself to be an able sailor, and although Julia suffered some discomforts of seasickness she was able to enjoy the voyage as well. According to James D. McCabe’s account of Grant’s trip, “Once on board the *Indiana*, General Grant seemed a changed man. He dropped the silence and reserve that had been for so many years among his chief characteristics, and conversed freely and with animation; entered heartily into the various amusements that were gotten up to beguile the tedium of the voyage, and was by common consent regarded as the most agreeable person on the ship.” Even the ship’s captain commented that Grant was an interesting and entertaining conversationalist. On the first day of the voyage Grant told the captain that he felt better than he had in the past sixteen years. Surely it must have been a great relief to Grant to finally be free of the duties and obligations tied to war or political office – free to relax and enjoy the peacefulness of the voyage.

Sources:

McCabe, James D. *A Tour Around the World with General Grant*. Cincinnati, 1879.
DOGS IN THE WHITE HOUSE

In his later years Jesse R. Grant, youngest son of Ulysses S. Grant, wrote his impressions of the events and experiences of his youth in the book, *In the Days of My Father General Grant*. In his book, which is filled with anecdotes of his boyhood, Jesse had the following to say about dogs in the White House:

"In the early days in my new home the only sorrows I ever knew in the White House came to me. I possessed all the normal small boy’s fondness for a dog and acquired several in rapid succession, only to have each, in turn, die. Over each demise my grief was bitter. Then someone presented me with a magnificent Newfoundland. When this dog came, father called the White House steward. He asked no questions, made no accusations. ‘Jesse has a new dog,’ he said, simply. ‘You may have noticed that his former pets have been peculiarly unfortunate. When this dog dies every employee in the White House will be at once discharged.’

‘Faithful’ was the name I gave to this dog, and he, and one or two more I acquired later, lived during the remainder of our stay in the White House. Faithful never had a press notice; to the outside world he was no better known than was John Smith’s dog, but, beyond this, he lacked nothing of attention. I never owned a dog more deserving."

NEW WEBSITE FOR GRANT’S BOYHOOD HOME IN GEORGETOWN

The Ulysses S. Grant Boyhood Home in Georgetown, Ohio now has a website located at www.usgrantboyhoodhome.org

The site currently lists details of the April 26-27 celebration of Grant’s birthday in Georgetown.

*(Grant Homestead sketch by John Ruthven)*
CAPTAIN GRANT'S OLD POST, FORT HUMBOLDT

The following article, written by N. S. Giberson, appeared in
The Overland Monthly, Volume 8, August 1886.

Scattered along the shores of the Pacific, from San Francisco to Sitka, one frequently comes into contact with gray-headed frontiersmen – survivors of a generation hardly yet passed into history – who not only claim acquaintance with the dead hero of the civil war, but who have messed with him, marched with him, and by the evening bivouac have beguiled the tedium of a rugged campaign in his company. In company with one of these favored few, a member of the veteran volunteer military organization of the coast, the “Battalion of California Mountaineers,” I stood upon the parade ground of old Fort Humboldt, which was the headquarters of Captain Grant during a part of the year 1853. The spirit of the departed leader hovers alike over the fields of his great military exploits, and the home of his earlier years: the very atmosphere of the spot tends to awaken the spirit of research, and makes us emulous to follow, even at so remote a distance, a stray footstep of him who has gone from among us.

Fort Humboldt was organized by the Federal Government in the year 1850; but was first brought into prominence as a base of supplies for the military operations against the belligerent Indians of the Klamath river and its affluents, in the outbreak of 1853. Previous to the gold excitement, this part of the State of California was as completely unknown, except to a few adventurous hunters and trappers in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company of Alaska. Isolated from the rest of the state by lofty mountain ranges, and having at that period no known harbor where a vessel could lie in safety, her ancient solitudes were likely to be disturbed by nothing in the usual course of events for a long time to come.

Scarcely, however, had the grand army of restless and in many cases reckless, adventurers swarmed over the mountains into the Sacramento Valley and among the foothills of the Sierras, than it became known that the rivers of north-western California were, with few exceptions, rich in placer gold. The consequence was an immediate invasion in force of this terr$$ incognita: and from the headwaters of the Klamath to the auriferous gravel of the Pacific at Gold Bluff, the smoke of the miner’s camp-fire ascended from every gulch and canyon where the shining dust rewarded the arduous and unremitting toil of the stranger. Almost coincident with the Bohemian settlement of these remote regions, came the instinct that they could be reached by sea much more easily and safely than by land; and the attention of seafaring men was attracted to that unknown and dangerous coast, whose limits were dimly shadowed forth on the old Spanish charts as were the outlines of Atlantis on the maps of that voracious geographer, Marco Polo.

In the three generations immediately preceding ’49, numerous voyages of discovery had been made northward, from the sleepy old mission village of San Francisco; and one of these named the savage cliffs, that mark the extreme western point of the Coast Range, Cape Mendocino. To these explorers also belongs the honor of having first dropped anchor in the harbor of Trinidad, which they christened after the day of discovery – the Sabbath of the Holy Trinity. It was to relocate this harbor, and to find if possible, the mouth of the Klamath River – which was to furnish them a water-way to the mines – that the expedition sailed in the year 1850, which discovered and named the bay of Humboldt.

The native population regarded the new comers with undisguised hostility; and as the mountain “Diggers” (a generic term applied to all the aboriginal tribes of the California coast, and derived from their well known habits of feeding on roots), very unlike their brethren of the valleys, were courageous and war-like, the first act of real or fancied aggression on the part of the whites blew
the smouldering embers of discontent into the flame or war; and the struggle that followed was continued with more than Indian persistency, because of the impression—which had been extensively circulated by the shrewd politicians of the various tribes—that the Gringoes were few in number, and that a concerted effort of all the children of the soil would end in ridding their territories of the hated intruders, who were killing their game, scaring away their salmon, corrupting their women, turning their hunting grounds into farms and stock ranges, and, by encouraging the dissensions of rival tribes, were rapidly rendering united resistance to a common enemy impossible. Hence the “Klamath War” was a war to the knife—a crusade of extermination—where every motive that could inflame the savage heart or nerve his arm, was actively at work. Quarter was seldom asked and never given. The Indians, secure in their inaccessible mountains (which for yawning canyons and perilous cliffs bear a close resemblance to the mountains at the headwaters of the Yaqui river in Sonora, where our lively wards, the Apaches, take their usual summer vacation), swooped down on the miners with torch and tomahawk, and soon inaugurated a rein of terror which speedily brought the scattered gold hunters together for the concerting of measures of protection.

The first military operations of the settlers were conducted under the most adverse circumstances. The route overland, from San Francisco through the valley of the Sacramento, and traversing the most rugged portion of the disaffected district, innocent of road or pathway, was difficult, dangerous, and frightfully expensive. Their dependence for supplies, general and military, therefore, was entirely upon the coast; then the importance of Fort Humboldt, as an easily accessible and safe base of operations, was fully appreciated. On the eastern shore of Humboldt Bay, and contiguous to the City of Eureka, its situation was admirable chosen, both from a strategic point of view and for an unrivaled outlook in almost every direction. One may “box the compass” anywhere on the parade ground, and he will be surprised and delighted at the view which unfolds before him. The post was located on the summit of a gentle eminence, which forms the outlying spur of the foothills that buttress the irregular mountain chasms known as the “Redwood Belt.” This range sweeps from the apex of the mountain triangle at Cape Mendocino on the south, to the City of Eureka, and then blends into the illimitable forests which extend northward almost to the Oregon line.

On a clear day, the view from the parade ground, looking west, is inspiring. Almost at one’s feet lie the navigable waters of the Bay, with their animated panorama of busy saw-mills and moving vessels’ while the entrance to the harbor is a veritable gateway, between the bluffs on one side, and the graceful tower of the light house—with “siren” and life-saving station nesting at its base—on the other. Still westward, the eye sweeps over the sand dunes and stunted pines of the peninsula, to the “gray and melancholy waste” of the Pacific beyond, with here and there a sail obscurely defined against the sky’ while the bold headlands of Cape Mendocino project like huge camuli far down on the horizon. Looking to the southeast, over the campus, an excellent view is obtained of the guard-house, with the bluffs and rolling hills of the Eel River Valley in the distance.

This building is perhaps the best preserved of the dozen or more that still bid defiance to the assaults of time and neglect. The houses, from the barracks to the officer’s quarters, are all constructed of the same materials; that is, upright joists covered with weather-boarding, which is shaved into smoothness with the drawing knife. The sutler’s store and commissary department is the only visible exception, being framed of hewn logs with the usual covering. Inside, the more pretentious are “hard-finished,” but the majority are fitted out with bard walls or a coat of whitewash.
The Grant house presents a most forlorn and dilapidated appearance; had it sustained a bombardment, it could not have suffered more. The walls have been denuded of their plaster, the windows smashed, the doors torn from their hinges; nothing but an occasional stud prevents the crazy roof from coming down. The rear of the little domicile is almost buried in a mass of climbing vines and they have looped and twined their tendrils around gaping doorway, and shattered window-frame, and crumbling roof, as it desires of concealing the erosion of a quarter of a century beneath their caressing folds.

The spacious cottage of the commanding officer is situated at the northwestern corner of the campus, on the very edge of the low plateau upon which the post is situated. "And here," said my conductor, "I have often enjoyed a social evening, when, grouped around the cheerful back-log, we listened to the yarn of some old hunter or Indian fighter; while the pleasant-faced, silent Captain reclined on the rude camp-bed, and smiled encouragement on the little group between the puffs of his cigar. One of his leading characteristics of later days, when he was the director of the military energies of the North, was even then conspicuous—his entire freedom from the stiff formalities of the service, when off duty."

The cottage that he occupied adjoined the commandant's, but has been moved; and upon its site flourishes a splendid rosebush, which, at the time of my visit, was in full and glorious bloom; and some thoughtful hand had woven a festoon of crape through the scarlet petals. This simple and touching tribute of respect and sympathy—the only evidence of life and care in all that field of desolation—was eloquently emblematical; the richest coloring of life and the sombre insignia of death—the decoration of are woven with nature's choicest tribute in a living chaplet to his green and fadeless memory.

Entering headquarters, I invaded the domain of the spider, the field mouse, and the swallow. An oppressive sense of loneliness seemed to hover over everything; we looked instinctively for some ghostly sentinel to extend to us a fleshy grasp of welcome; for, "all houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses".

The heavy hand of time has leaned with crushing weight upon the artificial beauties of the place; and the office, with its tall desks and well scribbled walls, is the only apartment on the ground floor that still bears indisputable evidence of its former use. Up stairs, commanding a superb view of bay and ocean, is the apartment designated the "photograph gallery." It is a spacious room well lighted by ample skylights, and overlooks the public highway.

The military cemetery is beautifully located upon a rolling hillside southeast of the post, from which it is separated by a little valley. The spot is now almost forgotten; vines and weeds have clambered over the rude bead-boards, and obliterated the pathways. Since the cemetery was abandoned, Nature has dressed the spot in her own exuberant loveliness; a vigorous growth of young fir trees has sprung up among and around the tiny enclosures, until they are fairly surrounded by a wall of foliage, whose tremulous music, under the afternoon breath of the trade winds,strings a perpetual Folian harp over the graves of the forgotten dead.

A portion only of the huge stables of the post remains. It is in an excellent state of preservation, and had ample accommodations for two hundred mules, which furnished forth the long pack trains running between the coast and the remote camps on the Klamath, the Trinity, and the Salmon Rivers. Indeed, this unhandsome but useful brute was for many years the sole means of communication between the mountain valleys and the coast. He was simply indispensable; he was to the old Californian what the camel is to the Arab; the reindeer to the Lapp; the elephant to the Hindu; and his occasional eccentricities only enhanced the novelty of familiar acquaintance with him.
Facing the stable lies a swamp that ranks among the natural curiosities of the neighborhood. It is about two acres in extent, and is fed by springs from the bottom, which in the winter time convert it into a lake gorgeous with the bloom of the yellow water lily. In the dry season, it is a quaking bog, not unlike the peat bogs which form so striking a feature of Scottish and Irish landscapes.

Although not upon a relic hunting expedition, I thought it singular that I failed to discover some memento of the former occupants. I ransacked the whole range of tumble-down buildings, from the “lock-up” to the dispensary; I glanced eagerly over the chapters of autographs that covered the walls—where paint or plaster still chanced to adhere—for some trace of the old followers of Mars; but in vain. The names were all recent, and I was fain to content myself with a relic that, clad in the regimentals of Uncle Sam, somewhat the worse for wear, was on scarecrow duty on the parade ground—now a vegetable garden—and I christened him “The Old Guard”.

Visit Fort Humboldt

Today Fort Humboldt is a State Historic Park, open to the public from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. all year. The Fort Museum, open during summer (other months by special arrangement), is housed in the reconstructed original hospital building and has exhibits that explain the fort’s operation and history. Long-range plans call for the reconstruction of other buildings that would return the fort to its original appearance. The park is located at 3431 Fort Ave in Eureka, California just off Highway 101. For information about special programs, or to arrange a tour of the museum call (707) 445-6567.
Know all persons by these presents, that I Ulysses S. Grant of the City & County of St. Louis in the State of Missouri, for divers good and valuable considerations me hereunto moving, do hereby emancipate and set free from Slavery my negro man William, sometimes called William Jones of Mulatto complexion, aged about thirty-five years, and about five feet seven inches in height and being the same slave purchased by me of Frederick Dent—And I do hereby manumit, emancipate and set free said William from Slavery forever.

In testimony Whereof I hereto set my hand & seal at St Louis this 29th day of March A D 1859.

U.S. Grant

Courtesy of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection
MOTHER NATURE INTERFERES WITH THE PROGRESS OF WAR

Recent newspapers headlines and television broadcasts described how severe sandstorms in the Iraqi desert slowed the coalition troops' advance toward Baghdad. Just as in recent military operations, inclement weather also interfered with the plans of the military during the Civil War.

Ulysses S. Grant described how the forces of nature slowed the progress of his troops at Spotsylvania. In his memoirs he wrote about the condition of the roads and quoted a letter he had written to Halleck on May 16, 1864: "We have had five days almost constant rain without any prospect yet of it clearing up. The roads have now become so impassable that ambulances with wounded men can no longer run between here and Fredericksburg. All offensive operations necessarily cease until we can have twenty-four hours of dry weather. The army is in the best of spirits, and feel the greatest confidence of ultimate success ... You can assure the President and Secretary of War that the elements alone have suspended hostilities, and that it is in no manner due to weakness or exhaustion on our part."

The weather conditions at that time prompted General Horace Porter to write about how Mother Nature can make life difficult for soldiers. In his book Campaigning with Grant, he wrote: "When the storm continues for a week it becomes one of the most serious obstacles in a campaign. The men can secure no proper shelter and no comfortable rest; their clothing has no chance to dry; and a tramp of a few miles through tenacious mud requires as much exertion as an ordinary day's march. Tents become saturated and weighted with water, and draft-animals have increased loads, and heavier roads over which to haul them. Dry wood cannot be found; cooking becomes difficult; the men's spirits are affected by the gloom, and even the most buoyant natures become disheartened. It is much worse for an army acting on the offensive, for it has more marching to do, being compelled to move principally on exterior lines."

THE VOICE OF THE SOUTH

When General Grant was dying at Mount McGregor the Boston Globe instructed its New Orleans correspondent to interview Jefferson Davis. Mr. Davis was not seen personally, but a few days later he penned the following letter:

"Dear Sir: – Your request in behalf of a Boston journalist for me to prepare a criticism of General Grant's military career cannot be complied with for the following reasons:
1. General Grant is dying
2. Though he invaded our country, it was with an open hand, and, as far as I know, he abetted neither arson nor pillage, and has since the war, I believe, showed no malignity to Confederates either of the military or civil service.

Therefore, instead of seeking to disturb the quiet of his closing hours, I would, if it were in my power, contribute to the peace of his mind and the comfort of his body.

Jefferson Davis."

Quoted from: The Photographic History of the Civil War: Poetry and Elegance.