

# PREFACE

## U.S. Grant Reconsidered

Researched and Written for Quest Club

By John R Burns

Presented February 15, 2019

The exact topic assigned for this paper is the title of a short book written by amateur historian and New York lawyer, Frank Scaturro, who analyzes Grant's Presidency and various alleged scandals during his two terms. He argues that Grant was a "strong and, in many respects, successful president." President Grant Reconsidered, Frank Scaturro, Madison Books, 1999. I am going to take a difference approach and examine social issues and innovations advanced by Grant as a commanding officer and later as President of the United States. I recommend Scaturro's book for a detailed analysis of his Presidential years.

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As we reconsider President and General U. S. Grant we need to know how conventional history evaluates his life and accomplishments. Before Google, some of us used to reach for the New York Public Library Desk Reference and I still use the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition for quick background information. There we find scant detail beyond that Grant was our 18<sup>th</sup> President and served from March 4, 1869 to March 3, 1877. During his Presidency, Virginia, Mississippi and Texas were re-admitted to the Union. New York Public Library Desk Reference, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., 861. Our Millennial colleagues are more likely to refer to Wikipedia for a summary of Grant's life and they will find there a much more robust discussion. For details and a "just the facts" review of Grant's life and times, I recommend reading it. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulysses\\_S.\\_Grant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulysses_S._Grant)

Grant was born in 1822, in Point Pleasant, Ohio, not far from Cincinnati, in a humble one room home. He weighed in at an unusually large 10 ¾ pounds. Grant went unnamed for weeks as his father, Jesse Root Grant, and mother, Hanna Simpson Grant, consulted friends and family in search of the right name. Grant, Ron Chernow, Penguin Press, 2017, page 3. So for our first act of reconsideration, let's clarify his name—No, it is not Ulysses S. Grant, nor is it Ulysses Simpson Grant as many writers assumed because of his mother's name, and it certainly is not "Unconditional Surrender Grant" as some journalists of his time called him. His actual name was Hiram Ulysses Grant, leading to the unfortunate initials H.U.G. and you can imagine the reaction if those initials appeared on his trunk at West Point. Id.

Young students "are taught from early grade school to revere George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as great presidents, and not long afterwards, they may briefly encounter president Ulysses S. Grant who still almost invariably is viewed on the opposite end of the spectrum." President Grant Reconsidered, Frank Scaturro, Madison Books, 1999, Preface.

However, Grant was also the only President between Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson to serve two consecutive and complete terms as President of the United States. *Id.*, 2. He was President during eight of the most socially tumultuous years between the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. He guided the nation from Reconstruction to the Gilded Age. *Id.* His taciturn manner and steady hand were forged in his hardscrabble youth, his personal challenges, and the hot fires of his Civil War years. To reconsider U. S. Grant, we have to understand those influencers on his life and times.

Historian Thomas A. Bailey described Grant as an “ignorant and confused president” whose “eight long years in blunderland are generally regarded as a national disgrace.” *Id.* at 1, citing Bailey, *Presidential Greatness*, 295. Similarly, Henry Adams, grandson of President John Adams and no friend of U. S. Grant said:

“The progress of evolution from President Washington to President Grant was alone evidence to upset Darwin.” Grant Reconsidered, 7 citing, *The Education of Henry Adams*, 265-66 (The Education of Henry Adams, 265-66). Given Grant's achievements as a soldier and as President, it is natural to question whether these statements suggest the political leaders and voters of the time were blind, deaf and ignorant, or were these comments perhaps politically motivated historical revision at work. As with politics today, many who opposed Grant's political views chose to attack him rather than his views.

As Grant was being considered as the Republican nominee for President in 1868, the *New York World* newspaper “branded him a ‘commonplace man. He has not military talent...is hated by the army. He is generally drunk.’” Grant, 608, citing, Nevins and Thomas, *The Dairy of George Templeton*, 4:187, Diary Entry for February 4, 1868. Such allegations of incompetence, unpopularity with subordinates and drunkenness are typical of the contemporary charges levied against Ulysses S. Grant.

With that as the backdrop of history, what more do we need to know to Reconsider U. S. Grant? Amateur historian and New York lawyer, Frank Scaturro, argues to the contrary that Grant was a “strong and, in many respects, successful president.” Grant Reconsidered, 6.

## A HESITANT CADET

Young Ulysses' reaction to being told by his father that Ulysses was likely to get a Senatorial appointment was telling. "What appointment?" he asked. When told that his father had applied for an appointment to prestigious West Point for him, the young Grant replied, "But I won't go." His father responded that he thought he would go, and Ulysses agreed, although he harbored a fear of failure. Much to his surprise he passed his entrance examination without difficulty. Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, Grant, First Rate Publishers, Chptr. II, Para. 1-7.

Grant set out for West Point in May 1839, by way of a steamer through Ohio and then a canal boat that dallied through Western Pennsylvania to Pittsburg. Grant was in no hurry and said, "he had rather a dread of reaching my destination at all." Personal Memoirs, Chptr. II, para.7. He took a railroad car from Harrisburg to Philadelphia and lingered there a few days before moving on to New York. *Id.* His train ride convinced him that rapid transit had reached its peak. *Id.*

Arriving at West Point, Grant registered under the name Ulysses Hiram Grant to avoid the unfortunate initials his actual name would produce, but he was told there were no admission papers for such a person, nor for Hiram Ulysses Grant. Grant, 20. His sponsor apparently mistakenly appointed him as "Ulysses S. Grant" and he readily accepted that as his West Point, and permanent, name. At West Point, he was often called "Uncle Sam Grant" or just "Sam". *Id.*

Grant was a middling student at West Point. He excelled in math, cavalry tactics and artillery, but was near the bottom of his class in French. In fact, he wrote that "if the class had been turned the other end foremost, I should have been near the head." In sum, he felt "that military life had no charms for me, and I had not the faintest idea of staying in the army even if I should be graduated, which I did not expect." *Id.* at para. 8. His greatest military ambition at that time was to become an Assistant Professor of Math at the Academy. *Id.*

Perhaps most significant of Grant's West Point years were the future officers he encountered there including James Longstreet and Thomas (later Stonewall) Jackson. Grant never met Stonewall Jackson on the field of battle, but his acquaintance with him at West Point helped his understanding of Jackson as a soldier. Grant, 24. Grant also encountered John Pope and a "witty and energetic" William Tecumseh Sherman. *Id.* Others attending West Point at the time included future Generals George Thomas, George McClellan and George Pickett. *Id.* One of the tragic ironies of the Civil War is that many of the top generals on both sides,

studied together at West Point and served together in the Mexican War before splitting by geography to ferociously fight each other in the Civil War.

## IN THE MEXICAN AND INDIAN WARS GRANT DEVELOPED AN ENLIGHTENED POLICY OF LIENENCY

Grant's first combat experience occurred after his commanding officer, General Zachary Taylor, ordered his army to cross the border recognized by Mexico between Texas and Mexico, the Nueces River and to move South across the Rio Grande River, the border desired by President Polk. Grant, 40. The Battle of Palo Alto ensued with Taylor's forces easily defeating a larger Mexican force, though one equipped with antiquated weapons firing solid shot compared to the explosive cannister shells of Taylor's howitzers. Grant, 44. He was introduced to the horrors of war at Palo Alto when a Mexican cannon ball flew through their ranks and literally took the head off of an enlisted man near Grant. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. VII, para. 6.

Following his victory at Buena Vista in early 1847, General Zackary Taylor was nominated and elected President of the United States in 1848. General Scott assumed command of the Army of Invasion in Mexico and moved first on Vera Cruz before beginning the siege of Mexico City. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. IX, para. 6-7. After capturing Vera Cruz, the army hurried to move on to avoid yellow fever, or *vomito* as it was called locally. Personal Memoirs, Chapter X, para. 2. In August 1847, General Scott's forces were arrayed against the Mexican capital, at that time a city of about 100,000, defended by a force about 3 times the number of Scott's army. Despite superior numbers, the Mexican forces were demoralized and Scott could have taken Mexico City with little opposition, but he did not, thinking it better to negotiate with a Mexican government still in possession of its capital, Scott opened discussions with General Santa Anna. Personal Memoirs, Chapter XI, para. 8-10. In the end, Mexico City was occupied, and terms of surrender negotiated in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ceded the present-day states of Arizona, New Mexico and California to the United States and established the Rio Grande River as the border with Texas.

The Mexican War made Grant a seasoned officer with invaluable battlefield and logistical experience. As with his time at West Point, perhaps the most valuable knowledge he took away was his understanding of men he would meet later on the battlefields of the Civil War. He studied an older officer, Robert E. Lee and knew

that while he was accomplished, “he was not endowed with supernatural abilities.” Grant, 58.

## DISGRACE AND DISMISSAL FROM THE MILITARY

January 1854 found the young Captain Grant stationed at Fort Humbolt, overlooking Humbolt Bay in Northern California. This was not a good place for a man prone to migraines, depression and an unrecognized drinking problem. Grant, 82. Chernow relates that “alcohol was ubiquitous at Fort Humbolt. Once morning drills were done, officers resorted to whiskey and poker to pass the time.” Boredom and separation from family proved to be a bad combination and Grant responded by drinking more frequently. Chernow describes how to deal “with his private sadness and mitigate the pain of migraine headaches, Grant got into the habit of drinking more frequently, often stopping for alcoholic refreshments at a local saloon or a general store....” Grant, 84. At this point his commander told him to reform or resign, to which Grant replied, “I will resign if I don’t reform.” Grant, 85.

When Captain Grant went to his company’s pay table one Sunday morning obviously drunk, he was not given another chance. Saying that he did not want his wife to know that he had been tried, he chose to resign from the Army. Many of his friends thought that he would have been cleared of charges because he was not debilitated by his drinking problem. *Id.* Grant’s pride could not take that chance and he left the Army.

Grant’s memoirs contain no mention of the drinking problem that led to his dismissal from the military. He chose to provide a different version of the reason for his separation from active duty service by saying that he could not support his family on military pay while stationed on the West Coast.

My family, all this while, was at the East. It consisted now of a wife and 2 children. I saw no chance of supporting them on the Pacific coast out of my pay as an army officer. I concluded, therefore, to resign, and in March applied for a leave of absence until the end of July following, tendering my resignation to take affect at the end of that time. I left the Pacific coast very much attached to it, and with the full expectation of making it my future home. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XVI, para. 1

It is unfortunate that Grant chose not to deal directly with what most writers agree was the real cause of his separation from active duty. His ability to control his drinking during combat operations and throughout his 8 years in the White House was a significant achievement without the benefit of any 12 Step Program. To one contemporary, General Augustus Chetlain, Grant was more direct in admitting that “when I have nothing to do, I get blue and depressed, I have a natural craving for a drink, when I was on the coast, I got into a depressed condition and got to drinking. Grant, 85, citing “Interview with General Augustus Chetlain.”

#### FAILING AT EVERY CIVILIAN ENDEAVOR A FUTURE PRESIDENT SOLD FIREWOOD ON THE STREET CORNERS

Frankly, Grant made a lousy civilian. He tried many civilian jobs but never found one that appealed to him or in which he succeeded. He worked for a time with his father in the tanning business and hated it. He was a store clerk. He tried to get a government job as County Engineer in St. Louis, but lost out to a German immigrant, prompting Grant to write that “no American can get anything in this town.” Grant, 107-108. At one time he even considered a “far-fetched idea” to move to Colorado and open a hardware store, but his father refused to finance it. Grant, 109.

Julia owned a small farm by inheritance and Grant gamely tried his hand at farming in the mid-1850s but insisted on hiring farm hands instead of forcing Julia’s four slaves to perform field work. Grant, 101. He ended up doing much of the work himself, but still needed to hawk firewood on the streets of St. Louis to survive. *Id.* at 102. He finally gave up on farming in 1858, auctioned his equipment and stock, but again, his memoirs contain not a word of this disappointing period in his life. Grant, 103. Chernow described Grant’s sad downward spiral. “He now paced the St. Louis streets, searching for work, obscure and invisible to the many people he passed, a bleak, defeated little man with a mysterious aura of solitude.” *Id.*

Grant worked hard to support his family in St. Louis but had little success. Though sober, Grant projected a defeated air on the St. Louis streets, a man with life beaten out of him. His injured pride cast a deep gloom over him. The depression visible in his expressionless face, seamy clothes, and absence of mirth were discernible to

those around him. His need to sell firewood on the streets, huddled in a faded blue army coat, broadcast his decline to the world. Grant, 98.

He encountered an old Army acquaintance from the Mexican War one day who was shocked by his appearance and asked what Grant was doing, to which Grant reportedly replied: “I am solving the problem of poverty.” Grant, 98, citing “Interview with General Robert Macfeely. Later Grant encountered James Longstreet, another West Point graduate, and insisted he accept a \$5 gold piece, that Grant could ill-afford to give, in payment of a 15-year-old debt. Grant would next see Longstreet at Appomattox Courthouse as Robert E. Lee’s chief commanding general. *Id.* Following the surrender they rekindled a close and lasting relationship.

Grant treats this period more casually in his memoirs. Like his drinking issues, Grant left much unexplained about these hardscrabble times describing this period as follows: “I worked very hard, never losing a day because of bad weather, and accomplished the object in a moderate way. If nothing else could be done I would load a cord of wood on a wagon and take it to the city for sale.” Personal Memoirs, Chptr. 16, para. 2.

Knowing that he had to find a way to support his family, he bowed to Julia’s wishes and sought employment with his father who was then a successful merchant. Grant’s two older brothers were already in the business and agreed that Ulysses would be sent to Galena, Illinois, to run the family’s store, at the miserly salary of \$800 per year. *Id.* When the family arrived in Galena the sun shown in anticipation of a new future for the Grants, but “[h]owever inviting the atmosphere, nothing could distract from the unpleasant truth that Grant had been a failure, battered by life at every turn. Everything indicated he would someday die a forgotten and thoroughly forgettable American, leaving no trace in historical annals.” Grant, 113.

## THE DARKENING CLOUDS OF CIVIL WAR CALLED HIM BACK TO THE MILITARY

Shortly after his inauguration, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers for 90 days of service to avenge the attack on Fort Sumpter and to put down the Southern uprising. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XVII, para. 1.

Patriotism was on display everywhere and when word reached Galena, Ulysses S. Grant, still new to Galena, but recognized as a West Point graduate and combat veteran, was asked to lead the recruitment meeting. *Id.* at para. 2. When Grant escorted his recruits to Springfield to form part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry, the Governor asked Grant to remain and assist the Illinois Adjutant-General organize the troops. *Id.* at para. 6-7. Soon, thereafter, President Lincoln issued a second call for troops—this time for 300,000 men to serve 3 years or until the end of the conflict. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XVIII, para.1. It was by then clear that the conflict would take much longer than 90 days to resolve.

Governor Yates appointed Grant a colonel and placed him in command of the 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois. *Id.* After training for a time in Springfield, he was ordered to move with his regiment to Quincy, Illinois, but while marching to Quincy, Grant received orders to change direction and head immediately to Palmyra, Missouri, to rescue an Illinois regiment surrounded there by rebel forces. *Id.* at para. 5. Once again, Grant was where he belonged, in the field, leading troops into combat.

## A RELUCTANT ABOLISHONIST

Grant evolved into a strong abolitionist and championed equal treatment of all men, but that was not always the case. During his time living in St. Louis he spent much time with the Dents, Julia's family who were slave owners and her father, Colonel Dent had given Julia four slaves for her use, but never transferred "title" to them to Julia, because under Missouri law they would then become the property of Ulysses Grant as her husband and Dent was afraid Grant would free them. Grant, 100. Julia's mother, Emma Dent appeared to have a different view when she said, "I do not believe Grant was such a rank abolitionist that Julia's slaves had to be forced upon him." Grant, 101, citing, Simpson, Ulysses S. Grant, 71.

For his part, Grant learned from his father the evils of slavery. Jesse Grant traced his roots to early Puritans who emigrated from England around 1630. Grant, 4. The first line of General Grant's memoirs reads: "My family is American, and has been for generations, in all its branches, direct and collateral." Personal Memoirs, Chapter I, para. 1. He says he was the eighth generation in America with direct ancestors who fought in the French-Indian and Revolutionary Wars. Jesse apprenticed with his half-brother, Peter, learning the tanning business as well as

the evils of slavery that Peter described as “the blot which stains our government.” Grant, 5. Later, while working at an Ohio tannery, Jesse lived with Owen Brown, father of the militant abolitionist, John Brown. *Id.* His father’s strong abolitionist views certainly helped inform Grant’s thinking as a young man.

## OUT OF THE WEST RIDES THE UNION’S CHAMPION, BUT WILL DRINK AGAIN BE HIS UNDOING

Grant’s exploits, accomplishments and challenges during his years of combat in the Civil War are the subject of many volumes and well beyond the scope of this paper. Generally, I will not be discussing strategy and battles, except as necessary to help us reconsider the historical treatment of Ulysses S. Grant. However, as context for the following discussion, it is important to know that Grant worked his way up the command chain fairly quickly while serving in what was known as the Western Theater of Operations—an area generally bounded by the Appalachian Mountains on the East and the Mississippi River area on the West. Grant’s early victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donalson helped secure the Upper Mississippi for the Union, opened an invasion route to Tennessee and brought Grant to the attention of military leaders in Washington.

When he was originally mustered into service in Springfield, he was given the rank of Colonel, an appropriate rank to command a regiment of troops, and in the unusual tradition of the time, his regiment had insisted that he be named their commander. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XVIII, para. 1-2. Higher ranks in these states raised forces were often made by Congressmen and Senators of the State from which the troops originated. So, it was that Grant was commissioned a Brigadier General in 1861 upon the nomination of a Congressman with whom he had little acquaintance. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XIX, para. 1-2.

Grant was an efficient organizer of his troops and was innovative in integrating gunboats with land forces to mount attacks on Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XXII, para.15-18. Not all of his battles were clear victories and the Battle of Shilo is viewed as a victory in name only because of the large number of Union casualties. Grant was criticized by journalists, generals and politicians who lobbied President Lincoln to remove him. The Army of the Potomac: Mr. Lincoln’s Army, Bruce Catton, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962, page 151. When pressed on the point by a Pennsylvania politician with whom he was close, Lincoln is said to have listened, remained thoughtfully quiet, and

responded: “I can’t spare this man; he fights.” Id. The view developed among Union politicians that the Eastern generals lacked the ability and the drive to match their Confederate counterparts. A change at the top was needed. Mr. Lincoln’s Army, 199.

General Lee knew what was happening in Washington where secrets were kept no better than than they are now—fortunately, Lincoln could not Tweet. In the Fall of 1862 there was

“enough ill-will and all-around distrust afloat in Washington to lose any war. The Union cause had reached low-water mark for the war, and the infection in its central nervous system had all but induced complete paralysis. Lee was invading Maryland with an army so exhausted, ragged, and ill-equipped that by any ordinary standard it ought to have gone back to some rest camp for a couple of months refit. But Lee knew what he was fighting against just then and if his daring in beginning an invasion with a worn-out army can be explained only by the assumption that he held his opponents in supreme contempt, there were ample grounds to justify such a feeling.” Mr. Lincoln’s Army, 208.

Lee was on Washington’s doorstep and Lincoln was searching for a commander who would take the fight to Lee instead of merely reacting to Lee’s moves.

Newly minted Lieutenant-General Grant arrived in the Spring of 1864 to meet General Meade, then commanding the Army of the Potomac, who offered his resignation to the new commander of all the Union Armies, but Grant refused the offer. The Army of the Potomac: A Stillness at Appomattox, Bruce Catton, Doubleday & Company, 1953, page 36. Grant’s command encompassed over 533,000 soldiers and Bruce Catton writes that he “was a natural—an unmistakable rural Middle Westerner, bearing somehow the air of the little Farm and the empty dusty road and the small-town harness shop, plunked down here in an army predominantly officered by polished Easterners. He was slouchy, round shouldered, a red bristly beard cropped short on his weathered face, with a look about the eyes as of a man who had come way up from very far down; his one visible talent seemingly the ability to ride any horse anywhere under any conditions.” Id at 37.

Aside from his ability to ride a horse better than most other generals, Grant possessed another invaluable asset in the person of John Rawlins, his Chief-of-Staff, a young lawyer in Illinois when Grant met him. Rawlins was indispensable

to Grant administratively, but he also enforced temperance on Grant. A Stillness, 40. Grant's drinking history—and exaggerated legend--was known to Congress as well as to many officers and all wondered if he could stay sober—Rawlins had made a career of making sure that he did at all important times. *Id.* On one occasion prior to the surrender of Vicksburg, Grant suffered a debilitating migraine headache and his doctor prescribed a glass of wine, that unfortunately triggered his desire for more wine and resulted in Rawlins chastising Grant the next day, as follows:

The great solicitude I feel for the safety of this army leads me to mention what I had hoped never again to do -- the subject of your drinking ... I have heard that Dr. McMillan... induced you, notwithstanding your pledge to me, to take a glass of wine, and today, when I found a box of wine in front of your tent and proposed to move it, which I did, I was told that you had forbid it being taken away, for you intended to keep it until you entered Vicksburg, that you might have it for your friends; and tonight, when you should, because of the condition of your health if nothing else, have been in bed, I find you where the wine bottle has just been emptied, in company of those who drink and urge you to do likewise, and the lack of your usual promptness a decision and clearness in expressing yourself in writing tended to confirm my suspicions. You have the *full* control of your appetite and can let drinking alone. Had you not pledged me the sincerity of your honor early last March that you would drink no more during the war, and kept that pledge during your recent campaign, you would not today have stood first in the world's history as a successful military leader. Grant, 272-73, citing *Letter from John Rawlins*, June 6, 1863.

## RELUCTANT NO MORE, GRANT IMPLIMENTS REAL PROGRAMS TO INCORPORATE “FREEDMEN” INTO THE UNION ARMY

The lengthy siege of Vicksburg highlighted the challenges and opportunities presented to Grant by the freed slaves. Several hundred thousand of them were liberated by Grant's army, and he enlisted the them to perform vital military duties. Black auxiliaries engaged in dangerous, arduous tasks: digging trenches and rifle pits around Vicksburg, enhancing Union defenses ... and tearing up railroad tracks east of the city. Grant, 280. Recognizing the value of these new resources, Lincoln dispatched General Lorenzo Thomas to assist Grant in recruiting and

training Black troops. In a short time, Thomas and Grant had assembled 20,000 freedmen into regiments under arms. *Id.*, 280-81.

Grant not only saw the military advantages to incorporating the freedmen, but when he encountered a plantation about 25 miles south of Vicksburg owned by Jefferson Davis and his rich brother, Grant ordered the land leased to its former slaves and other freedmen in the area who organized and farmed the land, paying the Union government for “rations, mules and tools” and by 1865 Davis Bend was operating at a profit and proving that the freedmen could be self-sustaining and independent. *Id.*, 282. Confederate troops encountering Black Union troops were often especially vicious in such encounters, but in numerous engagements the Black regiments acquitted themselves honorably. *Id.* 283. Word spread quickly that Grant “had gone from being a reluctant recruit to abolitionism to an ardent convert.” *Id.*

Lincoln pushed his generals to train and equip more freedmen into the Union ranks and Grant assured him he would not only obey the order but that it was something “he *personally approved.*” *Id.*, 284. The Army paid black soldiers less than their white comrades and there were still racial indignities, but Frederick Douglas “recognized that once the black man had ‘a musket on his shoulder and a bullet in his pocket,’ there was ‘no power on earth’ that ‘could deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States.” *Grant*, 284-85, citing, Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, 36.

#### “UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER GRANT” ACTUALLY USED A POLICY OF LENIENCY TO SHORTEN THE WAR

Grant earned his nickname “Unconditional Surrender Grant” by his stern demands for Confederate surrender at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, previously discussed. The siege of Vicksburg in early July 1863, was a difficult campaign against a well-entrenched Confederate force originally numbering in excess of 30,000 men. *Fn.* *Grant*, 268. After a lengthy siege, the Confederate commander, an officer whom Grant knew well from the Mexican War, requested terms of surrender to which Grant initially responded that none would be offered, but realizing that he needed to avoid the bloodshed and civilian loss that a frontal attack would entail, Grant offered to allow the Confederates to surrender and keep sidearms and horses. Rather than transporting them North as prisoners, the Confederate soldiers were allowed to return to their homes under terms of parole, thus saving the cost of

transport and freeing Grant from having to tie up his army's transports with prisoners. Grant, 288.

As March 1865 arrived, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman had marched to the sea and turned North with Lee bottled up by Grant as Lee tried desperately to defend Richmond. Grant, 485. Lincoln saw in these developments the beginning of the end of the war and instructed Grant and Sherman to pursue a policy of leniency toward the South. He is reported to have told them that "he didn't want to *hang* Confederates so much as to hang *on* to them." Grant left the meeting "believing that in dealing with Lee's army, he should be magnanimous in the terms of surrender." *Id.*

On the morning of April 3, 1865, Lee abandoned Richmond and the former capital of the Confederate States of America was captured by Grant's troops, although in an act of "profound" symbolism, General Grant never entered the city to revel in its conquest. Grant, 495. "With poetic justice, black soldiers joined the entrance of Union troops into the ravaged capital on April 3. The message wasn't lost on the townspeople." Grant, *Id.* President Abraham Lincoln accompanied by only 10 armed sailors walked the streets of Richmond the next day and sat in the chair recently vacated by Jefferson Davis. *Id.*

## LEE'S SURRENDER OF THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA EFFECTIVELY ENDS THE CIVIL WAR

As with Vicksburg and following the instructions of Lincoln, Grant negotiated lenient terms for the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia.

"The officers to give their paroles not to take up arms against the government of the United States until properly exchanged; And each company or regimental commander sign a life parole for the men of their commands. The arms, artillery, and public property to be parked and stacked, and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the sidearms of the officers, nor their private horses or baggage. This done each officer and man will be allowed to return to his home, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles and the laws in force for they may reside." Personal Memoirs, Appendix, April 9, 1865, Correspondence from Lieutenant-General Grant to General Robert E. Lee.

Grant decided not to demand that Lee surrender his sword and intentionally omitted the words “unconditional surrender”, but most importantly, consistent with President Lincoln’s wishes, the terms of surrender protected the Confederate officers and men from retribution or prosecution. Grant, 509. When Grant asked Lee if the written terms of surrender were satisfactory, Lee responded, “Yes, I am bound to be satisfied with anything you offer. It is more than I expected.” *Id.*, *citing*, Catton, Grant Takes Command, 465.

Lee’s opinion of Grant has been the subject of much debate by historians since the Civil War, but he is reliably reported to have said that “General Grant excelled all your most noted soldiers.” Grant 517. Grant’s view of Lee is somewhat easier to discern as he gave Lee his “qualified admiration.” “Lee was of a slow, conservative nature, without imagination or humor, always the same, with grave dignity.” Grant, 517, *citing New York Herald*, July 24, 1878. Whatever their mutual evaluations of the other, Lee’s gratitude to Grant in providing humane terms of surrender at Appomattox was genuine. Grant, 517.

#### ASSASSINATION AND FOUR YEARS OF PRESIDENT ANDREW JOHNSON LEAD TO GRANT’S LANDSLIDE ELECTORIAL COLLEGE VICTORY

Good Friday, April 14, 1865, found Grant in Washington attending a Cabinet meeting at President Lincoln’s request, but the day ended with Lincoln near death after being shot in the head at Ford’s Theater. Grant, 521. Following the Cabinet meeting, Lincoln had urged Grant and Julia to attend the theater that evening with the President and Mrs. Lincoln, but Julia had plans for the family to leave for Philadelphia after the meeting and was unenthusiastic about spending time with Mary Lincoln whom she believed had behaved rudely towards her the last occasion they were together, and Grant thus declined the invitation. *Id.* at 523. By this fortuitous occurrence, Grant escaped possible assassination himself, although he had been targeted, but always wondered whether he could have prevented Lincoln’s death, had he attended the theater with the President that tragic evening. Grant, 528.

President Johnson succeeded the assassinated Lincoln as President of the United States. He was born and reared in North Carolina before moving to Tennessee, but had remained loyal to the Union, although still a racist at heart. Grant, 532. Within six months of the war ending Grant, as General of the Army, reduced its number from about 1,000,000 men to a mere 210,000. *Id.* at 545. The First and

Second Reconstruction Acts vested military governments with control of the former Confederate States and their local governments became advisory. Grant, 286-87. Grant favored these acts and willingly enforced them, but that brought him into frequent conflict with President Johnson who remained very sympathetic to Southern Whites. *Id.*, 587. Violence against the freed Blacks grew rapidly in the South, particularly in Texas and Tennessee where a new “social club”, the Ku Klux Klan, terrorized former slaves and sought to prevent Blacks from voting in the 1868 elections. *Id.*, 588.

The Third Reconstruction Act passed Congress a few days after Grant testified on its behalf, but Johnson vetoed the bill and Congress promptly over-rode his veto and began building the case for impeachment. Grant, 590. Johnson continued to resist reconstruction and was impeached by the House, leading to a trial in the Senate commencing March 5, 1868, and continuing until May 15, when Johnson was saved from conviction by the vote of the junior senator from Kansas whose vote prevented the 2/3 majority required for conviction. Grant, 611. Although Grant favored conviction, he wisely stayed mostly out of the fray. *Id.*

Only days after the acquittal, the Republican convention opened in Chicago and nominated Grant for President as expected. The only drama was the selection of a Vice-Presidential candidate and House Speaker Schuyler Colfax of Indiana—known to some as “Smiler Colfax” was selected. Grant, 615. As “a fervent booster for Reconstruction and black voting rights, his politics were harmonious with Grant’s. *Id.* at 616. In accepting the nomination, Grant penned the four words that have been his legacy--“Let us have peace.” *Id.* The Democrats abandoned Johnson and nominated Horatio Seymour, known best as an opponent of the Emancipation Proclamation and for having called the instigators of the 1863 New York draft riots, “My friends.” *Id.* at 617.

The Democrat campaign against Grant was vicious and the partisan papers were full of “Fake News” such as Grant being in a “state of frenzy and tearing up his mattress” while being perpetually drunk. Grant, 619. The Democrat motto was “This is a white man’s country, let the white men rule.” *Id.* Ku Klux Klan violence, murder of black and white Republican supporters marred the election campaign. In the end, Grant won the popular vote by about 5%, but achieved a landslide 214 to 80 margin in the Electoral College. *Id.* at 623.

Grant wanted to not only restore the secessionist States to the Union, but he wanted all Southerners to feel they were part of one country again. As he stated in his memoirs:

“I would not have the anniversaries of our victories celebrated, nor those of our defeats made fast days and spent in humiliation and prayer; but I would like to see truthful history written. Such history will do full credit to the courage, endurance and soldierly ability of the American citizen, no matter what section of the country he hailed from, or in what ranks he fought. The justice of the cause which in the end prevailed, will, I doubt not, come to be acknowledged by every citizen of the land, in time. For the present, and so long as there are living witnesses to the great war of sections, there will be people who will not be consoled for the loss of a cause which they believed to be holy. As time passes, people, even of the South, will begin to wonder how it was possible that their ancestors ever fought for or justified institutions which acknowledged the right of property in man.” Personal Memoirs, Chptr. XII, para. 12.

## ANNEX SANTO DOMINGO AS ONE OR MORE BLACK MAJORITY STATES

Grant believed that the United States need not be bound by its continental limits and promoted the idea of annexing Santo Domingo into the United States so that it would become one or more states with majority black populations. American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant, Ronald C. White, Random House Publishing Group, 2016, 513. Not only did the island have resources and a relatively low debt to assume, but its annexation and ultimate statehood would make slavery unsupportable in Cuba and Puerto Rico. *Id.* He efforts were strongly opposed by Senator Charles Sumner, the Harvard educated lawyer from Boston who was a leader of the “Radical Republican” faction. Grant proposed a Treaty of Annexation, but it was defeated in the Senate even though it was supported by the government of Santo Domingo. *Id.*

## THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT AND SOUTHERN EFFORTS TO EVISERATE IT FRUSTRATE GRANT’S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY

As with Grant’s military campaigns and battles during the Civil War, Reconstruction and the many pitched battles between Klansmen and Federal authorities are issues beyond the scope of this paper and already the subject of several books.

The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution protected the right of black men to vote, irrespective of having previously been slaves and Grant supported its passage and ratification in his first inaugural address. Grant, 632. Later, he was pushed by Susan B. Anthony to add the right of Women’s Suffrage to the Fifteen Amendment, and while he “showed Sympathy for women’s rights, he didn’t cover himself with glory on the issue.” *Id.*, 749. At the Republican Convention in 1872, Anthony believed she at least got a “splinter” in the platform that promised to give the matter “respectful consideration.” *Id.*, 750. A splinter was enough for Anthony to support Grant’s reelection, perhaps because she believed that Julia Grant as with them “heart and soul.” *Id.*

The presidential election of 1872 proved to be the fairest in southern states until 1968, largely because of close Federal scrutiny in anticipation of violence. *Id.*, 751. However, in Louisiana, Republican leaders “claimed more than two thousand supporters were killed or injured before the election. *Id.* Grant won over 56% of the popular vote, and an overwhelming Electoral College victory, buoyed by the black vote, he won every southern state except Georgia and Texas. *Id.* The Republican party gained commanding control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. *Id.*

Thanks to waning faith in Reconstruction among Republicans combined with a mounting white backlash in the South, Grant faced resistance to the results of the recent elections and a revival of political opposition in the South. Grant, 753. In his Second Inaugural Address, Grant “reaffirmed his commitment to the four million former slaves who had been made citizens. Still, the freed people were ‘not possessed of the civil rights which citizenship could carry with it. This is wrong and should be corrected.’“ *Id.*, 755. Further, he decried the Wars of Extermination against Native Americans and advocated “education and civilization” instead of war. *Id.* While hardly enlightened by today’s views, it was at the time a radical departure from past practices.

1873 brought open warfare between supporters of competing slates for the governor of Louisiana resulting in a pitched battle when several hundred white Democrats armed with rifles and a small cannon attacked the parish courthouse defended by black and white supporters of the elected Republican officials, killing dozens. Grant, 758-59. When Federal authorities arrived, they found “heaps of dead black bodies being scavenged by dogs and buzzards ...[but] were unable to find the body of a single white man.” *Id.* Grant angrily told the Senate “a butchery of citizens was committed in Colfax, which in bloodthirstiness and barbarity is hardly surpassed by any acts of savage warfare.” Grant, 759, citing, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 26:6 “To the Senate,” January 13, 1875.

Fighting continued in Louisiana and other southern states during the first two years of Grant’s second term and he sent troops to South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana, as White Leaguers, Rifle Companies and the Klan waged war against the rights so recently won by the freedmen. Grant, 760-763. Following the mid-term elections of 1874, General Sheridan, sent by President Grant to restore order, estimated that there were “2,141 blacks killed by whites since the war, with another 2,115 wounded—almost all crimes that had gone unpunished.” *Id.*, 763.

## THE GAINS OF RECONSTRUCTION LOST FOR 100 YEARS

The mid-term elections of 1874 went solidly to the Democrats who stridently opposed Reconstruction and particularly the use of Federal troops to enforce civil rights. One of the last acts of the lame-duck Congress was to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1875, that Grant signed into law on March 1, 1875, and it outlawed racial segregation in public accommodations, schools, transportation and juries—at least until struck down by the Supreme Court in 1883. Grant, 795. The Republicans became hesitant if not hostile to enforce civil rights laws and the Supreme Court emasculated the power of the Federal government to protect voters by ruling in March 1876, that the equal protections and due process provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to State Actions and could not be used against “individuals”. American Ulysses, 576. Ultimately, the Supreme Court also would strike down the Civil Rights Act of 1868. Thereafter, constrained by politicians and courts, Grant’s inconsistent use of the Regular Army to enforce voting rights for newly freed black citizens allowed the resurrection of the Ku Klux Klan and other nightrider groups that succeeded in denying southern blacks their right to vote.

- As the elections of 1876 approached, the Republicans nominated Rutherford B. Hayes and the Democrats nominated Samuel J. Tilden. American Ulysses, 572. Tilden won the popular vote and initially appeared to be only one Electoral College vote short of the needed majority, but there were disputed votes and competing Electoral slates in several southern states. Id, 577. As a result of violent suppression of the black vote in southern states and the Fifteenth Amendment that required all black citizens to be counted, the South received forty more Electoral votes in 1876 than in previous elections. Grant, 848. With the outcome disputed as never before, Grant established an Electoral Commission that allocated the disputed Electoral votes—all 20 disputed votes were allocated to Hayes by a vote of 8-7, with Supreme Court Justice Bradley casting the deciding vote based upon Hayes’ promise to end Reconstruction and allow “home rule”. Grant knew that “home rule” meant white rule that would effectively disenfranchise the freedmen. American Ulysses, 581.

## GRANT TAKES A TWO-YEAR VICTORY LAP AROUND THE WORLD

Following completion of his second term as president Grant embarked on a world tour lasting over 2 years during which he met with many world leaders and promoted trade and diplomatic relations with United States. One of Grant’s few successful investments, a silver mining company, earned the former President \$25,000 and he thought that amount judiciously spent would allow him and Julia to travel around the world. American Ulysses, 587. On May 17, 1877, Grant, Julia, their 19-year-old son Jesse, a maid, secretary and John Young a 36 year-old correspondent sent by the New York Herald, set out from Philadelphia on the SS Indiana, a steamer bound for Liverpool. American Ulysses, 590. Thus, began Ulysses’ odyssey around the world where he met leaders of nations and many common citizens as well and he both expanded his own understanding of the world, but served as a goodwill ambassador and unofficial ambassador-at-large on behalf of the United States. Grant, 864.

Grant was impressed with all of the countries and peoples he visited, but his visits to China and Japan were particularly enlightening. He saw great potential in both countries and great opportunity for mutually beneficial trade, but he warned both against seeking financial entanglements with the West. American Ulysses, 609-610. Visiting the Great Wall, Grant remarked: “It is hard to see any practical use these walls can serve in the present age unless they should be converted into drives.” Grant, 879, citing “Travel Diary,” June 4, 1879. So impressed were the

leaders of China and Japan that they agreed to allow him to mediate a settlement of an island dispute. *Id.*, 610. Grant's highest praise, though, was to Mexico, the land he had invaded and with which he fell in love and Mexico's President greeted him as an old friend. *American Ulysses*, 618. He favored economic investment and the building of roads that would make Mexico a rich country and a good neighbor, so that each would prosper. *Id.*

### GRANT BREAKS WASHINGTON'S PLEDGE

At first reluctantly, Grant permitted his name to be placed in nomination in 1880 for a third term as president following Rutherford B. Hayes' decision not to seek a second term in office. He refused to campaign, expecting the nomination to come to him. *Grant*, 898. Julia strongly encouraged him to run and to go to the floor of the convention where he would have been received with wildly enthusiastic demonstrations, but Grant refused to chase it. *American Ulysses*, 620. Grant led on the first ballot 304 to 284 for Blaine and 93 for Sherman, and he continued to lead through the 35<sup>th</sup> ballot where he had 306 of the necessary 379 votes. But on the 36<sup>th</sup> ballot, James Garfield had 399 votes when Maine abandoned its favorite son, Blaine. *Grant*, 902. Washington's term-limit was preserved—until Franklin Roosevelt felt the demands of World War II required him to break it.

### TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS AND DETERMINATION TO COMPLETE MEMOIRS

June 1884, brought more travail to Grant when he suffered the first symptoms of the disease that would ultimately take his life. Having developed his cigar habit during the civil war Grant smoked as many as 20 cigars a day for many years. Not surprisingly, he was diagnosed with throat cancer. As the mass in his throat grew, it became hard and painful for him to swallow. Eating, drinking and talking all became difficult and painful for Grant and he was terrified that his death might leave Julia destitute. *Grant*, viii.

Many former generals and politicians of the time had already written their memoirs, but not Grant, although his were greatly anticipated by the public. Grant had a natural advantage over others because his wartime order books displayed a

clear and concise writing style he perfected during the war and it served him well then and as he penned his authoritative story of the war years. *Id.*

Fighting constant pain as he wrote, Grant tried, as much as possible to avoid the mind-numbing opiate medicines of the time. “When the pain grew too great, his black valet, Harrison Terrell, sprayed his throat with ‘cocaine water,’ temporarily numbing the area, or applied hot compresses to his head.” *Id.* at xix. Working four to six hours a day, he “pumped out 336,00 words of superb prose in a year.” *Id.* Toward the end he was forced to dictate or scribble notes, he finished his manuscript shortly before his death. *Id.*

Mark Twain and his son obtained the rights to publish Grant’s memoirs after convincing him that the publishing house with which he was dealing was taking advantage of him. *Century Magazine* had offered Grant a 10% royalty with a \$500 advance but projected only 25,000 copies would be sold. Twain thought this an outrageous slight to the man who had saved the Country. Twain set up a publishing company and pitched a better deal to Grant. Twain “proposed a 20% royalty or 70 percent of net profits and offered to write a \$50,000 check on the spot.” *Grant*, 935.

When Grant hesitated—momentarily bothered at the thought of rebuffing *Century*—Twain sweetened his offer by providing for Grant’s living expenses and a job for son, Jesse. *Id.*, 936. The publishing contract went to Twain’s Charles L. Webster and Company and Twain began assembling an army of veterans to sell the two-volume set door-to-door.

## WHERE WOULD AMERICA BE TODAY IF GRANT’S GOALS HAD BEEN ACHIEVED—WELL, PERHAPS NOT ANNEXING SANTO DOMINGO

Grant is described by many writers as slow and dim-witted but explain how he easily passed his entrance examination to West Point, even though he was mostly self-taught. Explain how he defeated Lee and the “magnificent” defenses of Richmond when six other, better educated and cultured, Eastern Generals utterly failed to stop Lee. He innovated the coordinated attack on fortified cities using army, cavalry and gunboats. In his memoirs he penned what is still studied today as one of the most complete descriptions of a military campaign. When he misstepped, it was often because he had trouble refusing the request of a relative or down-trodden acquaintance for help or a job. Even his obsession with annexing

Santo Domingo displayed a vision of our county unbound from its continental geography. What would our role be in the hemisphere today if Haiti and the Dominican Republic were two or three states, and perhaps even Puerto Rico and Cuba. They certainly are geographically much closer than Alaska and Hawaii.

The evidence supports understanding Ulysses S. Grant as a man of deep determination, an able intellect, but a reserved nature. He was trusting to a fault, especially with those whom he allowed to get close to him. He was a believer in redemption and a finder of good in almost every man. He survived a hardscrabble youth, over-came alcoholism and the derision of sensationalist journalists ever willing to talk about—and exaggerate-- his faults. He foresaw a post-war nation that needed to heal and knew that to do so he had to be lenient at Appomattox, and forceful in preventing southern whites from falling back into their old ways in hopes of recreating a caste system he hoped to have forever destroyed.

Grant saw the moral imperative following the Civil War to truly free the former slaves, to fully recognize them as citizens, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. He pushed hard for the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment and for the Civil Rights Act of 1868. He favored, though a bit tepidly, Women's Suffrage. These were extraordinary beliefs for a man of his time. It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the tumult of 1968 that the Country's focus was directed back to these issues that Hiram Ulysses Grant saw so clearly. He justly deserves to be reconsidered by history as one of our outstanding Presidents.

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