



#### The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage

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### PRESIDENTIAL REPORT

By the time you read this, I hope to report that Grant Cottage has been expanded by the 4.21 acres formerly known as the Mt. McGregor Prison Exercise Yard. Last year we completed a \$50,000 feasibility study by the LA Group Engineering firm which relied heavily on that property to provide increased parking and the location

for an event and programming pavilion.

Photo: Sarah Celik

As you probably know, the prison has been for sale ever since it was closed in the summer of 2014, and while no qualified buyer has yet been approved, your Cottage Board of Trustees has continuously lobbied during that time to have the fenced-in parcel annexed by the adjacent Cottage property. In mid-March, we were informed that the state has agreed to carve off that plot of land and we are confident that a final signature at the Commissioner level will seal the deal.

At that point, we can move forward with our Master Plan which calls for an expansion of badly needed parking spaces and a 125-seat programming pavilion with a magnificent view of the Hudson Valley and the Green Mountains of Vermont. Keep your fingers crossed. In the meantime, we will launch our first season in the past two years without any Covid -19 restrictions.

Tim Welch

President, Board of Trustees

**SPECIAL NOTE** Due to Covid mandates from the State, please visit www.grantcottage.org for the most up-to-date information on Cottage openings, hours and regulations. Programming may also change, so please check online for updated information.

#### NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



#### Let's Reconnect!

The ability to see, speak with, and visit people and places that have for so long been restricted is returning to normal. We are more comfortable with traveling, shopping, and in-person social interactions. So, this year as we plan to resume our connections with our favorite people and places, we hope that Grant Cottage will be on your list of places to reconnect with!

This year at the newly designated National Historic Landmark, we have more things to offer than ever before:

- 1. New exhibits of Ulysses S. Grant clothing on display
- 2. Display of a newly acquired period typewriter, similar to the one used when typing Grant's memoirs
- 3. A new 38-star flag flying at the Cottage, generously donated by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
- 4. A monument in front of the flag featuring the National Historic Landmark plaque from the National Park Service
- 5. A full schedule of programming for the season, with most offered in person
- 6. A campaign offering the ability to purchase a memorial brick or memorial bench for the grounds
- 7. A celebration of Grant's 200th birthday with a free community day event on June 18
- 8. A fundraising Gala in celebration of the Bicentennial on October 16
- 9. The ability to virtually tour the never-before-seen 2nd floor of the Cottage

We are excited to reconnect this season! See you on the mountain!

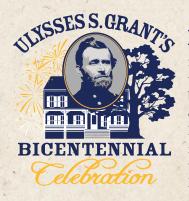
Visit our website www.grantcottage.org for details.

Sincerely,

Steve Porto Executive Director

## CELEBRATE GRANT'S 200TH BIRTHDAY!





Join us on June 18, 10 am – 5 pm, for a full day of festivities commemorating the Bicentennial of Grant's birth. Enjoy music, birthday cake, kid-friendly activities, historical fun, and so much more while surrounded by the natural beauty of Mt. McGregor.

Learn more about this and other programs & events at grantcottage.org/events



# CALL TO ACTION!

It is an exciting time to become involved with Grant Cottage Historic Site. As interest in Ulysses S. Grant is hitting new heights in recent years, visitation has grown

dramatically. We are always looking for individuals interested in helping us share an inspiring story with thousands of visitors each season. We have multiple opportunities for volunteer activities, so you can choose what works best for you. *To learn more about joining the Grant Cottage team, please fill out an application at: grantcottage.org/volunteer* 

## FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

**The year 2021 was a good one financially for the Friends, despite COVID.** Tour capacity was raised from 2020, but we were still forced to limit the number of people allowed on each tour. Despite these restrictions, we had record attendance, and record admissions revenue. Even with these successes, like most museums and historic sites, admission revenues only cover a small percentage of our operational expenses (in our case about 25%). Therefore, we remain reliant on support from our contributors, sponsors, and members. We are particularly thankful for the generous grants from the towns of Wilton and Moreau and the County of Saratoga.

The support of the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the management and crew from adjacent Moreau Lake State Park, continues to keep us functioning, maintaining and repairing the Cottage and grounds. The State installed a solar power array near the Visitor Center, taking us off the power grid, and making us a part of the State's Green Initiative. The State, with the help of a generous private benefactor, will also be underwriting the cost of a state-of-the-art fire suppression system for the Cottage. We hope that project will begin later this year.

Our big financial initiative in 2022 will be raising funds for the construction of a new Education Pavilion to be erected near the site of the old **Hotel Balmoral.** While we hope to receive government grants for part of this project, considerable fundraising will still be needed. The *Grant 200th Anniversary Gala* scheduled for October will start the ball rolling.

If you have any questions about Grant Cottage's financials, please feel free to contact me. Have you considered including Grant Cottage in your estate planning?

Again, thank you all for keeping living history alive!

Brike Lesser

Mike Lesser, Treasurer of the Board treasurer@grantcottage.org





# JOIN US ON OCTOBER 16, 2022 FOR THE BICENTENNIAL GALA

Telling the Story of Grant's "Wile" Hand Man at the Gold

By Melissa Trombley-Prosch, Friends of Grant Cottage Site Historian

s the Friends' Site Historian, I find my work involves research, networking, storytelling, and in some cases (to my great pleasure) – treasure hunting. Bringing the story of Noble E. Dawson's supporting role in Grant's memoirs project to life is a case in point. For years, snippets of information that I

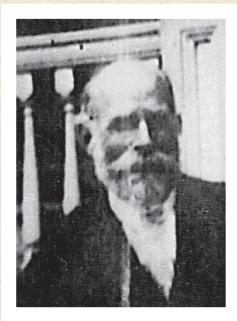
came across were added to my Dawson file in hopes of someday having enough material to tell the story of his life and his connection to U.S. Grant with a measure of detail. Some of the most interesting material came from Dawson's great-granddaughter Marjorie Orr Klein (including a rare multi-generational Dawson family photograph), and I am forever in her debt.

Noble Edmunds Dawson was a Civil War veteran who, as a nineteen-yearold, enlisted in the 19th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment as a corporal in July 1862 and mustered out as a second lieutenant in 1865. He was taken prisoner in September 1862 and sent to Camp Ford (4 miles northwest of Tyler, Texas), the largest Confederate prisoner of war camp west of the Mississippi River. While a prisoner, Dawson taught himself

shorthand using the dirt under his fingernails. His shorthand skill, which he managed to acquire despite the horrific circumstances he found himself in, would provide him a future livelihood as a stenographer.

After the war, Dawson worked as a stenographic reporter for the US House of Representatives. He later became an expert typist (the typewriter represented late 19th Century cutting-edge technology). In 1881, Dawson accompanied former President U.S. Grant and his wife Julia on a business trip to Mexico as his private secretary and interpreter (Dawson spoke fluent Spanish).

The year 1884 would prove a devastating one both for Grant



Noble E. Dawson in later life photo courtesy of Marjorie Orr Klein

and Dawson. Much has been written of the Grant family's impoverishment through an infamous Ponzi scheme, followed by his diagnosis of throat cancer. Tragedy also stalked the Dawson family that year as baby Helen Frances (whom the family called Nellie), died on January 9 at the age of 9 months, 9 days. Her death was followed by her mother Laura's on January 25th from tuberculosis.

On February 1, 1885, Grant wrote to Dawson. What the content of the letter was is still a mystery, but I would surmise Grant wrote of his memoirs project. I believe Mark Twain's (Grant's publisher) April offer of employment to him as Grant's secretary came as a welcome distraction for the grieving Dawson. A June 1885 newspaper article noted that Dawson would take Grant's dictation in shorthand and then type the content for the author to review

and make revisions. The material was then copied in longhand by either Grant's sons or Dawson for the publisher. On June 16, 1885, Dawson made the trip to Mt. McGregor with the Grant family and staff. He noted in a later interview that the last dictation Grant was able to make was on June 22, 1885.

About the same time, I found Dawson's typewriter use

documented (Albany Evening Journal, the paper owned by William Arkell – another figure that featured in the Cottage's 1885 story), I unexpectedly found a period Remington typewriter up for sale and had a "Eureka" moment. This artifact could provide a compelling way to interpret Dawson's role. The Friends' **Executive Director Steve** Porto and the Board of Trustees concurred. The purchase was made and the typewriter was donated (the Friends are not allowed to own artifacts under their NYS Charter) to NYS Parks (owners of Grant Cottage)



visitors beginning this season. On Memorial Day Weekend Cottage tour guide Steve Trimm will be presenting a program called *General Grant's Write Hand Man*, which delves more into Dawson's Civil War experiences (check the Friends' website at www.grantcottage. org for further information). We will also be sharing more information on the typewriter project on our social media. Thanks to all who helped make this project possible!

Grant Cottage typewriter after conservation

for exhibit in the Office room of the Cottage, where Dawson worked on the Memoirs project in 1885.

A typewriter that dates to the late 19th Century is bound to have issues and the Cottage's typewriter was no exception. A search for a conservator with the necessary expertise was undertaken. I would like to thank Cottage tour guide and Programming Committee member Steve Betts for suggesting Scott Connors and for providing transport for the typewriter.

Scott is the owner of the Stephentown Typewriter Company and a published author who enjoys writing with a typewriter. He bought one for backup use but found his first machine so reliable, he fixed his backup typewriter, sold it, and began his "journey into typewriters." Not only has Scott tackled the conservation of the Cottage's typewriter, but it is now a working 19th Century machine!

There is more to the stories of Noble Dawson and the Grant Cottage typewriter. The Friends will be sharing them with our



Scott Connors with Grant Cottage typewriter after conservation

## **OPERATIONS MANAGER REPORT**



n 1922 while celebrating the centennial of Ulysses S. Grant's birth, President Harding gave a speech in the little hamlet of Point Pleasant, Ohio, where the famous General was born. In the speech, he extolled the admirable traits of General Grant while arguing that his contributions and legacy were still relevant 36 years after his death. Now 100 years later, we at Grant Cottage Historic Site believe the same thing, that Grant's legacy continues to provide valuable lessons and inspiration to new generations. That is why the Friends of Grant Cottage are committed to making 2022 a special year of recognition. We are eager to welcome visitors and share the compelling story of Grant's last days with them, while also hosting special bicentennial events this season. We are continuing to work hard behind the scenes in our efforts toward expanding and improving the site and the visitor experience. Going forward the generous support of members and donors will be needed more than ever in order to realize the ambitious and exciting vision for the future of Grant Cottage. We are proud of the dramatic improvements to the historic site that have been accomplished in the last few years and we remain committed to introducing new experiences for visitors whether it be specialty tours, new exhibits, or engaging presentations. Most of all, we look forward, along with the other Grant-related historic sites and organizations around the country, to celebrating the General's bicentennial year with all of you!

> Sincerely, Ben Kemp Operations Manager



A brand-new exhibit will feature a nod to the Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant completed at the Cottage and this distinction, reserved for sites of significant literary contributions

Did you know that aside from our new National Historic Landmark designation, we are also a Literary Landmark?



to our nation's history. In addition, we will be hosting The Myth of Grant's Silence with Dr. Chris Mackowski, the inaugural event in our annual Grant Cottage Literary Landmark Authors series.

# TIDINGS FROM THE FRONTLINE



#### We're elated to celebrate Grant's 200th birthday with everyone!

With new specialty Tours, binoculars at the Outlook, new exhibits, and a full roster of programs

and events there's plenty for all to enjoy throughout the season. I'm particularly excited about the program Drawn Together about Grant and Thomas Nast, a German-born American editorial cartoonist, and to finally get together safely with friends to enjoy some outdoor music at A Concert: 19th Century Songs of Whimsy by Tom & Friends in August. Don't forget to become a Grant Cottage member to show your support of The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage National Historic and Literary Landmark while enjoying admission-free guided Tours of the Cottage, 10% off in the Gift Shop, and reciprocal benefits at hundreds of other historic sites and museums. We hope to see you often this year to celebrate the Bicentennial with us!

With thanks,

Golette Broestler Marketing & Development

# **VISITOR CENTER DISPATCH**

By Pat Porto, Visitor Center Manager

While the mountain is quiet in the winter, the staff has been busy with all kinds of projects for the new season. We will be offering many new items in the gift shop this year, and several are available for purchase online on our website www.grantcottage.org/shop-to-support.

We are particularly excited about a new line of products using original wood sourced from the Cottage by a company called History Salvaged. We will have custom bookmarks and ornaments available, and we already have a line of exclusive pens, created just for us, using the wood. This year we will have a wider range of pens with different price points. All are numbered and come with a certificate of authenticity. So stop in at the Visitor Center gift shop this season, say hello, and take a look at these beautiful one-of-a-kind writing utensils. If you can't visit, you can order them from the website store.

Ulysses S. Grant

We look forward to seeing you!

GRANT COTTAGE OVERLOOK Voted Top 10 Breathtaking Views of Upstate New York!





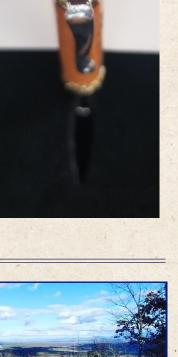
#### Celebrity and Grant fan Treat Williams paid The Friends a visit this winter.

Did you know that last year Treat performed 'Grant, An Evening with the General'?"

#### WELCOME TO OUR TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Brigid Martin John Roessner

Learn more about them both in our next edition





The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage P.O. Box 2294 / 1000 Mt. McGregor Rd. Wilton, NY 12831 (518) 584-4353 www.grantcottage.org





# **HELP US KEEP HISTORY ALIVE**

U.S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site is the final home of Ulysses S. Grant, Civil War Commanding General of the U.S. Army, 18th U.S. President and beloved American public figure. Grant Cottage is owned by the State of New York and operated by The Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Yes!	I would like to support Grant Cottage with
a tax-d	eductible donation of \$

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