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Proceedings
At the
UNVEILING
Of the
ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT
MEMORIAL TABLET
CONNECTICUT STATE CAPITOL
Hartford

October 4th, 1916

With a Short Account of the Securing and
Placing of the Tablet by the Connecticut
Division Sons of Veterans, U. S. A.

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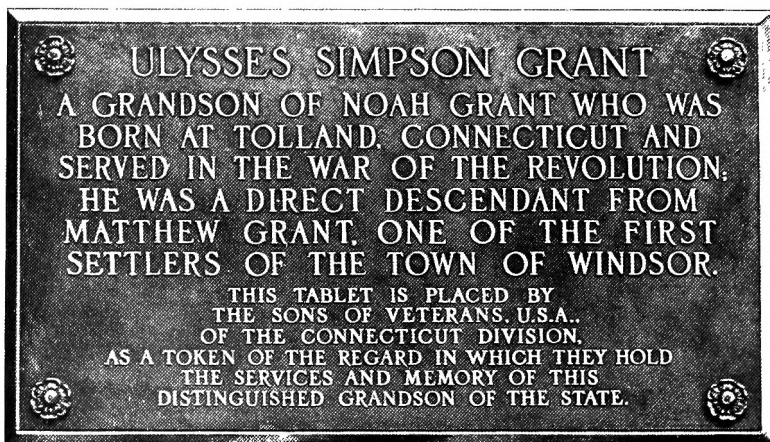
GRANT

Memorial Tablet

Presented to the State of Connecticut

By

The Connecticut Division
Sons of Veterans, U. S. A.



MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Charles H. Bissell

Allen T. Pratt, Commander

Charles W. Roberts

William H. Hart, “

Ralph M. Grant

Robert T. Alcorn, “

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE GRANT MEMORIAL

The project for the Connecticut Division, Sons of Veterans, U. S. A., procuring some memorial that should call attention to the special interest Connecticut has in General Ulysses S. Grant, had its inception in a report made to the Division Encampment held at Stamford in 1914, by Charles H. Bissell, as delegate to the National Encampment at Chattanooga, Tenn., in 1913. General Grant was in command of the Union armies at the battle of Chattanooga and this report referred to his having been a direct descendant from Matthew Grant, one of the first settlers of the town of Windsor Conn., to the fact that his grandfather, Noah Grant, was born and lived in the State and served in the War of the Revolution in a Connecticut company, and then Mr. Bissell made the following recommendation: "That this Encampment authorize the appointment of a committee, of which the Division Commander shall be, ex officio, a member, who shall have in charge the raising of funds and the procuring of a suitable memorial, to be so placed as to be a public and perpetual reminder of the regard in which the Sons of Veterans of the Connecticut Division hold the services and memory of that distinguished grandson of our State, Ulysses Simpson Grant." This was so far approved by the Encampment as to authorize the appointment of a committee as proposed, they to investigate and report a plan in detail at the next meeting of the Encampment. In his order of December 1, 1914, Division Commander Allen T. Pratt appointed the following as committee: C. H. Bissell, Southington; Chas. W. Roberts, Hartford, and Ralph M. Grant, Hartford. At the Division Encampment held at New Britain in 1915, this committee made a report recommending that the proposed memorial take the form of a bronze tablet, to be placed in the State Capitol at Hartford, a full sized drawing of the proposed tablet being submitted for inspection. This report was approved by the Encampment and the committee was authorized to solicit the necessary funds, which it at once proceeded to do. In its report to the Division Encampment at New Haven in 1916, the committee stated that about one half of the necessary funds were in hand or pledged, that various Camps had expressed an interest and an intention to contribute but that the committee had not felt justified in proceeding further without definite pledges for the remainder of the money. In his report to the New Haven Encampment Division Commander William H. Hart recommended that the Division appropriate \$50.00 from its treasury toward the expense of the tablet. This was approved by the Encampment and later sufficient pledges were received for the balance needed and work on the tablet was at once ordered. The tablet was received from the Gorham Company, who designed and cast it, in June, 1916, but it was not placed in position until October 4, when before a company of about 300 persons, made up of State Officials, representatives of the Grand Army of the Republic, Woman's Relief Corps, Daughters of Veterans, Sons of Veterans' Auxiliary, Sons of Veterans and interested friends, the tablet was unveiled. The exercises were in charge of Division Commander Robert T. Alcorn. Following is a detailed report of the proceedings.

**THE GRANT MEMORIAL TABLE
UNVEILING AND PRESENTATION TO THE
STATE OF CONNECTICUT
BY
CONNECTICUT DIVISION, SONS OF VETERANS
STATE CAPITOL
OCTOBER THE FOURTH, NINETEEN HUNDRED SIXTEEN
ORDER OF EXERCISES**

COMMANDER ALCORN: — We are gathered here today for the purpose of unveiling this tablet to the memory of General Ulysses S. Grant. This idea was conceived by Charles H. Bissell of Southington, two years ago. He thought it would be well and fitting for the Connecticut Division Sons of Veterans to erect this tablet to the memory of the quiet and unassuming, and yet thoroughly efficient and proficient soldier and statesman whose name is dear to all who believe in the history and destiny of the United States of America.

We will now give our attention to prayer by the Rev. James J. Dunlop, D. D., Pastor of the Fourth Congregational Church, Hartford.

PRAYER: — Almighty God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, from whom proceeds all power and dominion in Heaven and on earth, most heartily do we praise and thank Thee for the precious memories which we treasure as a people. We see Thy kind hand in the establishment of this nation. Thou hast raised up for us great men to be our leaders in every crisis in our history. Thou hast never failed us, but ever befriended us.

For this man, to whose memory we place this tablet on these walls today, we give Thee our most hearty thanks. We praise Thee for the victory which his genius achieved; for the national greatness which this victory secured. In grateful remembrance we place this tablet in the halls of all the people. We pray that this tablet may be something more than a mere token of appreciation; something more than a mere tribute to human greatness and genius. May it ever be a memorial that shall serve to awaken memories that shall ever enrich and inspire.

Upon this organization — the Sons of Veterans — which places this tablet on these walls, we ask Thy favor abundantly. Bless this organization in its useful ministry of inculcating the principles of patriotism, of perpetuating to posterity those principles for which their fathers fought and died. Hear now Thy servant who shall speak to us, that he shall make our hearts aglow with new devotion to Thee our God, and our country. Most earnestly do we beseech Thy favor on the President of these United States, the Governor of this State, and upon all in authority. Embue them, we pray Thee, with kindness and grace and truth. Throw over their hearts the mantle of Thy love so that the law and rule of peace and justice may prevail among us. And grant, we beseech Thee, to preserve us from all public calamity, from war and rebellion, from pestilence and especially from national sins and national corruption. So give us Thy grace and power that we shall be strong and great in the fear of God and the love of righteousness, so that we may be a blessing to all nations on the earth to the glory of Thy great name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

COMMANDER ALCORN: — It now gives me pleasure to present Charles H. Bissell, the man through whose efforts this tablet has been secured. He has worked long and faithfully to make it possible for the Connecticut Division, Sons of Veterans, to place this tablet in this house.

MR. BISSELL: — Commander Alcorn, your Excellency Lieutenant Governor Wilson, Comrades of the Grand Army of the Republic, brothers of the Sons of Veterans, and friends: It is my privilege this afternoon to speak for a few moments as the representative of the 2300 organized Sons of Veterans of the State of Connecticut. Our order is made up of the sons and grandsons of the men who served in the Union Army or Navy in the Civil War of 1861-1865. We are, therefore, interested to see that the men and women of the present generation should know and appreciate the part our State took in that great struggle. We are proud, and we have a right to be proud of the patriotic record of Connecticut. In the War for Independence from 1775-1783, she did her full share, and later, when the life of the nation was at stake, the full quota of men called for were in the Connecticut regiments. These are facts of record and are largely known. There is one other fact in this connection, however, not so well known and of which we hope to secure greater recognition by the placing of this tablet. When the thirteen colonies formed the Union, known as the United States of America, they occupied only a narrow strip along the Atlantic sea coast. To the West, was a great and largely unexplored country, a land of mountains filled with coal and metals, of great rivers and seemingly boundless plains, having a soil of unexampled fertility. So it is no wonder that in the years from 1800 to 1860 many of the strongest and most enterprising sons of Connecticut were among the men who explored and settled these new regions. When the crisis came in 1861 and President Lincoln called for troops, these men, the sons and grandsons of our State flocked in answer. Their names are not on the rolls of Connecticut regiments, but they were men of Connecticut blood and we have a right to an interest in their achievements. Today we pay honor to the memory of a grandson of our State — the man under whose leadership the war for the preservation of the Union was brought to a successful conclusion, and through him as the representative of them all, would also pay a tribute to the thousands of men of Connecticut lineage who from their homes in the great West answered their Country's call.

Your Excellency, on behalf of the Sons of Veterans of Connecticut, I now present to you, as the representative of our State, this tablet with the hope that so long as this building shall endure the tablet also may remain as a perpetual reminder to all comers of the special pride every citizen of Connecticut may take in the hero of Fort Donaldson, of Vicksburg, of Chattanooga and Appomattox, the hero of Mt. McGregor, Ulysses Simpson Grant.

Following the presentation by Mr. Bissell the tablet was unveiled by Miss Faith Grant, a daughter of Past Commander-in-Chief Ralph M. Grant, and a direct descendant from Matthew Grant, the first settler of the name at Windsor.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR WILSON: — Mr. Chairman, members of the Grand Army of the Republic, fellow members of the Sons of Veterans, ladies and gentlemen: We do well to pause in the midst of our busy everyday life to pay due homage to the splendid deeds of heroism and patriotism performed by loyal men from whatever state they may come. Connecticut is particularly rich in deeds of heroism and achievement in the days of the early formation and the days of the preservation of this great and glorious country. It has well been said that from 1775-1783, Connecticut contributed in no small numbers and in no small manner to the success of this country in the early days of its history. And, later, when the integrity of this country was in question, when the lives of its citizens were imperiled and the God given right of this country to exist was threatened, Connecticut has ever responded in liberal numbers to the protection to American lives and to the advancement of American liberty and the achievement of American manhood. And we are here today commemorating the splendid deeds of one of the splendid sons of Connecticut — Connecticut, the home of the written constitution, among whose hills and dales the spirit of true constitutional freedom first had its breath of life, and after whose model the written Constitutions of this great country, and our sister states were formed. We do well to commemorate at this time the events in connection with that great and national figure, Ulysses S. Grant. It is a peculiar pleasure to me to be here today to accept this tablet commemorative, as I say, of the achievements of one of Connecticut blood, and assuring as it does in his achievement and accomplishments, the perpetuation of this Union and inspiring the labors of those with whom we shall come into contact, until, indeed, our country will be recognized as the leader, as the director of all that tends to human freedom and the advancement of mankind. It is a peculiar situation — a peculiar position that this country has created for itself in these brief 150 or fewer years. Just as truly as the men in the early days, and the days of fifty years ago, gave themselves unsparingly to the creation and perpetuation of this nation, so we, today, while we commemorate the splendid deeds of the past, should be ever ready and willing to give ourselves unsparingly whole souled and unflinchingly for the protection, for the preservation of this Union and for the advancement of human liberty and human freedom throughout the world. It is a great pleasure — and particularly so as a Son of Veteran — for I do believe that next to actual service in time of trouble or in time of peace — a good, whole souled service — next to that is the splendid heritage which we Sons of Veterans are glad to recognize and proud to claim as our own.

As acting Chief Executive of the State, it gives me pleasure at this time to accept on behalf of and in the name of the State of Connecticut this splendid testimonial, this splendid memorial of the loyalty and fidelity of the Sons of Veterans from whom it comes, commemorating, as it does, the achievements of one of Connecticut's most noble, most able descendants.

COMMANDER ALCORN: — I now have pleasure in introducing to you the Rev. Rockwell Harmon Potter, D. D., pastor of the Center Congregational Church, who has consented to address this audience today.

DR. POTTER:— We are gathered here to place this tablet upon these walls of the State House of Connecticut, to commemorate one who was a grandson of this Commonwealth. His grandfather, Noah Grant, was born in Tolland of this state. He was something more than just a grandson of Connecticut, for preceding Noah Grant, who was born in Tolland, not less than five successive generations of Grants, beginning with Matthew Grant, who came from England to Dorchester and then to Windsor in this state, lived and loved and wrought and died on the soil of Connecticut. And when Noah Grant, after the Revolution (in which he served as a soldier) went out to the western country from New England, it was into the Western Reserve that he went. Now the Western Reserve which has come to be the State of Ohio, is indeed the daughter of Connecticut, so that the grandson, Ulysses S. Grant, was born in Ohio, the daughter of Connecticut. The ties which bind us to the memories of Ulysses S. Grant and the proud heritage of that memory, are not few but many, and it is worthy that you gentlemen of the Sons of Veterans, by your wise counsel, now place on the walls of the State House of Connecticut, this tablet in his memory.

If I may undertake very briefly to interpret the meaning of this tablet and to answer the question, "what should be remembered of Ulysses S. Grant?" I shall be but seeking to interpret the thoughts that are in the hearts of us all, but this is not a question to answer which anyone hesitates. It is rather a question the answer to which is in the minds and hearts of us all and which it becomes my privilege to seek to voice.

We remember Ulysses S. Grant because he was a great soldier. The story of his life as a soldier is a romance. No one can read that story from the day when his father, Jesse Grant, down on the banks of the Ohio River, told him he proposed that he should become a cadet until at Appomattox he received the surrender of the Confederacy — no one can read that story of the soldier's life without being thrilled as by a romance. For Ulysses S. Grant went to West Point an unwilling cadet, and it was as an unwilling graduate that he went from there in 1843 at the age of 21 years. He never chose the vocation of a soldier. It was neither to his mind nor liking. He went to West Point because he would obey his father's wish. He served as a soldier because he would obey the command of his officers and because, at last, he would obey the high command of the people's wish and the supreme mandate of a nation's welfare.

That story of his life as a soldier is strangely mixed with light and shadow. When a young man, shortly after his graduation, he went with the army into Mexico, again unwilling and feeling that he was engaging in an unrighteous war; unwilling, but loyal to his flag and the men placed over him, he achieved a brilliant career, and not the least among the influences that made him the supreme American Soldier was the close friendships he formed in the young army of the forties. It was these close friendships and this ardent loyalty that lasted through twenty years, and after twenty years led him to be a brave soldier, a soldier whose heart was never greater than in the moment of his supreme victory.

The story of the years intervening between the Mexican War and the Civil War is a pathetic story. The jealousies which grew up so fast among military men Grant had around him. He, himself, was engaged in a fight that took all of the courage of his personal character and deeply shaded are those years which began so brightly at the end of the Mexican War and closed in 1860, when we find him in his brother's leather store at Galena Illinois.

If Grant's career had closed then, it would have been one of marked pathos. The next four years write a different page in that story. What happened from '61, when he wrote to the Governor of his State and in his modest, sturdy way, offered his services to his country, until that April day in 1865, when from the proud hands of the Confederate Commander, he received the surrender: what happened through those four years is part of the treasured heritage of the Nation.

There is not the time, although this would be a worthy place, to tell the story of Grant's career as a soldier. The rapid rise of this man from the ranks of the Army as he progressed from Donaldson to Shiloh, to Chattanooga and Washington, from Washington to Appomattox and Richmond; this is the story that this country cherishes among its brightest pages; a story that has been read around the whole world and has written him down as the greatest soldier in that hour of deepest need and one of the greatest soldiers of all nations of all times.

We place this tablet because we would remember Grant as a soldier and the brightest moment in the story of this soldier's life was the last moment of it; the last moment, when at Appomattox he received the surrender of the Confederacy with the surrender of Lee.

Can any man remain unmoved who reads the story of the life of this soldier and remembers his friendship with the men with whom he fought during those four years, remembers the terrible stress of those fateful years the winds of envy, suspicion and hatred that blew around him, and the modest and sustained courage with which he faced them all and the persistence with which he carried out his task? Can anyone read that story and be unmoved as he comes to the record of the "Surrender;" as he visualizes that scene, and beholds the agony of the lost cause in the face of him who gave up his sword and remembers that day twenty years before when these two men met with the armies in Mexico, and the comradeship and friendship of those other years? As Grant saw this man with his stained uniform and his hands reached out to make terms of surrender for that great army of the South, and lifted his eyes to see the sword that he proffered, he wrote the provision that the officers of the Confederate Army should retain their side arms. As he lifted his eyes again to see the officers of the Southern Army with their horses in the background, he wrote in a provision that the men should be free to take their horses back with them to work upon their farms.

Looking into the eyes of Lee again with his words "unconditional surrender" on his mind, he turned again to those terms of surrender and, reaching out to exercise executive power, wrote down amnesty to every man in the Southern Army who should return to his home and live in accordance with the laws of the state.

The memory of that hour and those words outshine the words "unconditional surrender," and "I propose to move immediately on your works." The terms which he made for Lee's Army, wrote down Grant as a soldier supreme, because those were terms in which he dared venture beyond the technical commission of a soldier and show himself a generous man.

Abraham Lincoln magnanimously accepted that executive order. These acts together constitute the most sublime page in the military story of the Great Rebellion.

We place this tablet here because we would remember Grant as a soldier, great in the clemency of his victory.

We are placing this tablet — we are accepting this tablet which you have placed here — because we would remember Grant as President. He did not seek the office of Chief Magistrate of this country. He never sought any office or any position. When he offered himself to his country, he offered his services. He did not seek an office.

There is an interesting word which I have written down here, an interesting word which he wrote: "Everyone has a superstition. One of mine is that in a position of great responsibility everyone should do his duty. Whatever the influences, he should not change his position." No man can say that Ulysses S. Grant was ever false to his own declaration, and what he considered his superstition. We recognize it as one mighty principle of his noble accomplishments.

Placed in the chair of President, who of us can imagine (save you men who remember) the storms that swirled around him. The country was mad with its new and mighty opportunities. Men were mad with the lust for office and greed for gain, for gold and power. But in the midst of that storm, while it was beyond his power absolutely to cause the winds to become calm, he held himself steady. Any one who reads the story of those eight years in which he served the country as President will learn that through all those years he kept true to the principles he laid down for himself. So far as it was possible for any man in that position at that time to do so, Grant did so. The result of the reading of this story is the conviction that the dominant, deepest and highest ambition of Ulysses S. Grant, as President, was to fulfill and carry out by executive action that noble spirit of forgiveness and amnesty which was his when he dictated the terms of surrender to Lee. That was his supreme service as President of the United States, and whatever storms were about him, they came from the lives and deeds of other men. His own soul was unsullied and his own purpose was clean as President of the United States.

This tablet is here because we would remember Grant as President.

Gentlemen, this tablet is here because we would remember Grant as a statesman. It was given to Ulysses S. Grant, after he had retired as President, to make a circuit of the world. No other American has ever done so under such auspices; has ever been admitted to the courts of so many people, has ever been shown so deep a mark of attention and honor by the nations of the earth. No other American in the story of the Country's History has ever had the opportunity to come so close to so many of the world's rulers as he did in the tour he made immediately succeeding his retirement from the presidency.

It is the universal testimony of those who met him on that tour, ministers and governors, the crowned heads of Europe as well as Oriental potentates, that through it all the simple minded, honest hearted man bore himself with modesty and dignity and with a certain charm and strength that won the hearts of the old world. If such a man as Matthew Arnold was forced to testify when he read his *Memoirs*, years later, that while Grant sometimes indulged in boasting, he was forced to confess that this American in spite of what he had personally achieved, in spite of the honors which had been thrust upon him, never boasted of himself, but if he spoke in words that seemed boastful to English ears, they were words born of his love for his country, and only when he spoke for his country did such excess of feeling fall from his lips.

We remember him because of this journey around the world which had a profound influence on his heart and mind. The judgments he made and expressed when he had finished this journey bear witness to the truth that this man was coming into the international mind. It is most interesting to observe that after these long years, when he looked back on his service in Mexico, he looked back with profound regret. It is significant that this man who won his distinction as a soldier in Mexico, that this man who became supreme commander of the War of the Great Rebellion, should have written it down as his determined judgment that in large measure the War of the Rebellion came upon this country because of injustice and aggression in the war in Mexico. "Nations receive punishment, as well as men," said this soldier, said this statesman of international mind. "It was years delayed but we received it, and most sanguinary punishment it was."

Speaking in England he said: "Your cause is on my heart. I am a soldier but my deepest desire has been for peace."

Speaking again, I think in England, certainly in the same vein in which he had made other speeches, he said (and perhaps it is the most significant word he ever said):

"Though I have been trained as a soldier and have participated in many battles, there never was a time, in my opinion, that some way could not have been found to prevent the drawing of swords. I look forward to a court recognized by all nations to settle international differences, instead of keeping large standing armies as they do in Europe."

Listen again to another word spoken by this soldier — this statesman who had come into the international mind:

"I would gladly see the men in the armies now supported by the industries of the nations, return to industrial pursuits to become self-sustaining and take off the tax on labor which is levied for their support."

We remember this man because he was a soldier, but more than a soldier, because he was president, but more than president, because he was a statesman and was able to achieve the international mind.

We place this tablet here because we would remember Grant as a man. He was great as a soldier; he was great as a president; he was great as a statesman. I venture to think he was greater as a man. Read the biographies of the great men in history. We find no more tender, filial devotion than Ulysses S. Grant gave to his mother, Anna. Beautiful and tender were the words that as cadet at West Point he wrote back to his mother — the only person in all the world that understood how hard it was for him to be-

come a soldier — the only person to whom he could unburden his heart. Down through the years until his death bed, when he received baptism into his mother's faith, it was his mother's faith that lay on his simple soul. Read the biographies of all the great men of history and no where will you find more chivalrous devotion to the love of wife than this soldier gave to Julia Dent, his wife. From the day when a United States officer at St. Louis, he first looked into her eyes until at Mt. MacGregor he gained strength from those eyes to fight his last battle, this man was loyal to his wife. No man around his council board or camp fire passed a foul jest or coarse word, for this man was loyal to the wife of his heart. His heart was pure with love.

Sometimes he put himself in a position that later on embarrassed him because he would please her. She could not see as far as he could see, and yet he would not cross her way, he loved her so. Shall we not gladly forgive a man who makes a mistake for the sake of love? He was a loyal and devoted husband. He was clean-minded and pure of speech. Profanity came not upon his lips and coarseness was not found in his heart. He was a soldier of the spirit as well as a soldier of the nation, and when I think over the nation's story, I cannot find any more appealing or commanding figure than the figure of this man — soldier, president, statesman. When in the last years the storms of chance and change and circumstance, of spite and the jealousies of little-minded and little-souled people, of the greed and avarice of men who would use his character and high mindedness to promote their own aims, smote upon him, he stood like some naked rock in the midst of the sea, with the billows clashing upon it. He stood alone and offered up all he had of the savings of years which he had provided for his children — the gifts of nations and devoted friends, in order that his hands might be clean and testify that his heart was right.

When I consider Mt. MacGregor and think of this man bereft of power of speech, suffering from intense bodily pain, with feeble and trembling hands striving to earn means with which to redeem obligations not of his contracting, he seems to me like some figure of Greek tragedy, sublime in the midst of ruin, a man over whom storms broke, but whose soul stood impregnable at the last.

So we would remember him at rest on the banks of the Hudson in the great Metropolis where his body was carried to its resting place. We remember that there are written on the face of that tomb that looks out towards the land over which he took conquering armies, these words of the soldier and president, and statesman: "Let us have peace."