

Grant Cottage Chronicles

Friends of Grant Cottage Newsletter
Volume 40, Issue 2, Winter 2018-2019

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 2018 season at U.S. Grant Cottage broke all attendance records. The 8,500 visitors to the Cottage this season has doubled the numbers from just five years ago. Your Board of Trustees, staff and dedicated volunteers have succeeded in dramatically raising the profile of the General's final six weeks of life on Mt. McGregor in Wilton. This season's attendance figures were boosted by the more than 950 patrons at our two-day Civil War Weekend in August. Over 100 uniformed re-enactors from as far away as Virginia and Montreal, Canada helped us be an important part of Wilton's 200th birthday celebration.

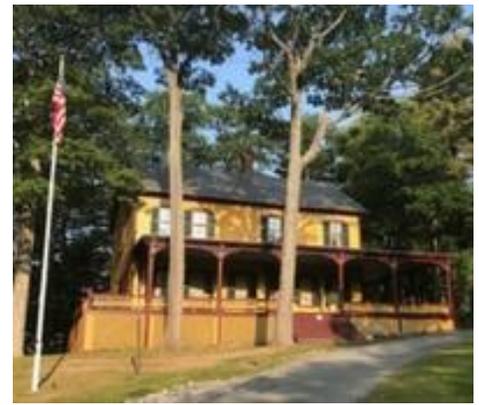


Aside from the fact that the paid attendance covered most of our costs, we were also fortunate to use the media visibility of the event to secure sponsorship grants from Parks and Trails NY, Adirondack Trust, Wilton Travel Center, Stewarts Shops, Saratoga Arms, and the towns of Wilton and Moreau. Regional newspapers and TV stations covered the Civil War Weekend extensively including front page photos in the *Times Union*, *Daily Gazette*, the *Saratogian* and the *Post Star*.

By partnering with the Town of Wilton on its bicentennial, we were able to stage the event at D.A. Collins Construction company property on Ballard Road and then invite visitors up to the Cottage, which could be seen from the soldiers' encampment. The event was so successful that the military historians have agreed to return in the summer of 2021 to honor the Man on the Mountain who saved the Union by winning the Civil War.



Tim Welch
President, Board of Trustees



SAVE THE DATE

Grant Discussion Group

Friday, January 18, 2-4 p.m.

The Susman Room at the Saratoga Springs Public Library

Register: ben@grantcottage.org or (518) 584-4353

Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 31, 2 p.m.

Gideon Putnam Room, Saratoga Spa State Park Admin. Building

Join us for news about our upcoming season, board elections and speaker Andre M. Fleche presenting "Ulysses S. Grant and the 1864 Campaign in History and Memory."

THE FRIENDS OF THE ULYSSES S. GRANT COTTAGE

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David Hubbard, Vis.Ctr./Group Sales Manager
Ben Kemp, Operations Manager
S. Marissa Barnes, Site Asst.
Emily Kane, Development/Events Asst.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

As we reflect on our 2018 season, it's easy to see what a vital role our supporters play in our successes. Thanks to the commitment and dedication of our volunteers, members, donors, and community partners, we can continue to provide quality educational programs, school field trips, community tours, off-site speaking opportunities, and special events, in addition to keeping the site open for daily operations. It is only because of your investment in us that we are able to fulfill our mission.

We are busy planning activities for 2019. Our new Grant discussion groups will begin in January, providing opportunities to stay involved during our off season. Our Annual Meeting will be held in March this year, with professor Andre M. Fleche presenting "Ulysses S. Grant and the 1864 Campaign in History and Memory." In April, we will have the privilege of welcoming the U.S. Grant Association to the site as part of their annual meeting.

We look forward to continuing to tell the story of the Grant family's time on Mount McGregor and are grateful for your support in us.

Melissa Swanson, *Executive Director*



FRIENDS CELEBRATE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Three decades ago, on September 18, 1989, a small informal group met at the Saratoga County Historical Society's (SCHS) Brookside Museum in Ballston Spa, New York to form the Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage. A number of our group had been involved in initiatives to reverse New York State's 1985 decision to close the Cottage following the death of the site's last live-in caretaker. Our lobbying efforts and grassroots petition drive had been successful, legislative grants had funded operation of the Cottage from 1985 to 1989 and the Saratoga County Historical Society signed a five-year agreement with the State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (Parks) to operate the Cottage in 1987. The agreement had been intended only as an interim initiative to keep the Cottage open. To provide a more permanent solution for operating & administering Grant Cottage,

SCHS additionally undertook the challenge of organizing and mentoring a Friends group for the Cottage. As one of the founding leaders of the new group, I can share that we were keenly aware of the deep debt of gratitude the Friends owe to the commitment of the SCHS (and to its then Director David Mitchell), which prepared the Friends to become a strong organizational steward for the Cottage.

As a founding executive officer of the Friends, I would also like to thank all the volunteers, staff, members, and Parks who have served and/or supported the organization over the past thirty years. This happy anniversary would not have been possible without you!

Melissa Trombley-Prosch
*Founding Friends Secretary,
Site Historian and
Current Friends Trustee*

U.S. Grant Discussion Group

Topic: U.S. Grant & Civil Rights

When: Friday January 18, 2019 from 2-4 p.m.

Where: The Susman Room at Saratoga Springs Public Library

Join Grant Cottage Operations Manager Ben Kemp as we kick off Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend by discussing Ulysses S. Grant and his relationship to Civil Rights. This moderated discussion group is open to the public, and all are encouraged to bring their own personal research and share their insights into Grant's relationship with African Americans and his efforts towards Civil Rights measures. It's a great opportunity to look back at the long difficult road towards Civil Rights and even explore how Grant shared some of the same views as later counterpart MLK Jr.

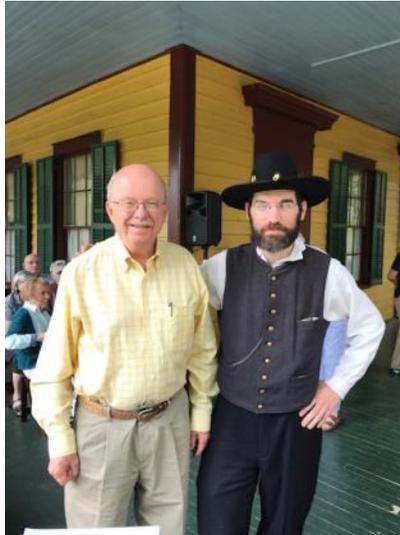
Information will also be available on becoming a member and/or volunteer with the Friends of US Grant Cottage, the organization that operates the local State Historic Site atop Mt. McGregor in Wilton, NY. Contact ben@grantcottage.org or 518-538-8330 for further information or to register.

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

The Friends of Grant Cottage have enjoyed a most successful year. Record attendance at the site, a well attended Civil War encampment, the engagement with a record number of school students, and a balanced budget all stood out. Ron White's lecture in June was another highlight of the season.

We, as members of the Board, work to provide the best possible experience for those who visit the site and hold in mind our responsibility to assure, as well as we can, that the Grant story, especially around the Cottage, will endure. We do this by collaborating with the NYS Parks and Rec which holds title to the property. We do this by formulating and reviewing our strategic plan. We do this by attempting to provide some financial backstop for any unforeseen emergencies in the future. We truly appreciate the generosity of time and treasure shared with us by our staff, our volunteers and our members.

The revised tax law of December 2017 increased the standard deduction and reduced the deductibility of state and local taxes, all of which decreased the likelihood for itemizing charitable contributions. They remain deductible but require financial planning to do so. One option, open to those who have an IRA and are over 70 and a half years of age, revolves around the RMD, the required minimum distribution, which comes into effect at that age. Current law allows the custodian of the IRA to distribute funds to charitable organizations and deduct them from the RMD, reducing taxable income. This thus reduces taxable income and gets around the deductible rules. The Friends will be happy to work with your financial custodian to see that the proper procedure is followed and that the donor does not take custody of any of these contributions before they are made.



Author Ronald C. White and Operations Manager Ben Kemp

The Board and staff are planning for an exciting 2019. We will bring more national and international media exposure to the Cottage and look forward to sharing our plans for programs in the near future. Happy New Year.

John M Myers, *Treasurer*



Re-enactors at our Civil War Weekend, August 2018

VOLUNTEERS

The 2018 season was record-breaking, both in number of visitors and number of volunteer hours. Approximately 30 volunteers put in over 360 shifts totaling over 1800 hours. With new books and television programs promoting Grant's life, we have seen a dramatic increase in visitors in recent years. Our dedicated volunteers have done their best to keep up with the increasing visitor numbers, helping with tours, parking, programs, outreach, educational visits and more. Even with this monumental effort, we were understaffed many days last season.

Volunteers are the backbone of The Friends of Grant Cottage organization, and as we continue to grow, we will need more help. Many volunteers over the years have found fulfillment and enjoyment in sharing the compelling story of U.S. Grant and his time on beautiful Mt. McGregor. If you or anyone you know may be interested in becoming involved as a volunteer, please consider filling out an application at grantcottage.org/volunteer. For more information, contact Ben at 518-538-8330 or ben@grantcottage.org.

Ben Kemp
Operations Manager



Volunteers from CWI assisted with site maintenance.



FRIENDS OF GRANT COTTAGE
P.O. BOX 2294
WILTON, NY 12831

HELP US KEEP HISTORY ALIVE

The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage, Inc. formed nearly 30 years ago to operate the Grant Cottage State Historic Site. Thanks to our generous supporters, this non-profit organization continues to inspire and educate people by interpreting and promoting the site's compelling and uniquely American story. Please consider a year end gift to help us continue this mission.

Thanks to previous support, we have been carrying on the legacy of the original caretakers of the Cottage, telling the important story of Ulysses S. Grant. During the 2018 season we reached over 8,500 people through tours, presentations, school groups, and community programs, including our Civil War Weekend. Our volunteers presented more than 30 programs at the cottage that covered topics related to Grant's family, military service, time on Mt. McGregor, and so much more. With your help, we can continue to educate people from around the world about this unique historic site and tell the story of the Civil War Commanding General of the U.S. Army, 18th U.S. President, and beloved American public figure.



Will you please donate today to help us keep history alive? Thank you for your support.!

I would like to support Grant Cottage with a tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____

Yes, I would like to join the Friends of Grant Cottage email list.

Mail your donation to: Friends of Grant Cottage, PO Box 2294, Wilton, NY 12831 or donate online at www.grantcottage.org/take-action