



HFCWRT Monthly Newsletter

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- DATE:** Wednesday, January 10th, 2018
- TIME:** Dinner 6:30 PM; Program 7:30
- PLACE:** Camp Hill Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV
- SPEAKER:** Bob Connor
- SUBJECT:** Southern Oasis at Gettysburg

The Speaker:

Bob O'Connor is a native of Dixon, Illinois and a graduate of Northern Illinois University. He moved here to this area in 1970 and has retired from a career in the tourism industry. He is a long-time member of the Harpers Ferry Civil War Round Table.

Bob has written thirteen books. He has been named finalist four times in national writing competition. His regular speaking assignments over the past ten years have taken him to twenty states and the District of Columbia for programs. He also writes regularly for other publications including the *Martinsburg Journal* and the *Spirit of Jefferson*. He is the host of the weekly national podcast "Chronicles of the American Civil War".

The Subject

A study of the northernmost Confederate hospital in the Civil War for the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association resulted in the writing of Bob O'Connor's recent fictional account entitled *Southern Oasis at Gettysburg*. The novel tells the story of the owners and the family of the Daniel Lady Farm house and barn that were used by over 1,800 casualties suffered by Major General Edward Johnson's division of the Army of Northern Virginia on July 2nd and 3rd. The story is historically accurate and every person mentioned in the book was present on the property which was the closest hospital to Culp's Hill where Johnson's men fell. The research for the book is based on regimental rosters, letters, diaries, and official records. The last part of the novel gives a footnoted list of each person mentioned in the book and what happened to him after Gettysburg.

The Daniel Lady Farm is located along Hanover Road in Gettysburg. It is also the northernmost Confederate site still open regularly to the public.

A portion of all book sales goes to the educational foundation set up to develop programs for the farm.

The Meal

A family-style meal will be served at 6:30 PM prior to the program. The cost of the meal is \$15.00 per person. Reservations for the meal **must be made no later than Sunday, Jan. 7th**, with Kevin Pawlak at 16kpawlak1829@gmail.com. The meal will consist of Sliced Baked Ham with Raisin Sauce, Escalloped Potatoes, Buttered Peas & Pearl Onions, Rolls, Butter, Iced Tea, Coffee, & Dessert.

Ulysses Grant's Last Campaign

BY GORDON BERG

10/17/2017 • AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR MAGAZINE

The porcelain clock on the mantle marks the moment time stopped in the cozy vacation cottage high on a hill above the Hudson River Valley. The Adirondack Mountains shimmer on one horizon; the Catskills on the other. Duncan McGregor, for whom the 1,070-foot-high mountain is named, couldn't have imagined that the site he bought to harvest its trees would later become the last refuge of Ulysses S. Grant, savior of the Union and twice-elected president of the United States, who had retreated there in a race to finish his memoirs before the cancer that plagued him achieved its final victory. When Grant took his last breath at 8:08 a.m. on July 23, 1885, his eldest son, Fred, immediately stopped the hands of the clock on the mantle.

Today the Grant Cottage, a state historic site since 1957 and operated by the Friends of the Ulysses S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site since 1989, remains a pilgrimage point for Civil War enthusiasts and regional vacationers alike. It was added to the National Historic Register in 1971, and was recently designated a Literary Landmark by United for Libraries in partnership with the Empire State Center for the Book.

Grant spent only the last five weeks of his life at Mount McGregor. He arrived in nearby Saratoga Springs on June 16, 1885, via a special train aboard the private rail car of

Cornelius Vanderbilt. Only eight months before, Dr. J.D. Douglas of New York diagnosed Grant with terminal throat cancer. A team of doctors believed the region's clear, cool air might prove soothing to the ailing general and give him the time he needed to finish writing and editing his memoirs. Grant had unwittingly lost his family's fortune in a fraudulent financial scheme, and his friend, author Mark Twain, believed the general's reminiscences would provide Julia Grant with the security she would need after her husband died.

Joseph W. Drexel owned the cottage that stood in the shadow of his popular resort Hotel Balmoral. He quickly refurbished it for use by the general and his entourage that included family members, servant, stenographer, and medical staff. Grant arrived at the resort via an 11-mile narrow gauge railroad built by Drexel to ferry guests from Saratoga Springs to the hotel. When Grant tried to walk the final steps to the cottage, he almost collapsed from the effort. A special invalid's bath chair conveyed him to the porch. There, Grant willed himself to climb the steps to his final residence with only the aid of a cane.

Grant rarely ventured beyond the cottage. Any outdoor activity exhausted his wasted body. Throughout his stay at Mount McGregor, he always ate alone and took only small amounts of specially prepared liquid food. When he died, Grant weighed barely 80 pounds. Nevertheless, on July 20 he expressed a wish to be taken to the Eastern Overlook, a beautiful vantagepoint with panoramic views of the valley and the mountains in the distance. Visitors can walk there today and see essentially what Grant did during the last 20 minutes he ever spent in the open air.

His health declined rapidly from there. At 1 a.m. on July 22, Dr. Douglas summoned all family members and medical staff to the cottage. During his last day, Grant drifted in and out of consciousness. He consented to be moved to the front room and placed in the bed there. Julia Grant held his hand; Fred stroked his brow. Perhaps the last words he hoarsely whispered were, "I hope no one will be distressed by my condition." The room where he died is known today simply as "The Death Room."

Grant, the unassuming man who vowed "to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," had held the line long enough to finish his memoirs just four days before he died. First published in December 1885, the two-volume set earned \$450,000 in royalties for the Grant family in the first two years (equivalent to \$11 million today). The books have never been out of print.

The dining room table served as Grant's first bier. The body was embalmed and he lay in state until August 4. Several original floral arrangements were preserved in wax and still stand their ghostly post in the dining room. The final burial services were held in Riverside Park in New York City on August 8. An estimated one million people lined the funeral route, and 60,000 participated in the parade. Mrs. Grant did not attend. She stayed at Mount McGregor for another month. Joseph Drexel never occupied his cottage again. He turned it over to the Grand Army of the Republic to keep the cottage open to the public as a memorial. The State of New York actually considered tearing it down before The Friends of the Cottage mounted a campaign to keep it open. (Excerpted from *America's Civil War Magazine* <http://www.historynet.com/americas-civil-war>)