GRANT RECEIVES HIS COMMISSION

After the battle of Chattanooga Grant arrived in Washington with his son Fred to receive his commission as Lieutenant General of the armies. Leaving Fred at the hotel Grant arrived at a White House evening reception with members of his staff. Lincoln, who had never met Grant personally, took an instant liking to him.

The following excerpt from Hamlin Garland’s book, *Ulysses S. Grant, His Life and Character* relates the account of how Grant received his commission.

Lincoln said to Grant, “I am to formally present you with your commission tomorrow morning at ten o’clock. I know, general, your dread of speaking, so I shall read what I have to say. It will only be four or five sentences. I would like you to say something in reply which will soften the feeling of jealousy among the officers, and encourage the nation.”

There were solemnity and a marked formality in the presentation of the commission. In the presence of his cabinet, the President rose and stood facing General Grant, beside whom was his little son and the members of his staff. From a slip of paper the President read these words:

“General Grant: The nation’s appreciation of what you have done, and its reliance upon you for what remains to be done, in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this commission constituting you lieutenant general in the army of the United States. With this high honor devolves upon you, also, a corresponding responsibility. As the country herin trusts you, so, under God, it will sustain you. I scarcely need to add that with what I here speak goes my own hearty concurrence.”

General Grant’s reply was equally simple, but his hands shook, and he found some difficulty in controlling his voice.

“Mr. President: I accept the commission with gratitude for the high honor conferred. With the aid of the noble armies that have fought in so many fields for our common country, it will be my earnest endeavor not to disappoint your expectations. I feel the full weight of the responsibilities now devolving upon me, and I know that if they are met it will be due to those armies, and, above all, to the favor of that Providence which leads both nations and men.”

The two men again shook hands. Lincoln seemed to be profoundly pleased with Grant. He found in him one of his own people, suited to his own conception of an American citizen, a man of the “plain people,” of whom, he said, God must have loved, he made so many of them.
SAVED FROM EMBARRASSMENT

Col. Nicholas Smith recounted his first meeting with Grant in the following anecdote from his book, Grant, the Man of Mystery:

My acquaintance with Grant began in Galena early in the winter of 1856. He was then on a visit to his brothers, Simpson and Orvil, who had charge of their father's interest in the leather store. Worn out by hard work in the lead mines and on the farm in southern Wisconsin, I had sought lighter employment in the harness shop of W. W. Venable, which adjoined the leather store.

I had been in the shop but a short time when one morning the foreman told me to go to Grant's and get some "strap oil." On entering the store, the only person I saw was a man wearing an army overcoat of blue, smoking a pipe, reading a paper, his feet resting on a stove. When he saw me he stopped reading and asked me if I wanted the clerk. I answered that our foreman had sent me in for some "strap oil." Instantly he grasped the meaning of this, and in a quiet, kindly way, he replied: "You may tell your foreman that the firm has no 'strap oil' this morning." This was a great disappointment to the shop force, as they expected to see me returning with a clerk giving my back some heavy strokes with a leather strap.

Captain Grant did not remain long in Galena that winter, as his visit was only to meet his brothers and to enjoy a short relief from the strain of farm labor at Gravois. During that brief stay – perhaps three weeks – I saw much of him after the incident I have related. As he had been kind enough to save me from being "hazed," I felt free to speak to him whenever we met, and although I was only a "cub" – yet a full grown man – he did not try to evade a conversation that was worth while. He army overcoat, and his sympathetic face, though often bearing a serious expression, strongly appealed to me. He had a remarkable memory, and after the Civil War he promptly recalled the incident of our first meeting.
GENERAL GRANT'S WELCOME AT OCEAN GROVE

In the late summer of 1884, Ulysses S. Grant was invited to attend a reunion of the veterans of the Civil War Christian Commission in Ocean Grove, New Jersey. The meeting took place in the Great Auditorium, a graceful open-air structure that could seat thousands of people. The following article commemorating that event was written by the Reverend John O. Foster and originally appeared in the December 28, 1893 issue of The Independent, a New York newspaper. Foster was the Secretary of the United States Christian Commission at that time.

The old Auditorium at Ocean Grove has been pulled down and the ground cleared for a larger and finer edifice; but memories of what took place under that old open tabernacle are many and valuable. Our Christian Commission and reunion of the “Good Samaritans” of the late War was held there in 1884, and proved to be the most memorable of any meeting ever held at that seaside resort.

President George H. Stuart, though exceedingly feeble, was present and presided a part of the time. Word came that General Grant was at his cottage, some five miles away at Long Branch; and President Stuart telegraphed a public welcome, and urged him to come at his earliest convenience. He answered, accepting the invitation, and said he would drive down the next afternoon. Notices had been sent to all the G.A.R. posts within reach, and the veterans responded nobly. The day was all that could have been desired. The summer throng was present, and the extended notice of such a special day called out many thousands more who desired to come and see the illustrious guest.

When the carriage drove up to the office entrance it contained ex-Governor R. J. Oglesby, Colonel Fred D. Grant and the great General. The sorrow of the Ward and Grant bank failure had cast a gloom over the friends of the hero; and this misfortune joined with his sufferings for some months by broken tendons of a leg, had depressed the sensitive soul of the old commander beyond all expression. He tried to be cheerful, but it was hard work. Unfriendly newspapers and politicians all over the land were slandering him most cruelly and questioning his honesty; this was to him a mortal wound. It was a time to awaken Christian sympathy, and the suffering chieftain needed it just then as never before.

It was a touching sight as the tall form of Dr. E. H. Stokes supported the hero on the right, and President George H. Stuart assisted on the left, while a third person brought the General’s crutches. The vast audience arose, and a sea of enthusiasm, never excelled even in war days, greeted the great man. He hobbled to his chair, bowed a graceful recognition, and was seated. The choir led in “America,” and Dr. Stokes offered prayer.

President Stuart, though a sick man and very weak, spoke a few words saying: “It was my good fortune just after the War closed to introduce General Grant, then the General of our Army, to the largest audience ever assembled in Philadelphia. Since then I have introduced him as President of the United States; and we now extend to him, as a private
citizen, a most hearty greeting and welcome him to Ocean Grove.” Tremendous cheering followed these remarks.

It had been arranged that A. J. Palmer, D.D., should give the formal welcome. This popular preacher and lecturer never had a greater opportunity in his life, but he was fully equal to the occasion. If we had known that such a quantity of oratorical dynamite was wrapped up in that short body, and that such a tempest of excitement was about to burst on that vast audience, we should have employed the best reporter in the realm; but feeling that something was coming, and being a rapid scribe, we caught some of the echoes of the flying sound. A part of the speech ran thus:

“Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen: I do not know why the committee selected me to give this welcome, unless it is that this man (pointing to the noble head on which he could have laid his hand) was at the head of the army while I was at the foot, and here you see the two extremes meet. [Wild cheering.] I welcome today the hero of the Republic. [Cheer after cheer.] It is sweet for the humblest soldier to welcome the greatest general the War produced. [Great applause.]

“He couldn’t have done anything without us [laughter], and he knows it. There were one million of us, but only one of him. He had to have this million, and we had to have him. We did something for the country and the world, twenty years ago, greater than that accomplished by Wellington, Marlboro or Hamilton. And so I, who was the humblest private in the army, am called upon to welcome the immortal general, who was at the head of the great army, the quiet man under whose leadership all the armies under Sherman, Sheridan, Meade, Hooker, Burnside, Logan and Thomas marched on to victory. Calm under calumny, magnanimous in victory, he was the greatest soldier of this or any other age, and the greatest man; and I say for one – and in behalf of the million private soldiers for whom I speak today – that no combination of Wall Street sharpers shall ever tarnish the luster of his splendid fame.”

The applause at this moment was indescribable. Like a terrific surge the vast audience shouted long rolls of “Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” “Tiger! Tiger!” over and over again. Caps from the comrades flew to the ceiling of the old Auditorium; crutches waved wildly in the air; veterans shouted, “Bully for Palmer! He’s hit it;” and the roar went on and on to the far away crowds that pressed to hear or see all they could of the historic scene. After the storm had spent its greatest force Dr. Palmer went on:

“He settled the question whether we should have a united nation from Canada to the Gulf, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, or two hostile nations on this territory, the land of the free and the home of the brave. He settled another question, whether we should have one flag [tremendous cheering; the comrade carrying the G.A.R. colors arose and waved the beautiful standard.] – or whether we should have two flags, the grand old Stars and Stripes [cheers] and the stars and bars, or the Stars and Stripes alone. [Again the cheering was with a vim of the old war meetings.] He has been the soldier of one great epoch in our national history and the twice honored statesman of another.”
During all this incoming tide of joyful, Christian, heroic welcome, the great General showed but little emotion; but to those near him it was evident that the clouds were broken, and the sunlight had come into his soul. It was the greatest change his noble mind had ever experienced in so short a period. When the storm abated there was a tremendous call of “Grant — Grant! General Grant, say something.”

President Stuart turned and said: “General, these people will not be satisfied unless you say a few words. Do say something if you can.”

Instantly the General reached down to his left, gathered up his crutches, placed them under his arms, and before one of us could get to him, sprang to his feet, hobbled a step or two forward and said: “Ladies and Gentlemen: Under all circumstances it is difficult for me to speak in public. An hour ago I might have made a speech, but now I am almost afraid to try. I know, as few can, the good these chaplains have done, writing letters to the friends at home for the sick and wounded soldiers to the anxious, sorrowing mothers and fathers. I have not words to express my thanks for this welcome. I hope you will have a good time at this reunion. I appreciate” —

Here his voice failed, tears rained down his cheeks, his chin quivered in great emotion, he turned, sank into his chair, and a deathlike stillness rested on the vast audience. No one spoke, no one wanted to speak, none knew what to say; the quiet was like a prelude to a funeral; we all wept in silence.

John R. Sweeney touched the sweet organ softly, and Mrs. Watrous sang a piece composed by Dr. Stokes. The grizzled commander, who had confronted tornadoes of iron hail and ghastly death in the hour of battle, and never showed the least emotion, melted before this hearty, swinging welcome. It was his last speech; his voice was never heard again on a public platform.

When the exercises of that day closed and the carriage drove away with the “silent man,” somehow a feeling crept over the soul that great good had been done.

Mrs. Grant told us, three years later, that the General frequently talked about the good cheer it brought him on that occasion.

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Ocean Grove, New Jersey began as camp meeting retreat by Methodists in 1869 and to this day has a strong religious tradition. The Camp Meeting Association has continued to operate in the same manner established by its founders in 1869. Hannah Simpson Grant, mother of Ulysses S. Grant, and her daughter, resided in a summer home there during Grant’s presidency. The present Great Auditorium, built in 1894, is almost the size of a football field and continues to serve as a stage for the world’s great preachers and evangelists.
AN AMUSING INCIDENT

While General Grant was usually quite reserved and rarely laughed out loud he did have a good sense of humor. The following episode recalled by General Horace Porter of Grant’s staff in his book, Campaigning With Grant, shows an amusing incident involving another staff member, Adam Badeau.

In climbing a rather steep hill at this point, the party had to move along a narrow bridle-path. The general was riding in the lead, followed by the staff in single file, with Badeau bringing up the rear. The trees were soon found to be so near together that a horse and rider could not pass between them when keeping in the path, and we turned out to the left, where the woods were more open. Badeau’s near-sightedness prevented him from seeing very far ahead, and he was not paying much attention to his horse, but simply letting him go along as he pleased. Suddenly we heard a cry from him: “I’m going off!” I say. “I’m going off!” On looking round, we found his horse climbing up the path with a tree on each side, between which he could scarcely squeeze. When Badeau’s knees reached the trees his saddle was forced back, and as the horse struggled on his rider finally slid off over the animal’s tail. Then came the cry, “See here, I’m off!” and Badeau and the saddle were seen lying on the ground. The horse stepped out of the girth and quietly continued his march up the hill as if nothing had happened. General Grant stopped, and looking back at the ludicrous sight presented, fairly screamed with laughter, and did not recover his equanimity during the remainder of the ride. Nothing could have been more amusing to him than such an accident; for, as he was an exceptionally expert horseman, awkwardness on the part of a rider was more laughable to him than to most people. Badeau, with the assistance of an orderly, had his horse resaddled, and, mounting again, soon joined the cavalcade. General Grant cracked jokes at his expense all the rest of the ride; and for two or three days afterward, when he would be sitting quietly in front of his tent, he would suddenly begin to shake with laughter, and say” “I can’t help thinking how that horse succeeded in sneaking out from under Badeau at Bermuda Hundred.
A CAMEO OF PRESIDENT GRANT

In the following account from Ulysses S. Grant: His Life and Character, Hamlin Garland relates how a photograph of President Grant without a beard was the result of a misinterpretation.

One day, Mrs. Grant, after describing a cameo which a friend had just shown her, and which she much admired, said to the President: "Ulysses, I want a profile of you."

"Oh, haven’t I had pictures enough taken?" he protested.

"No," replied Mrs. Grant, "you haven’t a single profile view, and I want one."

After a moment’s hesitation, and with a little sigh, he said: "Very well; you shall have one."

A day or two later the family was appalled to see the President of the United States enter the room wearing English mutton-chop whiskers, and looking like an Episcopal clergyman. His mustache was shaved away clean, and his chin completely exposed. For an instant they hardly knew him; he seemed like another person.

"Why, Ulysses, what have you been doing?" cried Mrs. Grant in vast astonishment and dismay.

"I’ve been having a profile taken," he replied.

In his absent-minded simplicity, and with his accustomed thoroughness, he had fought the battle clear through. He had given her a genuine profile, unobstructed by a single hair! Thus it happens that there is at least one picture of General Grant in existence which shows the rugged line of his profile face.
GRANT IN ADVERTISING

Grant's image was often used in advertisements in the nineteenth century. The ad below, which was inspired Grant's clean shaven profile, appeared an 1891 magazine.

TOILET ARTICLES

The effect of shaving upon the APPEARANCE may be seen by uniting figures 1 and 2, showing General U. S. Grant with a full beard; then by uniting figures 1 and 3, showing him as he appeared during his second term as President of the U. S., with shaven face. The effect upon the FEELINGS, the very best effect, will be experienced by those who use WILLIAMS' GENUINE YANKEE SHAVING SOAP.

CUT THEM OUT AND TRY IT.

The effect of Shaving—

Depends upon the agents employed.

Comfort—quickness and ease—safety—a soft, healthy skin—are the good results obtained by using GENUINE YANKEE SOAP. Ask your Druggist for it, or send 15c. in stamps to THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO., Glastonbury, Conn.

Pimples, eczema, Barbers' itch (which is simply blood poisoning caused by the use of cheap and impure soaps), "chapping," roughness of every kind peculiar to the face are permanently healed and prevented by the gentle medicinal and healing properties of GENUINE YANKEE SHAVING Soap. Ask your Druggist for it, or send 15c. in stamps to THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO., Glastonbury, Conn.

Teas of WILLIAMS' BARBERS' SOAP are sold
each 6c., A Family supply for a year for $1.00. A F

Adapted for Toilet Use. Ever tried it? Your Druggist

6 cakes, 40 cents. Sent by mail. Sample for a cent.
GRANT IN 1879

The following excerpts from the San Francisco Chronicle, 1879, describe some incidents as Grant toured the country and thousands of people showed up to see him. The excerpts were transcribed and edited by Nancy Winkler.

"Notwithstanding the crush and confusion and labyrinthian entanglement of bipeds and quadrupeds, no serious accident occurred, with the exception of a few insulting remarks by indiscreet sand-lotters, which were promptly and effectually checked by threats of a ducking in the bay; nothing occurred to mar the harmony of the reception by the people at the ferry.” (September 21, 1879)

After an injury to Grant on the train to Ogden, Utah – the governor greeted him in a brief speech, and Grant replied: “‘Ladies and gentlemen: I thank you for this welcome. I would like very much to spend several days in your Territory, and examine your industries, and resources, and growth, if time would permit. I cannot even stop at my home in Galena, but must hasten on my journey, for I have promised to be present at the unveiling of the monument of the brave and lamented General Thomas, which occurrence has been postponed to give me time to reach the capital of the nation. You will excuse me for not making a speech, as I am suffering very severely, and have been for an hour or two, from a sprain in my back, received while preparing to change cars, by a sudden lunge of the cars on a curve in the road. This is the first and only thing that has happened to me to mar the pleasure of my long-continued journey; indeed, the first thing of the kind that ever happened to me, and I think it will be all right in a day or two. I again thank you for this very kind welcome and wish you all well.’ The speech was greeted with cheers. The General, who was unable to walk without assistance, was conducted to the Union Pacific train, where he took a seat on the rear of a car and received the crowd as patiently as his injuries would permit.” (October 31, 1879)

Grant’s plans changed and he did go to Galena, however, he did not go to the unveiling of Thomas’ statue, scheduled for November 19-20 in Washington, D.C. On November 11 Grant wrote a letter from Galena saying that he could not come. He had already committed himself to a reunion of the Army of the Cumberland and the reunion of the Army of the Tennessee in Chicago. A banquet was given him by the Army of the Tennessee at the Palmer House on November 13, where several speeches were made, including the famous toast to the babies by Mark Twain.

“The only disagreeable incident of his journey across the continent, so far as General Grant himself is concerned, occurred last night at Galesburg [Illinois]. The train reached there about 8 o’clock, and blazing bonfires showed a multitude gathered to honor the illustrious traveler. He was taken from the train to a flat car, where he was introduced and made a few remarks. Mrs. Grant, who was called for, bowed to the people, and the General was about to return to the car when some miscreant in the crowd flung an egg which struck him on the side of the head. John B. Colton stepped forward and offered one hundred dollars reward for the detection and arrest of the ruffian.” (November 6, 1879)
GRANT'S TOMB IN THE NEWS

In the early 1990's the General Grant National Memorial in New York City suffered from neglect and fell victim to disrepair. The National Park Service restored the monument and conducted ceremonies in 1997 to commemorate the centennial of the dedication of the Tomb, but now the site has suffered another indignity.

On July 4th NBC televised a special program for the holiday that featured rock singer, Beyoncé Knowles performing in front of Grant's Tomb along with scantily clad dancers surrounded by hundreds of screaming fans. While such a performance today is considered appropriate for a television broadcast it is definitely not the type of program that is suitable for a burial place.

Certainly a patriotic or solemn event would be more in keeping with the somber character of the Memorial and would give proper reverence to the great General buried there.

GRANT COTTAGE NEWS AND EVENTS

Ulysses S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site at Mt. McGregor, New York is open for the season. This year construction begins on the Visitors Center.

Special events this season include:

July 27 – Grant Remembrance Day and Re-enactment: Spend the afternoon with Martha Clarke, the caretaker who lived at the Cottage from 1890 until 1942. She will reminisce about her years as caretaker and talk about visitors and activities on the mountain. The death of Ulysses Grant will be commemorated with a ceremony by the Sons of Union Veterans.

August 9 – Old Days on the Mountain: Various guests discuss activities and people on Mt. McGregor in the 20th century.

September 13 – Author David Pitkin speaks about Saratoga.

October 11 – Military Wives: Discussion of life with the army for women like Julia Grant, with Dr. Robin Campbell of the NYS Bureau of Historic Sites.

For further information phone (518) 587-8277.