

GRANT



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Plus Special Insert:
**Invitation to the 2024 Grant
Day Dinner and Colloquy**



**Grant Monument
Association**

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GRANT BIRTHDAY DINNER FEATURES BROOKS SIMPSON GMA LAUNCHES HORACE PORTER AWARD

On April 24, 2023, the Grant Monument Association commemorated Ulysses S. Grant's 201st birthday at the Union League Club in New York City with its traditional dinner followed by a colloquy featuring General David H. Petraeus and Grant biographer Brooks D. Simpson. A recognized scholar of the Civil War–Reconstruction era and trustee of the GMA, Professor Simpson is the most prolific living

Grant scholar. His books and articles going back more than 30 years have played a foundational role in much of the scholarly reassessment of Grant that has taken place since the 1990s.

Professor Simpson discussed his study of Grant from a young age, his disagreement with William S. McFeely's influential but problematical 1981 biography, and the importance of *Continued on page 2*



Prof. Simpson (center) and Gen. Petraeus (right), first recipients of the Horace Porter Award, with GMA president Frank Scaturro

Albert Trotman

SITE UPDATE: REPAIRS AT TOMB SOUGHT; VISITOR CENTER REOPENED

A number of deferred maintenance items at Grant's Tomb have called for attention over the past several years. In 2019, the GMA wrote elected officials about, among other issues, wear to the monument's steps and the broken, cracked outdoor plaza. There was not much progress made on maintenance issues during the pandemic, and in 2023, a substantial amount of discoloration from the intrusion of water became visible in the

Tomb's upper levels, adding yet another pressing concern at the monument. Both the repair of the plaza pavers and repairs to the roof of the Tomb have become the local NPS administrators' highest priority at the site, and these issues are now undergoing higher level review. In order for any of this to move along, however, a sufficient appropriation must be enacted into law by Congress. Concerned citizens should write their *Continued on page 2*

Birthday dinner colloquy, continued from page 1

understanding the connection between Grant the general and Grant the politician. “Grant had a much better understanding of the world he inhabited and the decisions he made and their political as well as military ramifications” than the image that often emerged from earlier historical accounts, Simpson observed. On the battlefield, Grant “understood that war was politics by other means, and then during Reconstruction, was general-in-chief during the administration of Andrew Johnson, began to understand that politics was war by other means—and that what had been achieved at Appomattox had to be preserved in that postwar world.”

Asked by General Petraeus to identify the source of Grant’s genius as a general, Simpson noted Grant’s knack for “reducing a problem to its simplest terms,” his capacity to “analyze what was before him and understand the fundamentals that he had to address.” Another factor was his “ability to deal with the unexpected,” a requirement for every commander. “Grant time and again could improvise in response to circumstances and do so while keeping his calm, his composure, in a way that other generals could not.” His later decision to run for president came “not because he wanted to be president,” but because he felt an obligation to protect “the fruits of the victory that so many have done so much to achieve.”

A substantial portion of the audience consisted of cadets and faculty from West Point along with other military trainees. The evening also featured the GMA’s second school essay-writing contest at the Frederick Douglass Academy in Upper Manhattan. Grant’s Second Inaugural Address, delivered 150 years earlier, was the assigned topic for the essays. Scholarship prizes were awarded to twelfth graders Shawn Yon, Jydin Harwell, and Sydney Mason.

Following the colloquy, the GMA announced a new award to recognize those whose work advances the organization’s mission—the interrelated notions of service, scholarship, preservation, and commemoration. It is called the Horace Porter Award, named for the aide de camp to General Grant during the war, White House secretary to President Grant, and author of the widely popular book *Campaigning with Grant*. Porter was also the president of the Grant Monument Association whose leadership and fundraising prowess were responsible for the successful completion of Grant’s Tomb. The evening’s two colloquy partners, General Petraeus and Professor Simpson, were the first recipients of the Horace Porter Award. As GMA president Frank Scaturro noted upon presenting the awards, Petraeus’ “service to country and dedication to Grant’s memory have been exemplary,” and Simpson’s “scholarship on Grant’s life and career has been nothing short of foundational.”

Tomb update, continued from page 1

members of Congress urging the appropriation of sufficient funds to accomplish these repairs without delay.

In other news, the visitor center at the overlook pavilion across the street from the Tomb, which had closed to the public in March 2020 amid the pandemic, was reopened on Memorial Day 2023. The current open hours at both locations are limited: Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the visitor center additionally closed between



Lucia McCreery/ GMA

Water damage at Grant’s Tomb (January 2024)

12 p.m. and 1 p.m. This contrasts to the hours adopted by the NPS during the renovation of the 1990s, when the site was opened for seven days per week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. “That schedule should once again be adopted,” said GMA president Frank Scaturro. “Appeals to Congress for sufficient appropriations for repairs to the site should also include a request for funding of sufficient staff to keep the entire site open for eight hours a day, seven days a week.”

ULYSSES S. GRANT IN VENICE: TO DRAIN OR NOT TO DRAIN

by Louis Picone

In his autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams*, the author claimed Ulysses Grant said that “Venice would be a fine city if it were drained.” It’s a snide, condescending, and pithy insult that conveys more than its brief ten words. It implies Grant is too uncultured, ignorant, and boorish to appreciate the majesty of the ancient city. Adams self-published his autobiography in 1907 (commercial publication came after his death in 1918), 29 years after Grant was in Venice and 22 years after Grant’s death. The line has been referenced, unquestioned, like a cudgel to bash Grant ever since, most recently in C.W. Goodyear’s otherwise excellent *President Garfield: From Radical to Unifier*.¹

Grant visited Venice in April 1878, almost a year into his 29-month world tour. Grant, Julia, their daughter, Nellie, and the rest of their band of travelers arrived late on April 22 or early April 23 from Florence. The visit was thankfully free of official ceremony that burdened him for most of his journey, allowing Grant to wander the narrow streets and visit sites that modern tourists would find familiar. He fed pigeons in the Piazza di San Marco, toured the Basilica di San Marco and Doge’s Palace. He walked across the Bridge of Sighs and the Rialto Bridge and took the obligatory gondola ride. Grant also saw the Arsenal, which stored the armaments used to fight the Turks and Moors in years past. They departed several days later for Milan.

There is little mention of Venice in Grant’s papers. Grant did not start his travel diary until January 1879, so he left no firsthand impressions. Julia, however, dedicated a full page to their stay in Venice. She made no reference to Grant’s alleged comment, but instead described a visit to an Armenian monastery where Lord Byron wrote *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. While Grant *Continued on page 3*

Grant smear, continued from page 2

preferred to travel incognito, the proud wife could not keep his secret and introduced her famous husband to their tour guide. An annoyed Grant scolded, "Now you have destroyed the day. We shall have no more comfort."²

American reporters covered only sparse details, including a visit from the mayor. Grant reportedly "expressed great satisfaction on visiting Venice and warmly thanked the mayor for the cordial expressions."³ Grant's companion and chronicler from the *New York Herald*, John Russell Young, wrote a verbose two-volume book about the trip, but he unfortunately offered few details of their stay in Venice. In Ron Chernow's opus, *Grant*, the author offered the possibility that Grant may have "meant that the canals should be cleansed of sewage." If Grant did say it—and that's a giant "if"—Young supports Chernow's assertion as he noted, "If any reliance can be placed in books of sanitary science, Venice is not the healthiest city in the world."⁴

Together, Grant's papers, accounts from fellow travelers, and newspaper articles offer no proof that Grant did say the comment. But neither do they provide evidence he *didn't* say it.

That brings us back to Henry Adams. He did not provide a citation (few historians did in 1907) but rather used what modern reporters call an "anonymous source" when he stated Grant made the remark "to a particularly bright young woman." While we can speculate about the identity of the mystery female, it's unlikely she was with Grant in Venice. Perhaps they spoke after his return to America. Or maybe she was a figment of Henry Adams' imagination. Just as he created distance from his own assertions by referring to himself in the third person ("Adams did not feel Grant as a hostile force . . . he saw only an uncertain one"), he could also have created an additional layer as a useful device to further evade accountability.

Given the possibility Adams fabricated Grant's comments, we must consider why he would do so. While some historians strive for political agnosticism, Henry Adams wore his opinions on his sleeve. It is not an overstatement to say he thought little of Grant. In another passage of *The Education*, he called Grant "pre-intellectual, archaic, and would have seemed so even to the cave-dwellers."⁵ In private letters, he was less oblique: "I have always considered that Grant wrecked my own life, and the last hope or chance of lifting society back to a reasonably high plane." Brooks Simpson explains that Adams held Grant singularly responsible for his failure to obtain political influence like his famous ancestors.⁶ Adams found Grant guilty of federal overreach in protecting freedmen's rights, including using the military to crush the Ku Klux Klan, members of which assaulted and murdered thousands of African Americans.⁷ In *The Last American Aristocrat: The Brilliant Life and Improbable Education of Henry Adams*, David S. Brown laments, "Adams failed to appreciate the problem of race in America with any urgency, insight, or empathy."⁸ Grant, on the other hand, did not fail to do so.

Shortly after the Venice smear, Adams added, "The progress of evolution from President Washington to President Grant, was alone evidence enough to upset Darwin." If we believe what he said about Venice without question, should we also assume Charles Darwin, who died five years after Grant left office, was upset by his presidency and tempted to rewrite *On the* *Continued on page 4*

MISSOURI BILLS INTRODUCED TO OBSERVE GRANT'S BIRTHDAY, DESIGNATE GRANT HERITAGE AREA

Two bills have been introduced in the Missouri House of Representatives that would advance the state's recognition of Grant's legacy and awareness of locations of significance during his life and career. H.B. 2751 would designate April 27, Grant's birthday, as "Ulysses S. Grant Day" in Missouri. This designation would not entail closing public buildings, but it would encourage students and other citizens throughout the state "to participate in appropriate events and activities to celebrate the life of the Civil War general and eighteenth president of the United States," in the words of the legislation, with this special recognition. Last year, Ohio enacted a similar designation of Grant's birthday, and Missouri would become the second state to do so. A second bill, H.B. 1808, would establish a "U.S. Grant Heritage Area" that encompasses 26 counties in approximately the eastern third of the state, all of which have some connection to Grant's civilian life or military command. Grant's connection to the city and county of St. Louis in his prewar life is well known and is perhaps best embodied at White Haven, his wife's family home (which Grant would later purchase) that is today administered as the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site. But that federally protected national park is just the tip of the iceberg.

Greg Wolk, the heritage programs coordinator of Missouri Humanities and a member of the board of the U.S. Grant Trail Association, explains the significance of the proposed heritage area as follows:

The life of Grant has a monumental scope, and for this reason, perhaps, few scholars or avid readers realize how extensive were Grant's movements in Missouri in 1861. Before the War, of course, the City and County of St. Louis played crucial roles in Grant's development. In addition, some of the most significant events of his Civil War career happened in and surrounding General [John C.] Fremont's St. Louis headquarters. Nevertheless, most of the significant connections Grant has to Missouri are found in its small towns and rural landscapes.

As an example, Grant's activities during eight days between August 28 and September 5, 1861, might be referred to as his "road to destiny." This road from obscurity to international fame began in Jefferson City, Missouri, when he boarded an eastbound train for St. Louis. It ended those 8 days later on the wharf in front of Paducah, Kentucky. This singular journey, first by rail, then by steamship (south from St. Louis as far as Cape Girardeau), by itself touched nine of the counties of the proposed heritage area. The proposed area also includes fifteen other eastern counties, which were impacted by four military campaigns that General Grant conducted in Missouri in 1861: 1) His initial foray into North Missouri (from Quincy), July 11 to August 8; 2) His August campaign to Ironton in the southeast; 3) The campaign to Fredericktown, Missouri, in October, 1861; 4) The campaign that resulted in the Battle of Belmont, November 7, 1861. Except for Fredericktown, Grant was in command in the field throughout the noted *Continued on page 4*

Missouri legislation, continued from page 3

campaigns. Several counties that Ulysses Grant might never have visited are included in the area for purposes of study, because they are adjacent counties with significant Civil War resources, or they relate to significant national themes with modern relevance and the themes arose during Grant's time in Missouri. Notable examples of the latter are the Civil War adventures of a young Samuel Clemens in and around Hannibal, and the original screaming eagle, the mascot "Old Abe" of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry.

Representative Louis Riggs introduced both bills in Missouri's House of Representatives, and both have bipartisan cosponsors. Robert J. Amsler, Jr., a longtime member of the U.S. Grant Camp #68 of the Sons of Union Veterans and commander of that organization's Department of Missouri, has been a prime driver of both bills and is appealing for support for the legislation. This includes finding state senators to introduce identical bills in the Missouri Senate. The GMA supports this endeavor and encourages concerned citizens to reach out to express their support to Missouri state legislators.

Grant Venice smear, continued from page 3

Origin of Species? Obviously, Adams was not above exaggeration to make his point. Regarding earlier writings, David S. Brown noted Adams "was aiming for effect rather than accuracy" and had a "tendency to embellish, kick, and bite to make a point more pungent."⁹

To help explain why the alleged comment gained traction, let's also consider its timing. Grant's reputation declined as the Lost Cause mythology began to surge after the 1915 debut of the film *The Birth of a Nation*, which occurred three years before the commercial publication of Adams' autobiography. In other words, at the time, disparaging remarks about the victorious general and staunch defender of civil rights and security for Black Americans would have found a receptive audience. Over the ensuing decades, Grant's reputation continued its slide. Joan Waugh notes, "Grant's star... has been eclipsed so completely for Americans since at least the mid-twentieth century." Tellingly, the first reference to the Venice comment found in a newspaper appeared as a quip in the *Minneapolis Morning Star Tribune* in 1950, when Grant's legacy wallowed at its nadir.¹⁰

Finally, we must consider that *if* Grant did say it, he meant it as a joke. Anyone who spends time with the primary sources can appreciate Grant's sense of humor. After watching fireworks in London that featured his emblazoned image, Grant joked, "I hardly understand the English people. They have burned me in effigy and cheered me."¹¹ Stumbling over rough cobblestones in Pompeii, Grant wisecracked, "Boss Tweed was not the first magistrate who failed to pave the roads."¹² In her memoirs, Julia lovingly recalled, "He was forever playing such practical jokes on poor me."¹³ "Venice would be a fine city if it was drained" would have fit nicely into Grant's comedic repertoire. And despite his unquestioned devotion for Julia, what older man doesn't like to get a laugh out of "a particularly bright young woman?"

History 101 teaches us to scrutinize sources, assess author bias, and investigate the primary sources, or lack thereof, used in secondary sources. For over a century, Henry Adams' damning insult has been indiscriminately accepted as immutable fact. But I contend, unless further evidence surfaces or the mysterious intelligent female's identity is revealed, historians and laymen alike should cease and desist from giving Adams' reckless quote credibility.

1. "Venice, the former president opined, would be pretty if only the streets were drained." C.W. Goodyear, *President Garfield: From Radical to Unifier* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023), 337.

2. Julia Dent Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)*, John Y. Simon, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 243.

3. "Italy Gen. Grant," *Burlington Free Press*, April 25, 1878.

4. John Russell Young, *Around the World with General Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: The American News Company, 1879), 1:374.

5. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Washington, 1907), 103. Goodyear echoes Adams's remarks when he states that "behind Grant's stony visage rested a similarly boulderlike mind—dull and heavy, possibly prehistoric." Goodyear, 192.

6. Brooks D. Simpson, *The Political Education of Henry Adams* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1996), ix.

7. David S. Brown, "The 'Race' Question: Where Henry Adams Lacked Moral Insight," *Literary Hub*, November 25, 2020, <https://lithub.com/the-race-question-where-henry-adams-lacked-moral-insight>, accessed March 9, 2024.

8. David S. Brown, *The Last American Aristocrat: The Brilliant Life and Improbable Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Scribner, 2020), 99.

9. *Ibid.*, 41, 165.

10. "Spring in Suburbia," *Minneapolis Morning Star Tribune*, March 30, 1950.

11. Julia Dent Grant, 205.

12. Young, 1:187.

13. Julia Dent Grant, 255.

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR TO HONOR GRANT

The Knights Templar, Priory of St. Patrick, will be honoring Grant during his birthday weekend by posthumously awarding him its Military Order of St. Louis. That award, which originated in Bourbon France as a mark of military merit, was reconstituted during America's bicentennial observances in 1976 and is currently given annually in recognition of contributions to military history and/or the plight of "Christians at risk." The honor to Grant stems from his iconic contribution to military history, his *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*. The Knights Templar will be giving this award to a representative of the Grant family at the West Point Club on Sunday, April 28, 2024, starting at 3 p.m. The event will include GMA officers and feature remarks from Grant biographer Brooks Simpson. All are welcome to attend. Please contact Anthony Mele at (914) 329-0338 or email tony@amiglobalsecurity.com for details and to RSVP. The West Point Club is located at 603 Cullum Road, West Point, NY 10996.

WOULD YOU BE THE JEOPARDY! CHAMPION?

On November 29, 2023, during the 2023 Champions Wildcard Hearts quarterfinal game 1 (show #8983), three Jeopardy! contestants had the opportunity to win \$2,000 by answering the following question in the Double Jeopardy! Round category "Farewell to the Chief:"

ON JULY 23, 1885 JUST DAYS AFTER
COMPLETING HIS MEMOIRS, HE DIED OF
CANCER AT HIS NEW YORK HOME

For those of us who have visited the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site & National Historic Landmark on Mount McGregor in Wilton, New York, this question was not difficult. Same for anyone else who has a basic familiarity with Grant's story. But as it turned out, none of the contestants were able to answer it!

Answer: Who is former president Ulysses S. Grant?

That said, the question could have been better worded. Joseph W. Drexel ostensibly owned the cottage in which Grant died. The former president was invited to stay there by Drexel and William J. Arkell, investors in a nearby resort.

Hon. Henry A. Kissinger (1923–2023)



Henry Kissinger was born to Jewish parents in Furth, Germany, on May 27, 1923. Following antisemitic discrimination in Germany, Kissinger's family emigrated to the United States. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943 and worked as an interpreter in the European theater. He later attended Harvard, earning his Ph.D. in 1954, and became the associate director of

Harvard's Center of International Affairs. For over a decade, Dr. Kissinger worked as a consultant for several federal agencies, eventually becoming secretary of state under President Richard Nixon. He also served as Nixon's national security advisor. Kissinger became emblematic of American foreign policy. He supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War by ensuring that Israel received the military supplies it needed to defend itself. Kissinger secured relations with China in order to further isolate the Soviet Union. He continued working with Middle Eastern nations, established peace agreements, and helped create a détente with the Soviet Union. Following Nixon's resignation in 1974, he continued to serve as secretary of state under President Gerald Ford.

Dr. Kissinger served as an honorary trustee of the Grant Monument Association. After his retirement, he published many works on historical figures and political events prior to his death at 100 on November 29, 2023. In a review of one Grant biography published in 2004, he approvingly noted the author's conclusion "that a greater understanding of how Grant confronted the watershed crises of his era has major relevance today as America wrestles with equally far-reaching military and political issues of a scope and importance not unlike those of the mid-nineteenth century."

Michael Arthur Worden Evans/
National Portrait Gallery

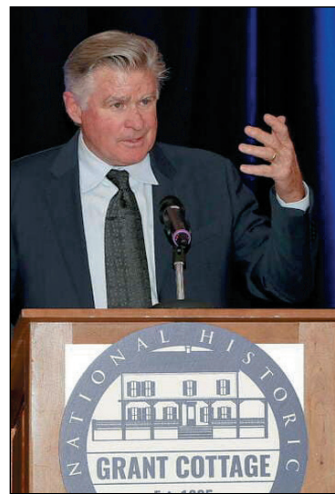


Frank Scaturro

Peter F. Delaney (1956–2023)

From GMA president Frank Scaturro: "I am saddened to report that Pete Delaney, my fellow park ranger and volunteer at Grant's Tomb during the 1990s, died on May 2, 2023. He was a friend under all circumstances, someone who gave of himself without expecting anything in return. He volunteered his talents for many years to New York City's national parks. This photo of Pete was taken at Grant's Tomb during an early 1990s visit by Miriam Marx Allen (Groucho's daughter) that Pete and I would always remember fondly."

Treat Williams (1951–2023)



Friends of Grant Cottage

The veteran actor Treat Williams tragically died in a motorcycle accident on June 12, 2023, that was caused by the negligent driver of another vehicle. He is best known for his many film and television roles, but he also contributed to the memorialization of Grant with his talents. The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage issued the following statement: "Treat Williams was a great friend of Grant Cottage and a member of our

Board of Trustees. He had been working with Cottage staff and volunteers to produce a one-man show on General Grant, a segment of which he performed at our fundraising Gala last October [2022]. His death is a tragic loss to all who knew him personally and who experienced his creative work on stage and screen. Our condolences to his wife, Pam Van Sant, and his two children."

Grant Monument Association
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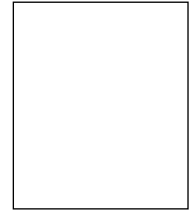
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Rosalynn Smith Carter, wife of President Jimmy Carter, died on November 19, 2023. In lieu of flowers, the Carter family requested that contributions be made to the Carter Center's Mental Health Program or the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers at RosalynnCarterTribute.org.



**Rosalynn
 Smith Carter**

1927–2023


Carter Center

Upcoming Grant Birthday Events

- Saturday, April 27, 11 a.m. National Park Service and West Point official Grant birthday ceremony, Grant's Tomb, Riverside Drive and West 122 Street, New York City
- Sunday, April 28, 11 a.m. Sons of Union Veterans, Oliver Tilden Camp #26 Grant birthday ceremony, Grant's Tomb, Riverside Drive and West 122 Street, New York City
- Sunday, April 28, 3 p.m. Knights Templar, Priory of St. Patrick, posthumous award of the Military Order of St. Louis to Grant, West Point Club, 603 Cullum Road, West Point, NY
- Monday, April 29, 6 p.m. Grant Day dinner and colloquy with Gen. David H. Petraeus and Donald L. Miller, Union League Club, 38 East 37 Street, New York City

In Memoriam

Peter F. Delaney (1956–2023)
 Hon. Henry A. Kissinger (1923–2023)
 Treat Williams (1951–2023)



The GMA thanks the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS) for its generous support in bringing this newsletter to you. Since 1865, Union officers and their descendants have worked through MOLLUS to perpetuate the memory of the struggle for the Union.

The Grant Monument Association

cordially invites you to a dinner commemorating the
202nd Anniversary of President Ulysses S. Grant's birth.

Dinner shall be accompanied by a colloquy between

General David Petraeus

and

Donald L. Miller

Military historian, author of *Vicksburg*

Monday, April 29, 2024

Reception at 6:00 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m.

**Union League Club
38 East 37th Street
New York, NY 10016**

Business attire

Dinner tickets: \$275
Host committee: \$750
Table of ten: \$2,750

RSVP to the Grant Monument Association at (646) 504-1865 or gma@grantstomb.org.
Pay online at grantstomb.org/gma-dinner or send payment to
Grant Monument Association P.O. Box 1088, FDR Station New York, NY 10150-1088