

Ulysses S. Grant:

Why the Mainstream Likes to Bash Him

MENTION THE NAME “ULYSSES S. GRANT” to most Americans at least slightly aware of their country’s history, and they will tell you he was a whiskey-sodden “Civil War” general whose post-bellum presidency was notable for its corruption. But there is a lot more to this man, once America’s most popular president, when he took office, than the establishment would have you think. A review of certain incidents in Grant’s career may explain why his memory is regularly sullied by the modern mass media whenever it gets that chance. One North Carolina legislator, Patrick T. McHenry, has even suggested as recently as 2010 that Grant be replaced on the \$50 bill with “a better man.”

BY MARC ROLAND

Americans’ sketchy appreciation of Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885) is reflected in the decline of his New York City mausoleum. Decades of neglect and vandalism beginning in the 1960s have rendered the grand structure a graffiti-smearing haven for narcotics traffickers and homeless vagrants.

The process of urban decay steadily pushed it toward the brink of demolition until 1994, when Congress was prevailed upon to grudgingly allocate funds for the monument’s partial restoration. While this practically casual effort indefinitely postponed the General Grant National Memorial’s confrontation with the wrecking ball, it was perhaps too little, too late, as escalating gang violence in the vicinity continues to erode our 18th president’s final resting place, just as his diminishing reputation suffers and fades over time. Today, the location of his tomb overlooking the Hudson River is seldom visited, save by contentious factions of Upper West Side Afro-American youth, who have transformed the once-fashionable Riverside Park into an arena for murderous “tribal” warfare and profitable drug deals.

Things were not always so, however. After Grant’s death

on July 23, 1885, more than 90,000 Americans donated the most money that had ever been raised for a public monument until that time: \$600,000—equivalent in our time to about \$12,500,000.¹ For the sepulcher’s official opening on April 27, 1897—the 75th anniversary of Grant’s birth—more than 1 million persons were in attendance, as his body was conveyed to what is still the second largest memorial in the Western World.² His interment was accompanied by a seven-mile-long funeral procession comprising 60,000 marchers, among them President Grover Cleveland, two ex-U.S. presidents, Supreme Court justices and dozens of veteran Union and Confederate Army generals.

The deplorable saga of Grant’s tomb from the late 20th to early 21st centuries accurately parallels deepening uninterest in his life, while mirroring the simultaneous decline of the country he served for a quarter of a century. A *Wall Street Journal* poll last year ranked Grant 29th in popularity out of all 44 U.S. presidents.³ Further marginalizing his significance is the preference given today by educators and mass-media producers to black historical figures and raceless celebrities at the expense of, as New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg described them, “irrelevant, dead, old white males.”⁴

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After permanently leaving the White House in 1877, Grant, accompanied by his wife Julia, was the first U.S. president to make a round-the-world trip. They were guests of the late 19th century's most prominent leaders—Queen Victoria, Prince Otto von Bismarck, Pope Leo XII, Czar Alexander III et al.—and feted by immense crowds wherever they went, from Europe to Egypt, Palestine, Siam, Burma, China and Japan. Grant's modern perception as nothing more than a corrupt drunkard seems at odds with the unprecedented outpouring of popular respect and official honors he received in both life and death.

A closer look at him simultaneously identifies part of the cause of that adulation and explains why it is meant to become forgotten.

Originally born "Hiram Ulysses Grant" on April 27, 1822 in Point Pleasant, northern Ohio, his name was mistakenly changed to "Ulysses Simpson Grant" upon entering the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, after his 17th birthday. Graduating 21st out of a class of 39, his grades had been mostly average or below, save for mathematics, in which he excelled.

In horsemanship, however, he was the best at West Point, where the young Grant set an equestrian high jump record that lasted almost 25 years. His achievement was no fortuitous accident, but the result of a mysterious quality evident since early boyhood.

Grant was, as would be termed today, a "horse whisperer," like Alexander the Great, possessing a profound natural rapport with horses. During early years working on his father's land, Ulysses was often called upon by local farmers to tame otherwise uncontrollable steeds, invariably with success. Possessed of a quiet, inward, yet amiable nature, his only recorded explosion of anger occurred in late May 1864, when he saw a teamster savagely beating a horse about the head and face. Freeing the abused animal, he furiously berated the man, then had him tied to a post for several hours.

Despite Grant's remarkable equestrian ability, he was denied entry into the cavalry, which had no vacancy, and was assigned duty as a regimental quartermaster, a job he performed with neither skill nor enthusiasm.

After the Mexican-American War began in 1846, Lt. Grant saw extensive action during the battles of Resaca de la Palma, Palo Alto and Veracruz. At Monterrey, he volunteered as a dispatch rider, negotiating a sniper-lined boulevard with such skill, he miraculously avoided being hit by the concentrated gunfire through which he speedily passed. He went on to become twice brevetted for outstanding per-



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Grant Never Cussed? Ulysses S. Grant never swore. His explanation was: "Well, somehow or another, I never learned to swear, when a boy I seemed to have an aversion to it, and when I became a man I saw the folly of it. I have always noticed, too, that swearing helps to rouse a man's anger; and when a man flies into a passion his adversary who keeps cool always gets the better of him. In fact, I could never see the use of swearing. I think it is the case with many people who swear excessively that it is mere habit, and that they do not mean to be profane; but, to say the least, it is a great waste of time."

sonal bravery throughout the fighting for Molino del Rey and Chapultepec. More important than his West Point education, these experiences combined with close observation of his superior officers to make Grant a firm believer in the mobility of forces and utter ruthlessness during attack, regardless of his own losses. These views would make him the outstanding field commander in the Union Army throughout the coming so-called Civil War.

After the fall of Fort Sumter in April, for the rest of 1861, Northern forces had been almost everywhere routed or defeated. But Grant's invasion of Tennessee netted the Confederate stronghold of Fort Henry on February 6, 1862, followed 10 days later by the surrender of Fort Donelson. In less than two weeks of fighting, he took the largest number of enemy prisoners and weapons since the onset of hostilities, a success that represented the Union's first major victory of the war. Grant was proclaimed a national hero throughout the North and promoted to major general.

But Fame is a fickle goddess, and, less than three months later, he came under severe public criticism—not for the last time in his stormy life—for having lost so many men at Shiloh, even though he had rallied his faltering troops and stabilized the situation. He was demoted to second in command of a newly formed 120,000-man army, kept away from decisive action and was at the point of submitting his resignation, when President Abraham Lincoln, frustrated by the hesitancy and downright incompetence of his commanders, reinstated Grant as major general in December.

During a lightning campaign, Grant's Army of the Tennessee crossed the Mississippi River, pushing enemy forces into defensive lines surrounding the fortress city of Vicksburg, Mississippi. But these lines stiffened, held, and then repulsed all Union attackers, with heavy casualties. Unable to take the stronghold by direct assault, Grant resorted to siege tactics on May 25. After more than 30 days of round-the-clock artillery bombardment, utterly cut off from the outside world, with no possibility of receiving reinforcements, and down to final supplies, Vicksburg was taken on July 4, an Independence Day its understandably bitter citizens refused to celebrate for the next 80 years.

The garrison's capitulation severed all communications with "rebel" forces throughout the Trans-Mississippi Department, splitting the Confederacy in two, while turning over the Mississippi River to the Union Army, thereby al-

lowing access to Georgia's vital granary supplies—disasters from which the South would never recover. This major turning point was mostly due to the iron will and skillful execution of the Vicksburg Campaign conducted by Ulysses S. Grant, and he was given command of the entire Northern war front in the West, except for Louisiana.

Later, he was promoted to lieutenant general (a position that had previously been given only to George Washington), for another decisive victory, this one at Chattanooga. It opened Georgia and the heartland of the Confederacy to invasion. [On July 25, 1866, Congress promoted Grant to the newly created rank of general of the Army of the U.S.—Ed.]

Thus, well positioned for such an undertaking, Lincoln and Grant decided upon multiple offensives aimed at preventing Southern armies from mobilizing reinforcements, while destroying their railroads and economic infrastructure. The rebels had plenty of fight left, however. Grant's losses were so terrible he was not able to take to the field again until May 1864, when he attacked Gen. Robert E. Lee in the Battle of the Wilderness, initiating a series of engagements that cost the Union Army 60,000 casualties in 30 days.

Grant was nevertheless able to get his entire Army of the Potomac across the James River without being detected by the enemy and advanced on Petersburg, a central railroad hub. The city was vigorously defended, resulting in a nine-month, ultimately stalemated siege. Shifting his attention to the Southern capital itself, he captured Richmond in April 1865, sending shock waves of defeatism throughout the Confederacy, and Gen. Lee capitulated with the Army of Virginia at Appomattox Court House on the 9th.

Grant's surrender conditions were deliberately generous. Rebel officers kept their horses, troops could retain their weapons, and all were allowed to return to their homes, so long as they no longer took up arms against the federal government. He wisely realized that harsh terms would have only stiffened Southern resistance.

Although Grant had done more to win the war for the North than any other Union commander—an achievement sufficient to enshrine his name among the most significant U.S. leaders in our history—his reputation was obscured, due less to any later, perceived failings as U.S. president, than because he offended a pair of politically correct sacred cows. His first (and utterly unforgivable) affront was the supreme blasphemy of our times: so-called "anti-Semitism."

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Grant's favorite horse during Lincoln's War was Cincinnati, given to him by an admirer after the battle of Chattanooga. Cincinnati was seldom ridden by anyone other than Grant, a notable exception being President Abraham Lincoln, when Lincoln last visited City Point, Virginia. Cincinnati ended up accompanying President Grant to the White House. Other horses Grant had in the War for Southern Independence were named Jack, Fox and Kangaroo (described as ugly and raw-boned). Kangaroo had been left on the Shiloh battlefield by the Confederates and was rescued by Grant. Having an eye for horses, Grant knew Kangaroo was a thoroughbred. After becoming a Union general's horse, Kangaroo got more rest, more grub and eventually became a fine steed.

During the siege of Vicksburg, Gen. Grant decreed in General Order No. 11:

The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled from the Department [of the Tennessee] within 24 hours from the receipt of this order. Post commanders will see to it that all of this class of people be furnished passes and required to leave, and anyone returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permit from headquarters. No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application of trade permits.⁵

Apologists for this shocking *faux pas* claimed the decree was composed by a bigoted underling and hastily endorsed by Grant without reading it. Much later, the general availed himself of the same excuse to escape mounting political pressure. "This was not the first discriminatory order [Grant] had signed," writes the Jewish historian Bertram Wallace Korn; "he was firmly convinced of the Jews' guilt,

and was eager to use any means of ridding himself of them."⁶

To be sure, in November, 1862, a month before he penned General Order No. 11 on December 17, Grant instructed Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut, commanding XVI Corps from his headquarters at Memphis, to "refuse all permits to come south of Jackson for the present. The Israelites especially should be kept out."⁷

Following up on this directive within 24 hours, he ordered Gen. Joseph Dana Webster, chief of transportation for the Army of the Tennessee, to "give orders to all the conductors on the road that no Jews are to be permitted to travel on the railroad southward from any point. They may go north and be encouraged in it; but they are such an intolerable nuisance that the department must be purged of them."⁸

Nor was General Order No. 11 the first and only general order of its kind. It had been preceded on December 8 by General Order No. 2, wherein Grant demanded that "cotton-speculators, Jews and other vagrants having no honest means of support, except trading upon the miseries of their country . . . will leave in 24 hours, or they will be sent to duty in the trenches."⁹

As General Order 11 came into effect, Grant personally



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Grant & the Freemasons

Ulysses S. Grant, who apparently was not a Freemason, took a dim view of such organizations. Said he: "All secret, oath bound, political parties are dangerous to any nation." Which U.S. presidents were Masons? George Washington, John Adams (33rd degree), James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft (also a Skull and Bones man), Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman (33rd degree), Gerald Ford (33rd degree) and Lyndon Johnson (33rd degree). Abraham Lincoln was a Rosicrucian. Also having some Masonic "backgrounds" but not actual Masons were Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan and both George Bushes (who are members of Yale's Skull & Bones Society).

explained to Christopher Parsons Wolcott, assistant U.S. secretary of war:

I have long since believed that in spite of all the vigilance that can be infused into post commanders, that the specie regulations of the Treasury Dept. have been violated, and that mostly by Jews and other unprincipled traders. So well satisfied of this have I been at this that I instructed the commanding officer at Columbus [Kentucky] to refuse all permits to Jews to come south, and frequently have had them expelled from the Dept. [of the Tennessee]. But they come in with their carpet sacks in spite of all that can be done to prevent it.

The Jews seem to be a privileged class that can travel anywhere. They will land at any wood yard or landing on the river and make their way through the country. If not permitted to buy cotton themselves they will act as agents for someone else who will be at a military post, with a Treasury permit to receive cotton and pay for it in Treasury notes, which the Jew will buy up at an agreed rate, paying gold. There is but one way that I know of to reach this case. That is for government to buy all the cotton at a fixed rate and send it to Cairo, St. Louis or some other point to be sold. Then all traders, they are a curse to the Army, might be expelled.¹⁰

General Order No. 11 had been issued, Grant informed Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman by letter, "in consequence of the total disregard and evasion of orders by Jews."¹¹

Grant's interest in the Jews appears to have been foreshadowed by his meddling father, Jesse, sometime prior to the issuance of General Order 2.

According to renowned Union Army cavalry Gen. James H. Wilson: "There was a mean, nasty streak in old Jesse Grant. He was close and greedy. He came down into Tennessee with a Jew trader that he wanted his son to help, and with whom he was going to share the profits. Grant refused to issue a permit and sent the Jew flying [and subsequently] prohibiting Jews from entering the line."¹²

His entirely responsible and defensive actions elicited predictable outrage from Northern Jews led by Republican Adolphus Solomons and editors of *The New York Times*, who pressured Lincoln to rescind General Order No. 11, although its propriety, even necessity, were never called into question. General-in-Chief Henry Wager Halleck conveyed the news to Grant, explaining:

Ulysses Grant: Nailed for Speed-

ing? As a president, Ulysses S. Grant was an honest man, although he allowed himself to be surrounded by shady characters. Early in his first term as president, Grant was arrested and fined, probably \$5 (some sources claim it was \$20) for speeding in his horse and buggy in Washington. The policeman, embarrassed to realize he had stopped the president of the United States, offered to release him uncharged. But Grant replied, "Do your duty, my good man!" His horse and rig were impounded. Grant had to walk back to the White House. Reportedly the charge was later dropped. Incidentally, the only other sitting president to be arrested was Franklin Pierce. Pierce was charged with running over an elderly lady with his horse. The case was dropped, for lack of evidence. Right, Ulysses S. Grant is shown seated on a lawn with his wife Julia and son Jesse.



Had the word "pedlar" been inserted after "Jew," I do not suppose any exception would have been taken to the order." The president himself had "no objection to expelling traitors and Jewish pedlars, which I suppose, was the object of your order. But, as in terms proscribing an entire religious class, some of whom are fighting in our ranks, the president deemed it necessary to revoke it."¹³

The politically motivated—indeed, openly subversive—suppression of a military decree issued by the Union Army's supreme commander and most important field commander produced something of an anti-Semitic backlash among several statesmen and from that dwindling minority of mainstream newspapers still published by gentiles. *The Washington Chronicle* supported Grant's prophylactic measures against the Jews, who were described as "scavengers of commerce," while a prominent founder of the Republican Party, Elihu B. Washburne, agreed with

Halleck that the precise wording, not the spirit, of General Order No. 11 was alone at fault.¹⁴

It haunted him during his first presidential campaign of 1868 and threatened to derail all chances for success. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the most high-profile American Jew of the period, organized opposition to the general's candidacy.¹⁵ Grant was nonetheless swept into the White House on a national wave of patriotic fervor, thereafter appointing more Jews to public office than any president before him in an effort to placate Jewish hatred and avoid further charges of "anti-Semitism," which, due to America's large influx of Jews after the Civil War, was rapidly becoming the kiss of death for any political career.

During 1874, at the height of the Sanborn Contract scandal—the fifth of 11 such improprieties that blotted his terms in office—President Grant and all his Cabinet ministers attended dedication ceremonies at Washington, D.C.'s

Adas Israel Congregation in the hope of gathering much-needed political support from America's burgeoning, increasingly influential Jewish community. These scandals could never be directly connected with Grant, because he was truly innocent of them all. Contrasting his brilliant military career, he was trusting to the point of naïveté and in possession of absolutely no business sense whatsoever, as attested by his lifelong failure to make a living outside the Army or the White House.

His handling of the country's highly volatile racial relations was no less ineffectual. The fault, however, lay primarily with Radical Republican politicians representing big money capitalists, such as Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, determined to employ freed negroes as industrial wage slaves. Grant did not want to "enfranchise the negro in all his ignorance," but instead proposed annexing Haiti and Santo Domingo (also known as the Dominican Republic) for relocating America's entire black population.¹⁶ "Grant was unwilling," according to writer Michael Korda, "to use federal force to defend the rights of blacks or to challenge the Southern status quo." He sought domestic tranquility "without necessarily making blacks the equal of whites."¹⁷

As Grant later told the German chancellor while visiting with Bismarck in Berlin, he would not "accept the former slaves as equals or force the former Confederate states to do so."¹⁸

Transferring the nation's negro population to Hispaniola seemed to him the most sensible, peaceful solution, with salubrious ramifications for the future of American society. But his annexation treaty was overwhelmingly defeated by a corrupted Senate in 1871. He believed Santo Domingo alone "might absorb as many as 4 million blacks. At one stroke, he imagined, America's position in the Caribbean would be made secure, American investment and ingenuity would turn Santo Domingo into a paying proposition, and the problem of what to do with (and about) the freed slaves in the South would be solved."¹⁹



Grant Discovers Golf

In a bid to get him to take up a new sport, a friend took Ulysses S. Grant to a golf course. There the president observed a novice player hacking away at the grass around a tee, without touching the ball. After a while of this, Grant commented: "That does look like good exercise. But what is that little white ball for?"

But it was not to be. Had his vision, which he never gave up on and for which he fought long and hard, been realized, the development of our country would have been radically different. Grant's sabotaged attempt to deport all U.S. negroes and his equally suppressed efforts at limiting Jewish black marketeers are highlights of a life unfamiliar to most Americans. They are better acquainted with his alleged alcoholism. He was, indeed, a heavy drinker, as were very many military men in the mid-19th century. But Grant was never drunk on duty, and was killed in the end, not by "demon rum," but by throat cancer, a result of heavy cigar smoking, in his 64th year. ♦

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Consumer Price Index, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millionaire>.
- 2 Ohio's James A. Garfield Memorial, in Cleveland, is the largest mausoleum in the Western World.
- 3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Grant.
- 4 "Mayor Big on Educational Reform," Zena Horowitz, *The New York Daily Herald*, p. 12, April 4, 2003.
- 5 www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.
- 6 Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, Jewish Publications Society, Pa., 2001, 143.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Frederic Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness*, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994, 199.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book*, Wayne State University Press, Mich., 1996, 199-203.
- 11 Jaher, *op. cit.*, 199.
- 12 <http://www.american-presidents.org/2007/12/grant-lincoln-and-general-order-number.html>.
- 13 Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Antisemitism*, Rowman & Littlefield, Md., 2005, 91.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Order_No._11_\(1862\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Order_No._11_(1862)).
- 16 Michael Korda, *Ulysses S. Grant, The Unlikely Hero*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2004, Calif. 116.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 132, 133.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*, 126.

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