

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

Inside the Vault: Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection

May 15, 2020

Sponsored by HISTORY



- Your camera is automatically off.
- Your microphone is muted.
- Chat has been disabled.

Gilder Lehrman Staff

Panelists

- Sandy Trenholm – Collection Director
- Patience LeBlanc – Gilder Lehrman's 2018 Texas History Teacher of the Year

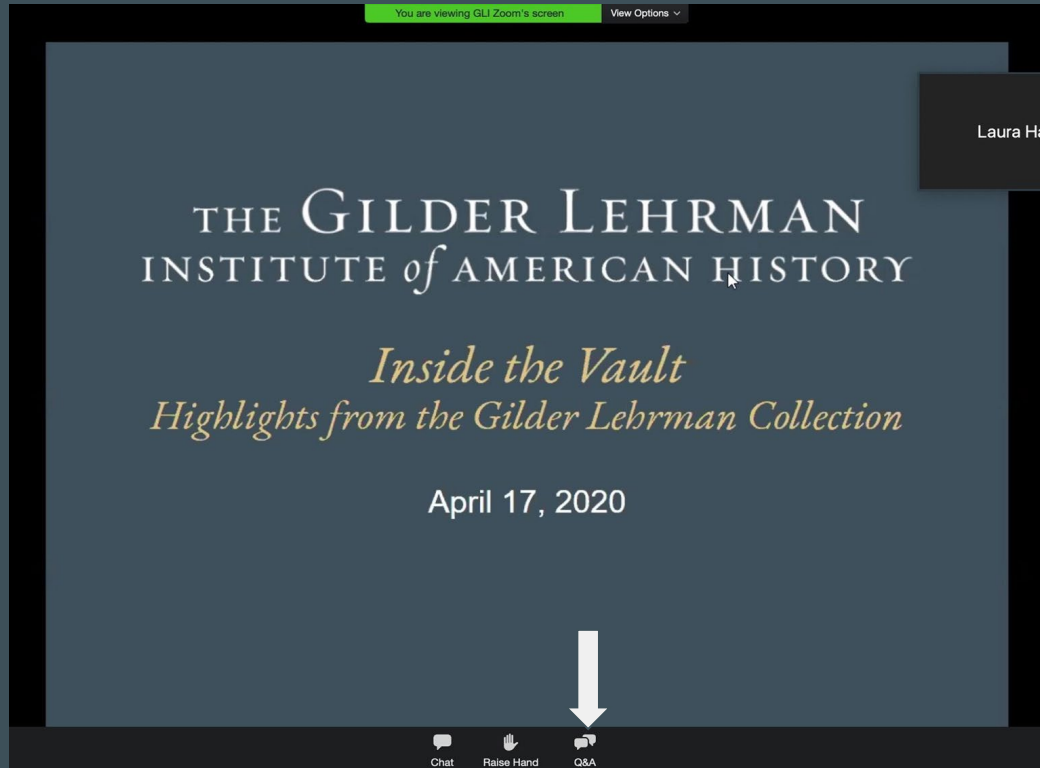
Support

- Allison Kraft – Assistant Curator
- Laura Hapke – Curatorial Assistant

For Security

- Your microphone is muted.
- Your camera is automatically off.
- Chat is disabled.

How to Participate on PC or Mac



- In order to keep this a safe and secure meeting, your mic is automatically muted and your camera is automatically off.
- If you would like to ask a question, **you can use the Q&A feature**, which can be found along the bottom of your screen.

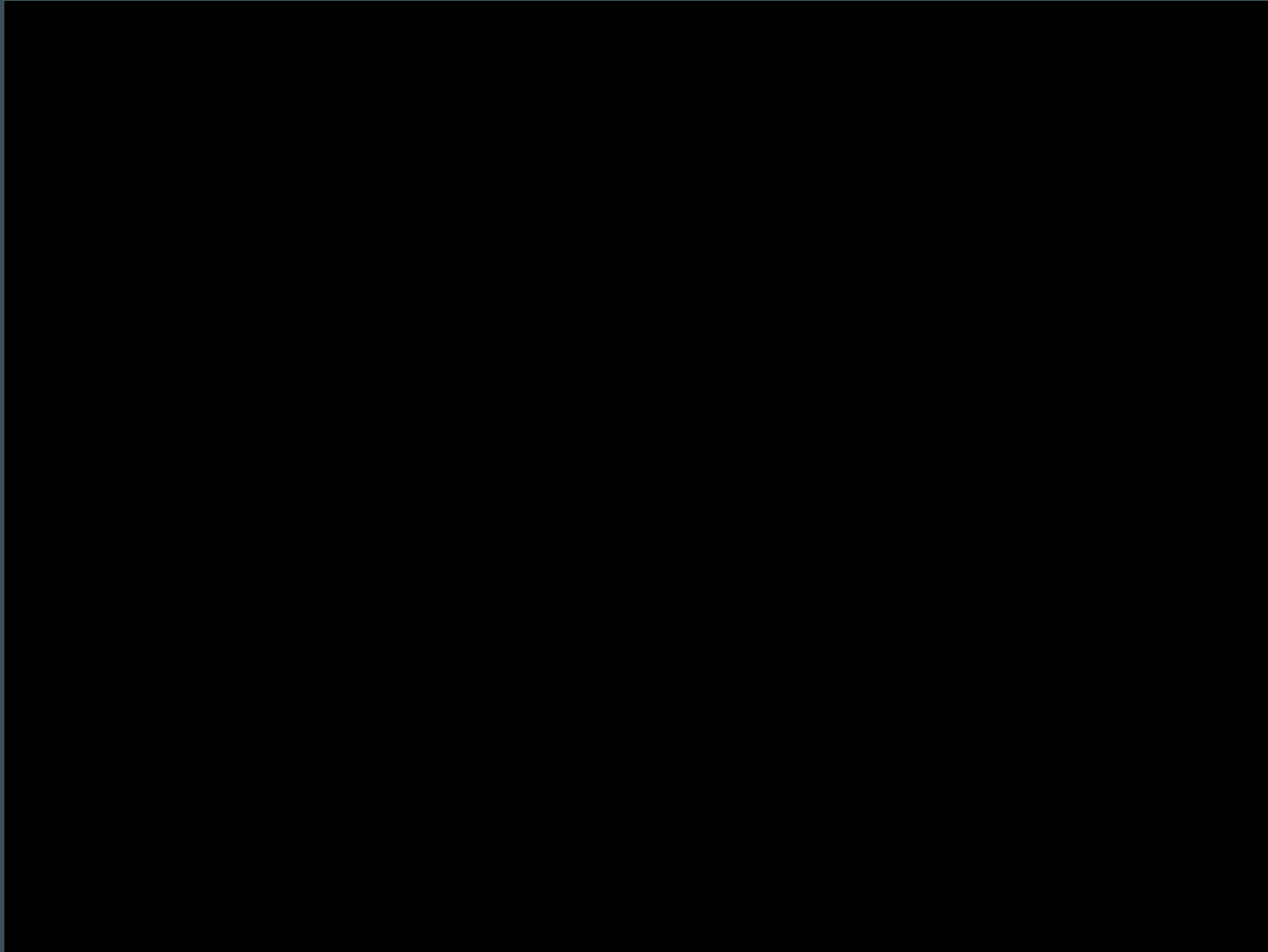
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

- The Gilder Lehrman Institute has more than 70,000 documents pertaining to American history from colonization through the end of the 20th century.
- We are dedicated to improving K–12 history education while also serving the general public.
 - Educational programs
 - Online resources
 - Direct access to unique primary source materials

Grant - *HISTORY* documentary

- Premieres on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25 at 9 p.m. ET and airs for three consecutive nights.
- Executive produced by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and biographer Ron Chernow and Academy Award-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio,
- Rated TV-14 V. It is not recommended for younger students.

Grant



Today's Documents

- The earliest known letter by Grant, written when he was a 17-year-old cadet at West Point
- A political cartoon showing Grant's "bull-dog" grip on the Confederacy in 1864

What we will be doing

- Providing historical context
- Analyzing key parts of the document
- Discussing how media & primary sources can further our understanding of people and events

Ulysses S.
Grant to
McKinstry
Griffith,
September 22,
1839

Military Academy
West Point N.Y.
Sept. 22^d 1839.

Dear Sir,

I was just thinking that you would be
right glad to hear from one of your relations who is so far
away as I am. So, I have just availed my *Albatross* and
Ethos and am going to tell you a long story about this
prettiest of places West Point. So far as it regards natu-
ral attractions it is decidedly the most beautiful place
that I have ever seen; here are hills and dells, rocks and
river; all pleasant to look upon. From the window near I can
see the Hudson; that far famed, that beautiful river with
its bosom studded with hundreds of snow ~~white~~ sails. Again
if I look another way I can see Fort Putnam forming
for above; a stern monument of a stern age, which seems plac-
ed there on purpose to tell us of the glorious deeds of our fathers and
to bid us remember their sufferings - to follow their examples. And
that this is the best of all places - the place of all places for
an institution like this. I have not told you half its
attractions. Here is the house Washington used to live
in - there Kosciuszko used to walk and think of his coun-
try and of ours. Over the river we are shown the dwelling
house of Arnold, that brave and heartless traitor to his
country and his God. I do love the place, it seems as though
I could live here forever if my friends would only come too. You
might search the wide world over and then not find a better

Hiram Ulysses Grant

- He was born April 27, 1822, in Point Pleasant, Ohio, to Hannah and Jesse Grant.
- His first name was Hiram because his maternal grandfather liked the name.
- His middle name, Ulysses, was suggested by his maternal grandmother and his father.
- He was always referred to as Ulysses.
- Ulysses was a small, sensitive, quiet youth. The local schools bored him, and other children mistook his quietness for stupidity, nicknaming him “Useless.”

Ulysses H. Grant goes to West Point

- In 1839, when Grant was 17, his father arranged for him to enter the United States Military Academy at West Point.
- Grant wanted to switch his middle name and his first name.
- Congressman Thomas Hammer nominated Grant for West Point as Ulysses S. Grant.
- In 1844, Grant wrote to Julia Dent, “You know I have an “S” in my name and I don’t know what it stand[s] for.”
- He arrived at West Point in the summer of 1839.
- West Point classmate William T. Sherman gave him the nickname “Uncle Sam” or “Sam.”
- He was an mediocre student, but he didn’t really study. He graduated 21st in a class of 39.
- Grant planned to resign from the military after he served his mandatory four years of duty.

Ulysses S.
Grant to
McKinstry
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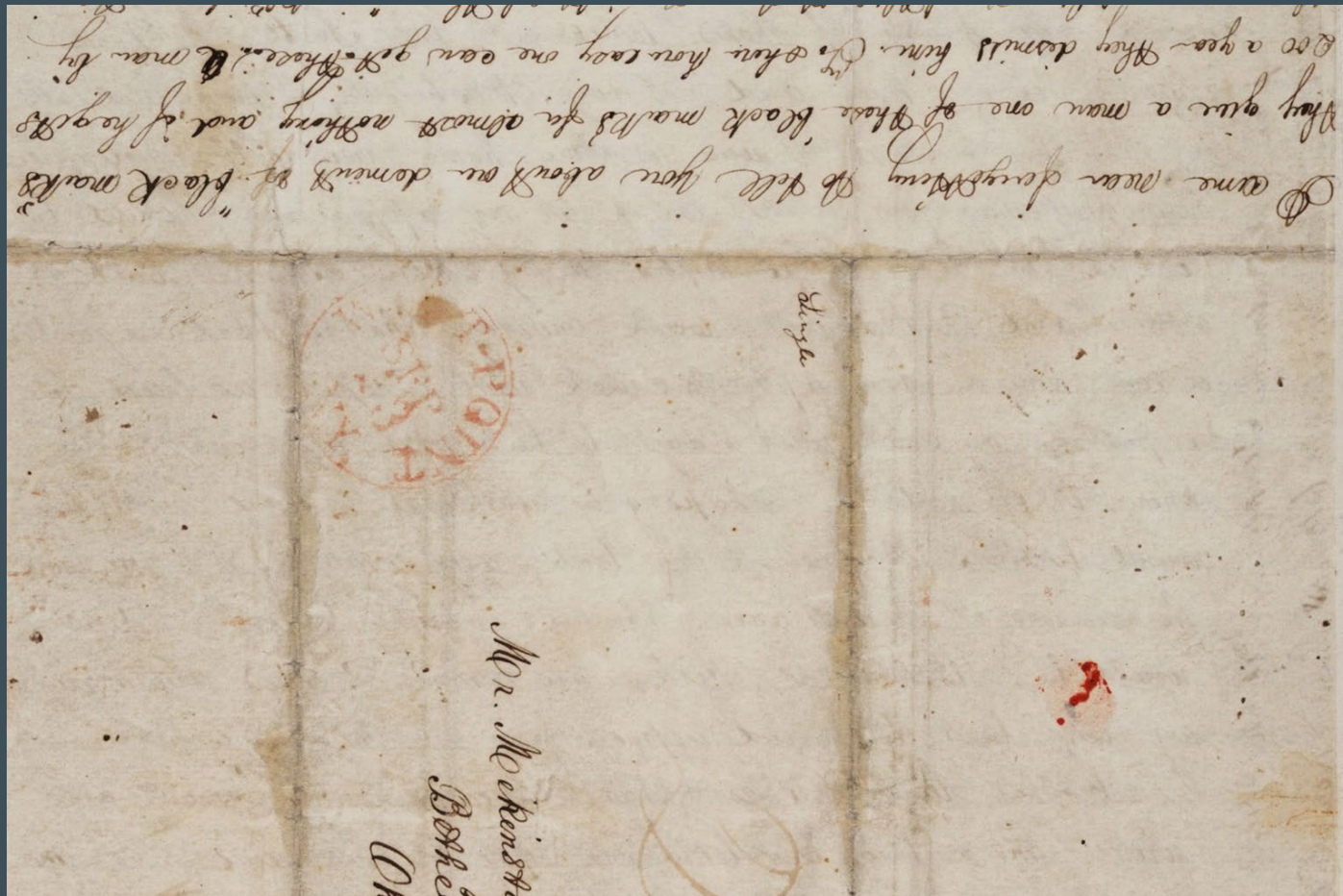
Dear Sir,

I was just thinking that you would be
right glad to hear from one of your relations who is so far
away as I am. So, I have just availed my *Albatross* and
others and am going to tell you a long story about this
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Ulysses S. Grant to McKinstry Griffith, September 22, 1839



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What did 17-year-old Grant write about?



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- Clothing
- Classes
- Money
- West Point's location
- Homesickness
- Demerits
- Lack of women

Clothing

“If I were to come home now with my uniform on, they way you would laugh at my appearance would be curious. My pants sit as tight to my skin as the bark to a tree and if I do not walk military, that is if I bend over quickly or run, they are very apt to crack with a report as loud as a pistol.”

If I were to come home now with my uniform on. They way you would laugh at my appearance would be curious. My pants sit as tight to my skin as the bark to a tree and if I do not walk military. That is, bend over quickly or run. They are very apt to crack with a report as loud as a pistol.

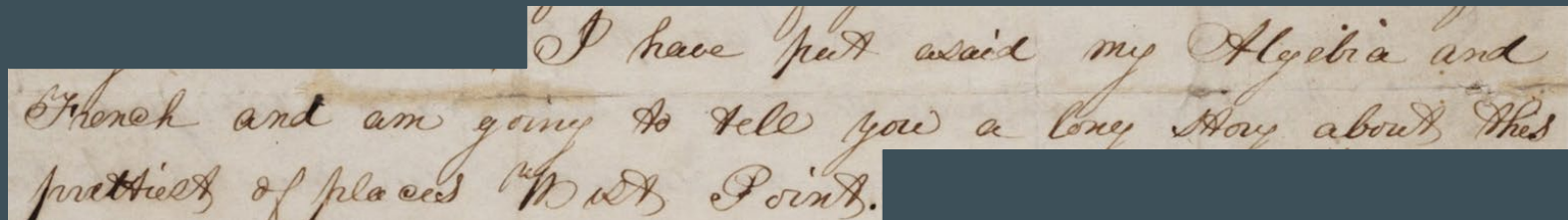
*Ulysses S.
Grant and
Alexander
Hays, 1845*



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Schooling

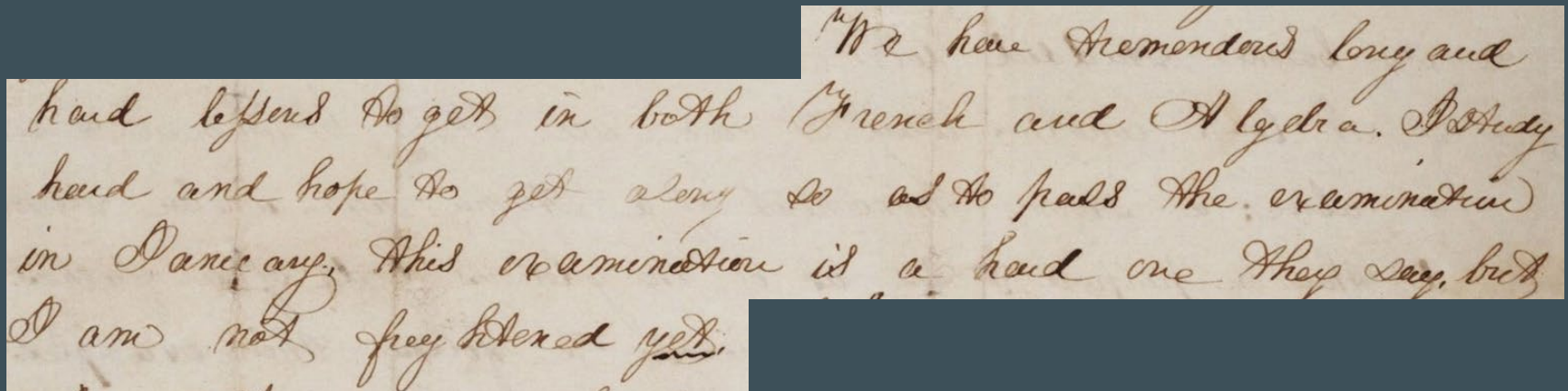
“So, I have put asaid my Algebra and French and am going to tell you a long story about this prettiest of places West Point.”

A snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script, showing the text: "I have put asaid my Algebra and French and am going to tell you a long story about this prettiest of places West Point." The paper is aged and yellowed, with some ink bleed-through visible.

I have put asaid my Algebra and French and am going to tell you a long story about this prettiest of places West Point.

Schooling

“We have tremendous long and hard lessons to get in both French and Algebra. I study hard and hope to get along so as to pass the examination in January. this examination is a hard one they say, but I am not freyhtened yet.”

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript snippet on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script and matches the quote in the block above. The snippet is divided into two parts by a vertical white line. The left part contains the text: "hard lessons to get in both French and Algebra. I study hard and hope to get along so as to pass the examination in January. This examination is a hard one they say, but I am not freyhtened yet." The right part contains the text: "We have tremendous long and".

“We have tremendous long and hard lessons to get in both French and Algebra. I study hard and hope to get along so as to pass the examination in January. This examination is a hard one they say, but I am not freyhtened yet.”

*Landscape watercolor painted by Grant
while a cadet at West Point, ca. 1842*



Gilder Lehrman Collection

*Landscape watercolor painted by Grant
while a cadet at West Point, ca. 1842*



Gilder Lehrman Collection

*“The fact is if a man graduates
here
he safe for life.”*



Gilder Lehrman Collection

How?

Why?

Q&A

**Did you
know?**

Who?

The Old Bull Dog on the Right Track, 1864



Grant Comes East, 1864



Gilder Lehrman Collection

- By the spring of 1864, the Army of the Potomac had been through four commanders, but none had been able to defeat Robert E. Lee or capture any significant ground.
- In the West, Grant had defeated two Confederate armies (one at Fort Donelson in 1861 and another at Vicksburg in 1863) and had captured key cities along the Confederate supply lines.

Lieutenant General Grant, 1864

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

HEAD-QUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
NASHVILLE, TENN., MARCH 17TH, 1864.

GENERAL ORDERS, }

No. 1.

In pursuance of the following Order of the President:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION,
Washington, D. C., March 10th, 1864.

"Under the authority of the Act of Congress, to revive the grade of Lieutenant General in the United States Army, approved February 29th, 1864, Lieutenant General ULYSSES S. GRANT, U. S. A., is assigned to the command of the Armies of the United States.

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

I assume command of the Armies of the United States.

Head-Quarters will be in the Field; and, until further orders, will be with the Army of the Potomac.

There will be an office Head-Quarters in Washington, D. C., to which all official communications will be sent, except those from the Army where Head-Quarters are at the date of their address.

U. S. GRANT,
Lieutenant General, U. S. A.

OFFICIAL 2

Assistant Adjutant General

- March 1864, Grant is appointed Lieutenant General and given command of all Union armies.
- He was the first Lieutenant General since George Washington.
- Grant came east to personally lead the Union forces in Virginia.
- Grant's strategy focused on the destruction of Lee's army, the Confederate economy, and Southern morale.

Summer of 1864

- Between May 5 and June 24, Union and Confederate troops clashed almost daily.
- They suffered a combined total of more than 83,000 casualties—dead, missing, and wounded.
- Even though the two armies were in a siege, there were still assaults on Petersburg and battle happening in vicinity.



Gilder Lehrman Collection

Grant's Bull-dog Grip

- With such heavy losses, Northern governors feared the resurgence of draft riots.
- It was suggested that some troops be removed from Grant's army and sent to keep the peace in northern cities.
- Grant strongly disagreed and stressed the importance of keeping Lee's troops pinned down at Petersburg.
- On August 17, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln supported Grant's request.

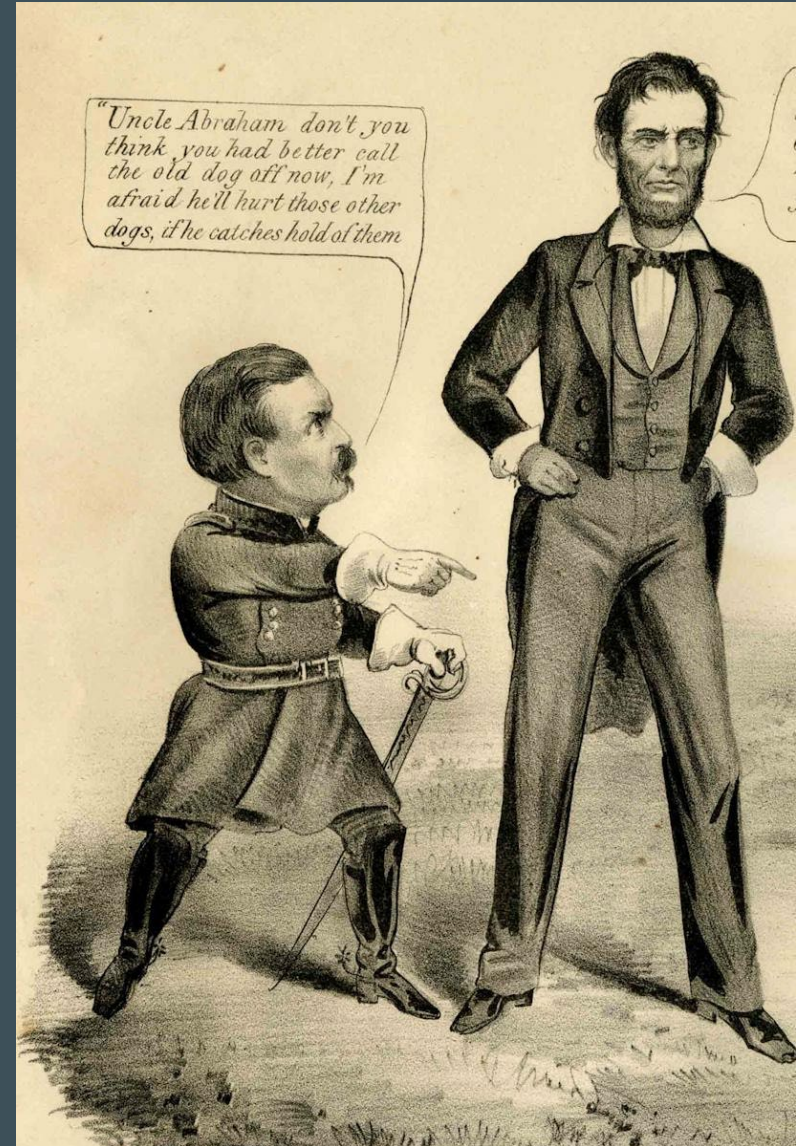
"I have seen your despatch expressing your unwillingness to break your hold where you are. Neither am I willing. Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew & choke, as much as possible."

The Old Bull Dog on the Right Track, 1864

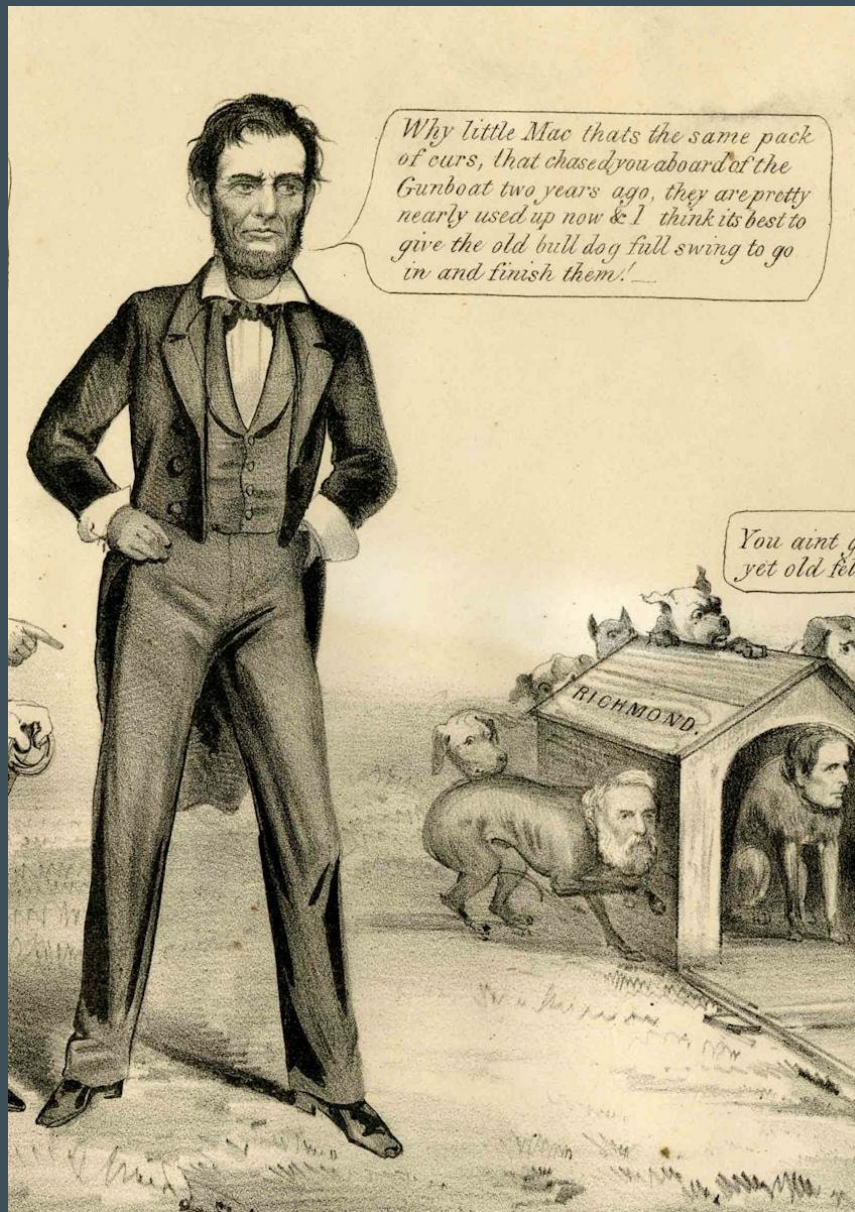


General George McClellan

“Uncle Abraham don’t you think you had better call the old dog off now, I’m afraid he’ll hurt those other dogs, if he catches hold of them.”



President Abraham Lincoln



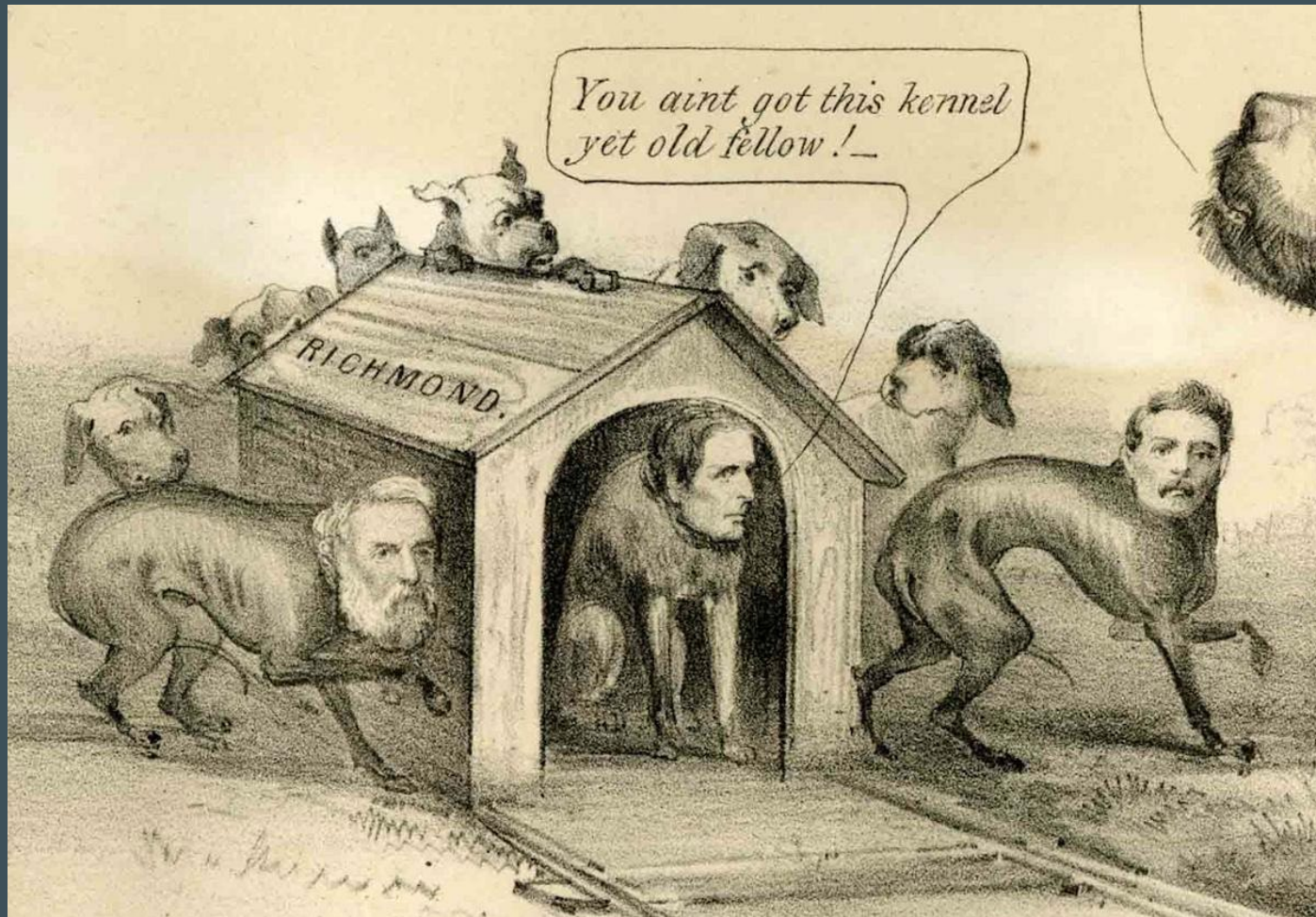
“Why little Mac thats the same pack of curs, that chased you aboard of the Gunboat two years ago, they are pretty nearly used up now & I think its best to give the old bull dog full swing to go in and finish them!”

General Ulysses S. Grant



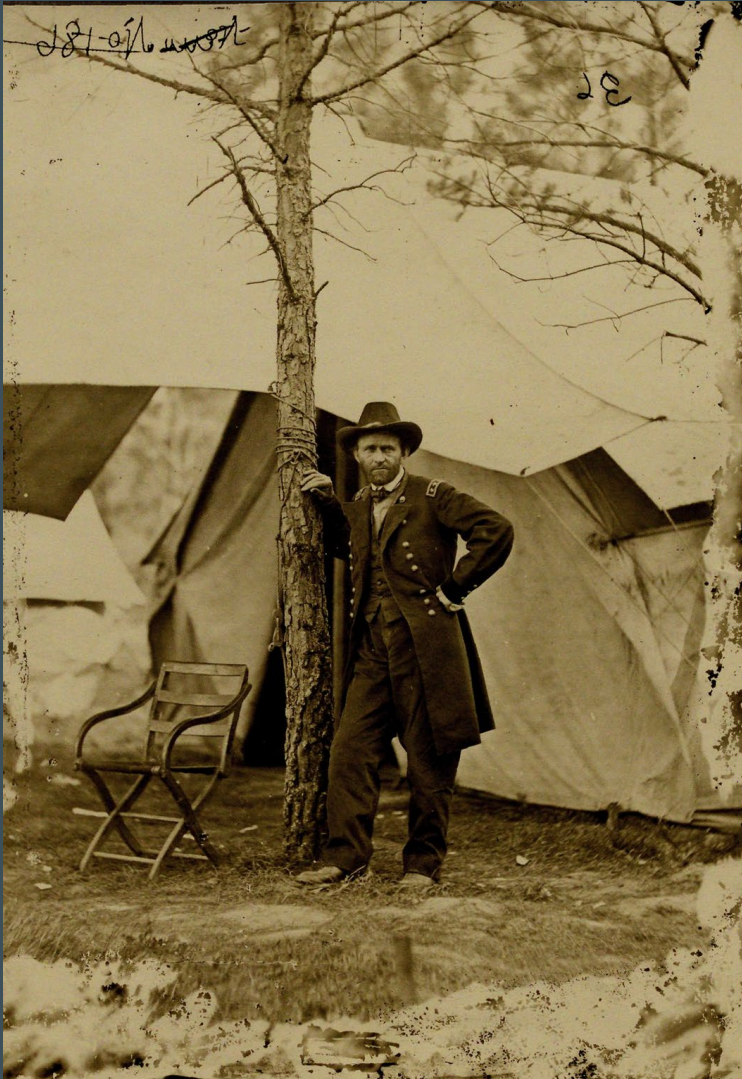
"I'm bound to take it"

President Jefferson Davis



“You aint got this kennel yet old fellow!”

Summer of 1864



Gilder Lehrman Collection

- From August 18 to 21, Grant concentrated his army on the capture of the Weldon Railroad, Richmond's main supply line.
- Grant's victory at Weldon left Lee's army and the Confederate capital without supplies and prevented reinforcements from being sent south to stop General William T. Sherman.

The Old Bull Dog on the Right Track, 1864



How?

Why?

Q&A

**Did you
know?**

Who?

GRANT - *HISTORY* documentary



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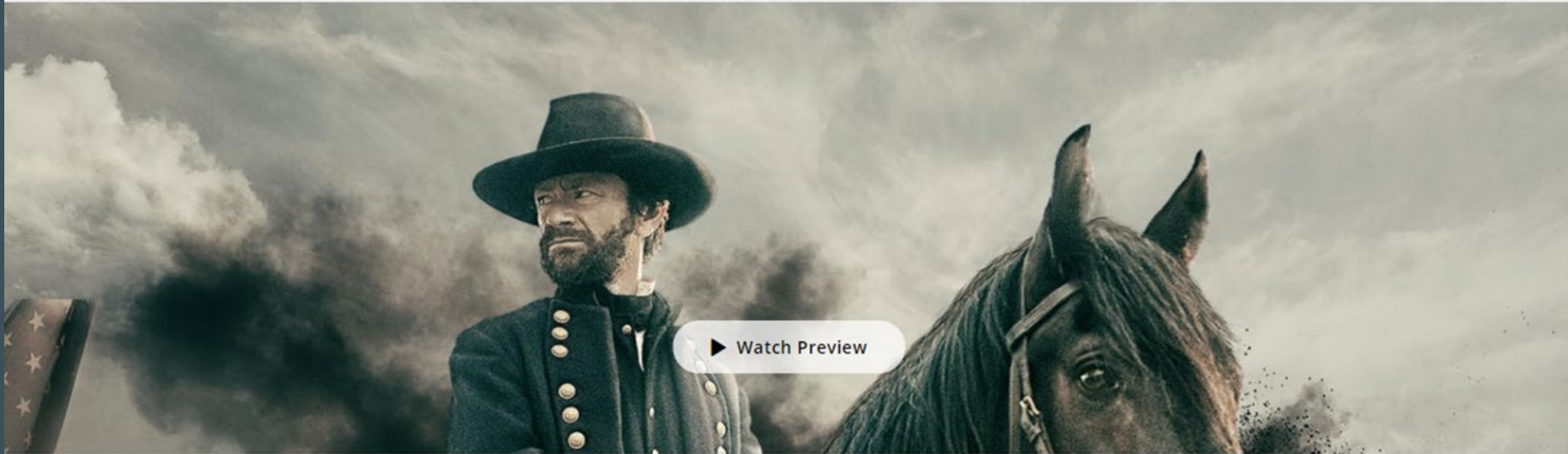
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Grant

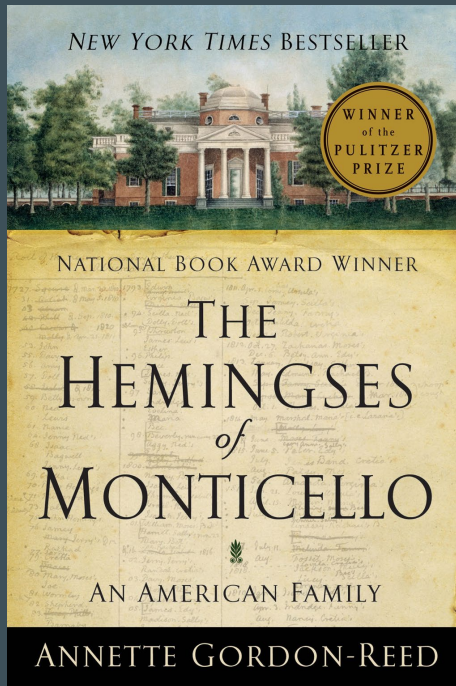
Three-Night Miniseries Event Premieres Memorial Day at 9/8c

Book Breaks

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY



- Gilder Lehrman Book Breaks is a new program that features the most exciting history scholars in America discussing their books live with host William Roka, followed by a Q&A with home audiences.



- Join us this Sunday, May 17, at 2pm ET for a conversation with Annette Gordon-Reed about her book *The Hemingses of Monticello*.
- Follow this link to register and view a schedule of speakers:
gilderlehrman.org/bookbreaks

Richard Gilder, 1932-2020

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INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

Celebrating Our 25th Anniversary



Sandra Trenholm

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*Richard Gilder
Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the
Gilder Lehrman Institute of
American History
May 31, 1932 - May 12, 2020*

gilderlehrman.org/about/richard-gilder

gilderlehrman.org/about/richard-gilder

What's next?

1. We will send you a packet with the documents we talked about today.
2. Please complete a 2-minute feedback survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Vault_May15

1. Visit gilderlehrman.org for
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Thank you!