

GENERAL GRANT COMMISSIONS A VETERAN ROUND TABLE MEMBER

By Williamsburg CWRT President Bill Miller

*"In great deeds, something abides,
On great fields, something stays..."*

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's evocative words have served as marching orders for Civil War travelers for over a century and half. And among our current generation of travelers, the Williamsburg VA Round Table's Peggy Vogtsberger has established an exemplary record. Joining the Round Table shortly after its establishment, she has dedicated over 45 years of membership, study, and travel to Civil War sites both near and far. She has researched and presented a diversity of programs, including "The Gallant Pelham", The Battles of Franklin and Nashville, Patrick Cleburne, as well the all-German 32nd Indiana Regiment, where her ancestor served. Her most recent program, entitled "A Damn Failure – The Battle of Dam No. 1", saw her travel to Vermont to review historical records of the Vermont troops engaged in that fight.

In April 2015, Peggy traveled out to Appomattox for the sesquicentennial commemoration, and had the pleasure of making acquaintances of Curt Fields and Tom Jessee. As everyone is aware, Curt and Tom are preeminent living historians. Curt reprises the role of General Ulysses S.

Grant, and Tom portrays General Robert E. Lee. On the afternoon of April 9, 2015, the Generals met at the MacLean House to recreate "the surrender meeting." At the conclusion of the program, the entire group of reenactors assembled on the porch steps



Colonel Peggy Vogtsberger's iconic photograph.

of the MacLean House for photographs. Peggy seized the moment and was granted the opportunity to stand between the two Generals to record her moment of history.

Fast forward now to April 2022. After their annual Appomattox commemoration visit, our Generals traveled to Williamsburg to present their "Appomattox – The Last Two Days" program to our Round Table. Prior to the presentation, our Executive Committee honored Peggy's long

service by presenting her with a plaque that included her iconic photograph with the Generals at Appomattox. At our invitation, both Curt and Tom...oops...General Grant and General Lee stood with us on the stage to participate in the presentation ceremony. And then, in a



Williamsburg CWRT President Bill Miller makes presentations to Colonel Peggy Vogtsberger on behalf of General Grant.

completely unscripted moment, General Grant announced that he would commission Peggy to be a Colonel on his staff to honor her service in promoting the history of the Civil War.

Well, as we all know, Generals do get immersed with campaign details and other myriad duties. As was the case during the Civil War, so is the case in the present day. Curt Fields, our living historian, maintains a robust schedule of appearances that carry him to all points of the compass. That notwithstanding, and true to his word, our modern day General Grant forwarded the official document which attests to the Commission of our Peggy Vogtsberger as a Colonel, to serve as a special assistant to his staff. The presentation ceremony occurred on September 26, 2023.

In closing, there are two lessons to be learned. First and foremost, there are many good folks like Peggy Vogtsberger who deserve recognition for all that they do to promote the legacy of our Civil War. Moreover, there are numerous educators and living historians like our good friend Curt Fields who take a personal interest in recognizing the special efforts of those travelers that they encounter.

Huzzah to Peggy! Huzzah to Curt!