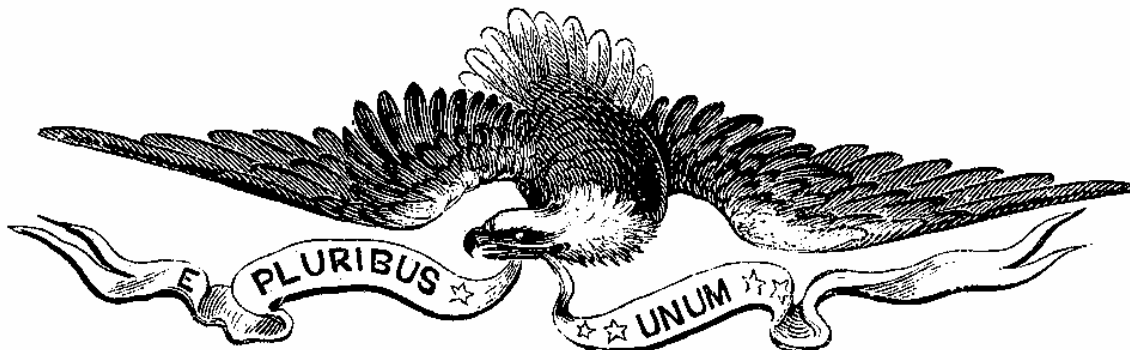


COMPANY K GAZETTE

A PUBLICATION OF COMPANY K, SECOND
WISCONSIN VOLUNTEERS



VOLUME VII

ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY, 2010

RANDOM MUSINGS FROM THE RANKS

SEVENTH BIRTHDAY OF THE COMPANY K GAZETTE

The February issue of the *Gazette* will mark the birthday of our newsletter. Little needs to be said to mark this achievement, but there are some thank yous that need to be sent out to our members. The editor will not try to name everyone who has generously contributed to the publication. But the editor is grateful to all the members who have made suggestions to assist in making the newsletter better.

Many of the members have submitted information on events, activities, suggestions for articles for inclusion in the monthly newsletter. There

have also been suggestions as to format to make the newsletter more readable.

A CALL TO ARMS!

THE
GOVERNMENT
IS ASSAILED!!!

VOLUNTEERS TO
ASSEMBLE FOR DRILL!



The first drill of the season will be conducted on the field of the Waterloo High School gym at 9:00 a.m. on February 20, 2010.

Everyone should be in uniform with all their leathers, rifle, bayonet, and above all a full canteen. Wear soft soled shoes to protect the gym floor.

This is our first "event" of the year and drills are important. For our new fellas it is imperative to get up to speed on the manual of arms and the various maneuvers we use on the field. For us old sea dogs it is a chance to limber up and knock off the rust that accumulates over the long cold winter months. Forget the robins, the first drill is a sure sign that spring is nearly here!

REPORT FROM COMPANY K ANNUAL MEETING

First, let the editor take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the Company

officers to our members in the last frantic days as we prepared for our annual meeting who went through the effort to locate a place for our meeting. It seems unnecessary to review all that transpired in the last few weeks as our annual meeting approached. Suffice it to say that we found ourselves in search of a place to hold our annual meeting with relatively little time to do so. As is always the case a number of folks stepped up and offered a number of locations to hold the meeting.

The editor always faces some trepidation when preparing to recognize the valuable input from our members. There is that fear that he will overlook someone whose efforts were extended on behalf of Company K. We thank Ugi Pirocanac, John Decker, Shar Fellmuth and Wayne Vawter for their efforts. The officers selected the Lake Mills site because of its location, believing it would be closer for most of our members.

Due to the necessity of preparing the roster of members, campaign schedule and other requirements for the Association meeting, the minutes will not be published until our March edition of the newsletter for your review and input before the final version is ready to put to bed.

Below you will find a reproduction of the report by outgoing quartermaster and recruiter, Tim Grover. It was read into the minutes at the annual meeting, as Tim was unable to attend the meeting, but it is included for your further review. The newsletter thanks Tim for providing the report to be included in the newsletter.

On behalf of the company we thank Wayne Vawter for the excellent opening prayer to

begin our meeting on the right note.

There were 27 members present for the meeting and two non-voting visitors. Everyone should take pride in the manner the meeting was conducted. Despite the number of items to be considered, the meeting was businesslike and business was handled efficiently and effectively! A cheer for our members!!

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED FOR THE COMPANY

A number of officers, both corporate and military, were recently elected to fill the roster of positions that were up for election in 2010. All officers are elected to serve three year terms.

Two corporate offices were up for election. Jim Dumke was re-elected secretary and Bill Raftery was elected to serve as Company K treasurer.

The following men were elected to serve as military officers for the next three years:

Captain	Bob Mann
First Sergeant	Patrick Lynch
Sergeant	Ryan Holbrook

Corporals	Rob Heibler
	Ben Rasmussen
	Joe Fellmeth

The company extends its gratitude to those who have completed their service as officers of Company K. They have served with great distinction and honor. We owe them a great debt for their dedication to the unit. It takes a lot of time and effort to lead us on the field and in the conduct of company

business. Thank you Craig Mickelson, Jeff Meicher and Tim Grover!

We have also been blessed with the men who have stepped up to serve us as we move forward. They are men of quality who will assure stability and continuity as we move forward. The new officers are an excellent blend of youth and experience. It bodes well for the future of the Company as we move into the sesquicentennial cycle of the American Civil War!

FEBRUARY MILESTONES

Feb. 1, 1861	Texas secedes
Feb. 1, 1865	Sherman begins Carolina Campaign
Feb. 2, 1803	Gen Albert S. Johnston CSA born
Feb. 3, 1807	Gen. Joseph E. Johnston CSA born
Feb. 3, 1864	Meridian Campaign begins
Feb. 3, 1865	Peace talks begin
Feb. 6, 1832	Gen. John Brown Gordon CSA
Feb. 6, 1833	Gen. J.E.B. Stuart CSA born
Feb. 6, 1834	Gen. William Dorsey Pender CSA born
Feb. 8, 1820	Gen. William T. Sherman USA born
Feb. 8, 1862	Battle of Roanoke Island
Feb. 9, 1861	Jefferson Davis elected president of CSA
Feb. 12, 1809	ABRAHAM LINCOLN born—Happy 201 st birthday Mr. President
Feb. 13, 1962	Battle of Fort Donelson
Feb. 14, 1824	Gen. Winfield S. Hancock US born
Feb. 14, 2010	VALENTINES DAY!!
Feb. 22, 2010	WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY COMPANY BIRTHDAYS

FEB. 11 Ryan Schwartz
FEB. 11 Doug Ward
FEB. 24 Travis Fellmeth
FEB. 26 Scott Boesel

On behalf of your comrades in the company the newsletter extends its heartiest birthday greetings and wishes you a very happy birthday!

There are no reported anniversaries for the month of February.

NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS

CHAPTER II

My master's family consisted of two sons, Andrew and Richard; one daughter, Lucretia, and her husband, Captain Thomas Auld. They lived in one house, upon the home plantation of Colonel Edward Lloyd. My master was Colonel Lloyd's clerk and superintendent. He was what might be called the overseer of the overseers. I spent two years of childhood on this plantation in my old master's family. It was here that I

witnessed the bloody transaction recorded in the first chapter; and as I received my first impressions of slavery on this plantation, I will give some description of it, and of slavery as it there existed. The plantation is about twelve miles north of Easton, in Talbot county, and is situated on the border of Miles River. The principal products raised upon it were tobacco, corn, and wheat. These were raised in great abundance; so that, with the products of this and the other farms belonging to him, he was able to keep in almost constant employment a large sloop, in carrying them to market at Baltimore. This sloop was named Sally Lloyd, in honor of one of the colonel's daughters. My master's son-in-law, Captain Auld, was master of the vessel; she was otherwise manned by the colonel's own slaves. Their names were Peter, Isaac, Rich, and Jake. These were esteemed very highly by the other slaves, and looked upon as the privileged ones of the plantation; for it was no small affair, in the eyes of the slaves, to be allowed to see Baltimore.

Colonel Lloyd kept from three to four hundred slaves on his home plantation, and owned a large number more on the

neighboring farms belonging to him. The names of the farms nearest to the home plantation were Wye Town and New Design. "Wye Town" was under the overseership of a man named Noah Willis. New Design was under the overseership of a Mr. Townsend. The overseers of these, and all the rest of the farms, numbering over twenty, received advice and direction from the managers of the home plantation. This was the great business place. It was the seat of government for the whole twenty farms. All disputes among the overseers were settled here. If a slave was convicted of any high misdemeanor, became unmanageable, or evinced a determination to run away, he was brought immediately here, severely whipped, put on board the sloop, carried to Baltimore, and sold to Austin Woolfolk, or some other slave-trader, as a warning to the slaves remaining.

Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal. Their yearly clothing consisted of

two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year.

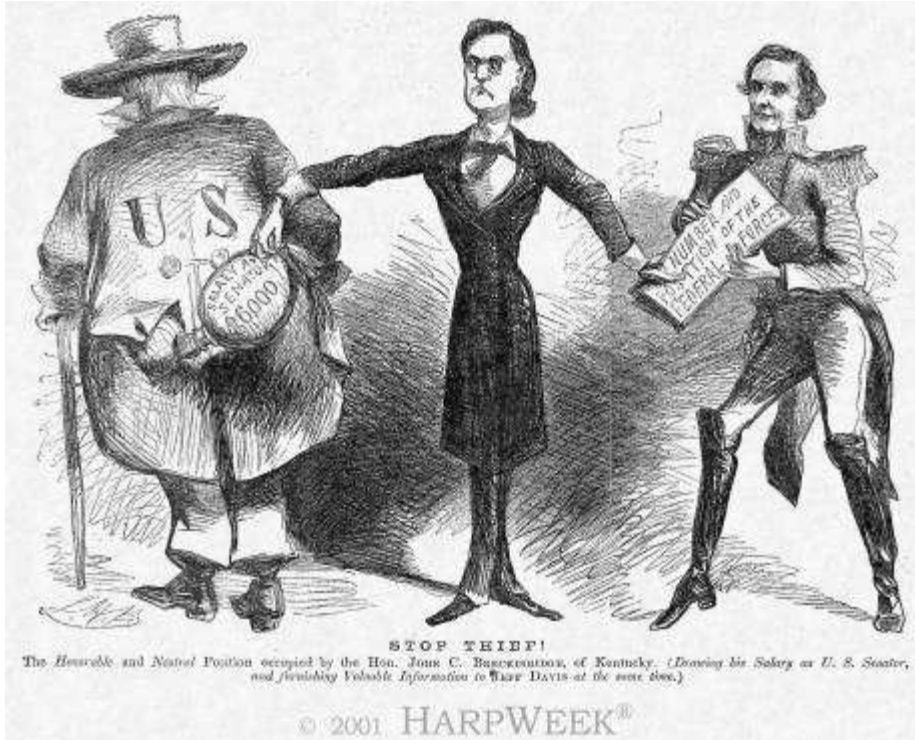
There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. This, however, is not considered a very great privation. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep; for when their day's work in the field is done, the most of them having their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of

their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day; and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down side by side, on one common bed,—the cold, damp floor,—each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets; and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver's horn. At the sound of this, all must rise, and be off to the field. There must be no halting; every one must be at his or her post; and woe betides them who hear not this morning summons to the field; for if they are not awakened by the sense of hearing, they are by the sense of feeling; no age nor sex finds any favor. Mr. Severe, the overseer, used to stand by the door of the quarter, armed with a large hickory stick and heavy cowskin, ready to whip any one who was so unfortunate as not to hear, or, from any other cause, was prevented from being ready to start for the field at the sound of the horn.

Mr. Severe was rightly named; he was a cruel man. I have seen him whip a woman, causing the blood to run half an hour at the time; and this, too, in the midst of her crying children, pleading for their

mother's release. He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his fiendish barbarity. Added to his cruelty, he was a profane swearer. It was enough to chill the blood and stiffen the hair of an ordinary man to hear him talk. Scarce a sentence escaped him but that was commenced or concluded by some horrid oath. The field was the place to witness his cruelty and profanity. His presence made it both the field of blood and of blasphemy. From the rising till the going down of the sun, he was cursing, raving, cutting, and slashing among the slaves of the field, in the most frightful manner. His career was short. He died very soon after I went to Colonel Lloyd's; and he died as he lived, uttering, with his dying groans, bitter curses and horrid oaths. His death was regarded by the slaves as the result of a merciful providence.

Mr. Severe's place was filled by a Mr. Hopkins. He was a very different man. He was less cruel, less profane, and made less noise, than Mr. Severe. His course was characterized by no extraordinary demonstrations of cruelty. He whipped, but seemed to take no pleasure in it. He was called by the slaves a good overseer.



STOP THIEF!

The Honorable and Neutral Position occupied by the Hon. JOHN C. BRECKINRIDGE, of Kentucky.

(Drawing his Salary as U.S. Senator, and furnishing Valuable Information to JEFF DAVIS, at the same time.)

Artist: John McLenan

This cartoon labels Senator John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, former vice president of the United States, as a thief for continuing to draw his senatorial salary from the federal government while he supposedly conspires with Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. The post-dated cartoon appeared only a few days after the Kentucky legislature vowed its allegiance to the Union, after months under a formal declaration of neutrality, and announced that its two U.S. senators, Breckinridge and Lazarus Powell, "do not represent the will of the people of Kentucky." Both men, however, continued on the federal payroll for a few more months.

John Cabell Breckinridge was born in Lexington Kentucky in 1821. In 1839, he graduated from Centre College (Kentucky), and then studied law at the College of New Jersey before completing his degree at Transylvania University (Kentucky) in 1841. He established a law practice in Burlington, Iowa, but two years later returned to Kentucky, where he prospered in the profession. During the Mexican War (1846-1848), he served as a major with the Kentucky volunteers.

At the war's conclusion, Breckinridge was elected to Kentucky's lower house (1849-1851) as a states' rights Democrat before winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives (1851-1855). He played a key role in incorporating the repeal of the Missouri Compromise ban on slavery into Stephen Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act and in securing House approval for the final bill (1854). Breckinridge himself sponsored no major legislation, but was a popular political figure. In 1856, delegates to the Democratic National Convention selected him as James Buchanan's vice-presidential running mate. Inaugurated when only 36 years old, he has the distinction of being the youngest vice president in American history.

When the Democratic Party split into sectional factions in 1860, Breckinridge was nominated for president by the Southern wing. Concerned that a divided party

would allow the Republicans to triumph, he offered to decline the nomination if Douglas would reject his nomination by the Northern wing. Douglas declined the proposition, and both men remained in the race.

Although Breckinridge was a slaveowner who supported the constitutional protection of slavery and the right of secession, he was not one of the radicals. In the November 1860 election, Breckinridge captured all the states in the Deep South, but as he had feared, Republican Abraham Lincoln won the presidency with an Electoral College majority.

During the interval between Lincoln's election and his inauguration in March 1861, Breckinridge worked for a compromise between the North and South. In early 1861, the Kentucky legislature again elected him to the U.S. Senate, and he took his seat in March. When the Kentucky state government declared in late May 1861 that it was officially neutral in the Civil War, Breckinridge supported its right to do so, even though he personally opposed the policy. A Confederate invasion of western Kentucky in early September prodded an angered Kentucky legislature to throw its support to the Union cause. A few days later, the body declared that Breckinridge and Powell no longer represented the state of Kentucky.

On October 8, Breckinridge responded in a heated speech against the Union's allegedly harsh treatment of Missouri and Maryland, two other important Border States (slave states loyal to the Union). He warned that Kentuckians would henceforth have "to deal with a power which respects neither the Constitution nor laws, and which, if successful, will reduce you to the condition of prostrate and bleeding Maryland." In early November, a federal court in Kentucky returned indictments for treason against 32 prominent Kentuckians, including Breckinridge. Within a few weeks, he left the halls of Congress, was commissioned a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, and took command of the First Kentucky Brigade. On December 4, 1861, the U.S. Senate expelled John C. Breckinridge from its membership.

Breckinridge accumulated a notable military record during the Civil War, fighting at Bowling Green, Shiloh, Baton Rouge, Stones River, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge. He rose to the rank of major general, and then served as the Confederacy's last secretary of war during the closing months of the war. He opposed efforts to prolong the war with guerrilla fighting after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. Following the war Breckinridge fled to Cuba, then to England, and finally to Canada. President Andrew Johnson pardoned him on Christmas Day 1868, allowing him to return to Kentucky a few months later. Although he forswore electoral politics, Breckinridge urged sectional

reconciliation and criticized the Ku Klux Klan. He was employed as a railroad executive until his death in 1874.

Robert C. Kennedy

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/harp/1012.html>

QUARTERMASTER REPORT FOR 2010

CAPTAIN'S EQUIPMENT

1. Officer Sash
2. .44 cal. Remington Pistol
3. Holster
4. Officer's Leather Haversack
5. Pistol Cartridge Box
6. Pair of Capt Shoulder Boards
7. 183 Quaker Muskets
8. 1 Box of Gunpowder
9. Co. K Folding Wood Table
10. Wood Sign, says Wisconsin & Iron Brigade
11. Wood Plaque from Middleton Parade
12. Yellow Ribbon

Quaker rifles- Tim 16, Pat about 40

Powder- Tim 11 lbs, Craig 25 lbs

Caps- Tim 47 tin's

Company A tent and poles- Tim

Company loaner equipment- Tim, leathers, coat's hats, gators, shoes, bayonet, shirts, etc.

Company manuals- Tim

Company Flags- Ugi

Company flag holders- Tim

Company drum- Ben Johnson

RECRUITER'S REPORT

New members- John Decker, Dave May, Tim Brown, Tom Drendel

2010 CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE FOR COMPANY K

Februray 20, 2010	Company K drill Arrive by 9:00 A.M.	Waterloo High School
March 20, 2010	Company K drill Arrive by 9:00 A.M.	Waterloo High School
April 17, 2010	Company School of the Soldier/drill	TBA**

May 1-2, 2010	Regimental Muster Arrive by 8:00 A.M.	Old Wade House Greenbush, WI
May 21, 2010	COMPANY K SCHOOL DAY Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Blue Mound State Park Mt. Horeb, WI	
May 31, 2010	Memorial Day Ceremony Arrive by 7:45 A.M. Forest Hills Cemetery Madison. WI	
May 31, 2010	Monona Memorial Day Parade Immediately after Forest Hills Ceremony Monona, WI	
June 5-6, 2010	Reclaiming Our Heritage event Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Woods Veterans Hospital Milwaukee, WI	
July 17-18, 2010	Old Falls Village Co. E event Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Menominee Falls, WI	
August 6-8, 2010	Muskets and Memories event Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Boscobel, WI	
September 24-26, 2010	Old Wade House Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Greenbush, WI	
October 2-3, 2010	Trimborn Farm Living History Arrive by 8:00 A.M. Greendale, WI	

NATIONAL EVENT TBD

BREAKING UP GENERAL GRANT

BY MARK TWAIN

Many times MT told his family and friends that he would stop "speechifying" and save the time and energy these performances cost him. Invariably he went back to the banquet scene for another dose of the elated sense of mastery that he gained whenever a room full of well-dressed notables loved him. In the fall of 1879 he went all the way to Chicago, to speak at a dinner in Grant's honor, because, he wrote Howells in early October, "My sluggish soul needs a fierce upstirring." He got it. To him, the

toast he delivered "To the Babies" was his greatest triumph as an after-dinner speaker.

Below is the text of MT's toast, from Paine's edition of his Speeches, and a brief account of the context, including MT's written [and ecstatic] accounts of his performance. The speech was widely reprinted -- it was even reprinted as a pamphlet by "George B. Harfield, chemist," who obviously used it as advertising; this version of text includes [audience reactions].

The banquet was also widely reported in the papers. The Tribune's coverage of the banquet filled up three pages of the paper. The paper even published a detailed seating chart showing the places assigned to all 500 diners.

The raised dais where Grant sat is at the right. MT is listed as "Saml. L. Clemens" and his place is marked in blue.

The account went into equal detail about the lavish menu, which began with "Blue Point Oysters on the Shell" and a "Sauterne," and ended, many courses later, with "Celery," "Coffee," "Cognac," and "Cigars." The "weary correspondent" stayed until after 2 a.m. to take down in shorthand all fifteen speeches. MT's came last, and was not treated as more newsworthy than most of the rest.

Probably the main emphasis of the Tribune's account was the "Stag" nature of the banquet. It took the reader into the dinner with a long description of "the amusing feature" of "the singular contrast" between "the stern masculinity of the line of banqueters and the almost exclusively feminine character of the groups of spectators who enclosed them on both sides" as they marched into the dining room, from which all women were excluded. "Taken altogether," the reporter said, "the sight was one which would make a woman's-right's advocate boil over with righteous indignation." If someone like Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Susan B. Anthony had been there, "she would have got points enough in ten minutes to supply the basis of half a dozen lectures on the evil and immoral tendency of that vile remnant of barbarism which mars modern civilization under the villainously suggestive name of the 'Stag party.'"

When the account gets to "THE TOASTS," it picks up the theme of male saturnalia: "At 10:45 p.m. Gen. Sherman, the President of the meeting, arose and began the arduous task of quieting the tumult and general conviviality resulting from a superabundance of empty wine glasses and a plentiful supply of cigars."

"Woman" was represented in the hall by the regular toast. After MT turned down the topic, it was assigned to Gen. Thomas C. Fletcher, who began: "The only real magic of nature is the power possessed by a woman over the man who loves her, -- whether it be his mother, his wife, his sister, or his sweetheart." According to this account, the biggest crowd response was produced by this line: "The fires were kept by them bright upon the altar of home for those who never came back. The flag of their country covers their mouldering ashes in the National Cemetery; and the strong fatherly arm of the Government for which they died protects their dear old mother, or their widow, or orphan children; and, comrades, while we live and they live, the Government we fought for shall continue to do so. [Cheers and applause.]"

In the letter he wrote Livy hours after the banquet, MT called Fletcher's performance the "flattest, insipidest, silliest" response to "Woman" he'd ever heard.

When U.S. Grant and his family returned in 1879 from a two-year journey around the world, Chicago decided to throw a huge welcome home party. It lasted three days, and included a parade with over 80,000 Civil War veterans. MT attended all the festivities, and his speech felt like the climax of the whole event. It was the fifteenth and last speech delivered at the banquet at the Palmer House on November 14, the last day of the celebration. At around 2 a.m. MT stood on a table amidst 500 men who had been eating, drinking and listening to oratory for more than six hours, and gave this toast. The topic was his own idea. He'd been asked to respond to "The Ladies," but turned that down as too familiar to his audiences, and proposed "The Babies" instead.

He wrote this to Livy several hours after the event, while the shouts and laughter of the crowd were obviously still ringing in his ears:

A little after 5 in the morning.

I've just come to my room, Livy darling, I guess this was the memorable night of my life. By George, I never was so stirred since I was born. I heard four speeches which I can never forget. One by Emory Storrs, one by Gen. Vilas (O, wasn't it wonderful!) one by Gen. Logan [mighty stirring], one by somebody whose name escapes me, and one by that splendid old soul, Col. Bob Ingersoll, -- oh, it was just the supremest combination of English words that was ever put together since the world began. My soul, how handsome he looked, as he stood on that table, in the midst of those 500 shouting men, and poured the molten silver from his lips! Lord, what an organ is human speech when it is played by a master! All these speeches may look dull in print, but how the lightning glared around them when they were uttered, and how the crowd roared in response! It was a great night, a memorable night. I am so richly repaid for my journey -- and how I did wish with all my whole heart that you were there to be lifted into the very seventh heaven of enthusiasm, as I was. The army songs, the military music, the crashing applause -- Lord bless me, it was unspeakable.

Out of compliment they placed me last in the list -- No. 15 -- I was to "hold the crowd" -- and bless my life I was in awful terror when No. 14 rose, at 2 o'clock this morning and killed all the enthusiasm by delivering the flattest, insipidest, silliest of all responses to "Woman" that ever a wearied multitude listened to.

Then Gen. Sherman (chairman) announced my toast, and the crowd gave me a good round of applause as I mounted on top of the dinner table, but it was only on account of my name, nothing more -- they were all tired and wretched. They let my first sentence go in silence, till I paused and added "we stand on common ground" -- then they burst forth like a hurricane and I saw that I had them! From that time on, I stopped at the end of each sentence, and let the tornado of applause and laughter sweep around me -- and when I closed with "And if the child is but the prophecy of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt that he succeeded," I say it who oughtn't to say it, the house came down with a crash. For two hours and a half, now, I've been shaking hands and listening to congratulations. Gen. Sherman said, "Lord bless me, my boy, I don't know how you do it -- it's a secret that's beyond me -- but it was great -- give me your hand again."

And do you know, Gen. Grant sat through fourteen speeches like a graven image, but I fetched him! I broke him up, utterly! He told me he laughed till the tears came and every bone in his body ached. (And do you know, the biggest part of the success of the

speech lay in the fact that the audience saw that for once in his life he had been knocked out of his iron serenity.)

Bless your soul, 'twas immense. I was never so proud in my life. Lots and lots of people -- hundreds I might say -- told me my speech was the triumph of the evening -- which was a lie. Ladies, Tom, Dick and Harry -- even the policemen -- captured me in the halls and shook hands, and scores of army officers said "We shall always be grateful to you for coming."

MT was back in Hartford on November 17 when he wrote Howells about the event, but his sense of triumph remained vivid. He was especially proud of the way he had cracked up Ulysses S. Grant:

Grand times, my boy, grand times. Gen. Grant sat at the banquet like a statue of iron & listened without the faintest suggestion of emotion to fourteen speeches which tore other people all to shreds, but when I lit in with the fifteenth & last, his time was come! I shook him up like dynamite & he sat there fifteen minutes & laughed & cried like the mortalest of mortals. But bless you I had measured this unconquerable conqueror, & went at my work with the confidence of conviction, for I knew I could lick him. He told me he had shaken hands with 15,000 people that day & come out of it without an ache or pain, but that my truths had racked all the bones of his body apart.

The fifteenth regular toast was "The Babies. -- As they comfort us in our sorrows, let us not forget them in our festivities."

I LIKE that. We have not all had the good fortune to be ladies. We have not all been generals, or poets, or statesmen; but when the toast works down to the babies, we stand on common ground. It is a shame that for a thousand years the world's banquets have utterly ignored the baby, as if he didn't amount to anything. If you will stop and think a minute -- if you will go back fifty or one hundred years to your early married life and recontemplate your first baby -- you will remember that he amounted to a good deal, and even something over. You soldiers all know that when that little fellow arrived at family headquarters you had to hand in your resignation. He took entire command. You became his lackey, his mere body-servant, and you had to stand around too. He was not a commander who made allowances for time, distance, weather, or anything else. You had to execute his order whether it was possible or not. And there was only one form of marching in his manual of tactics, and that was the double-quick. He treated you with every sort of insolence and disrespect, and the bravest of you didn't dare to say a word. You could face the death-storm at Donelson and Vicksburg, and give back blow for blow; but when he clawed your whiskers, and pulled your hair, and twisted your nose, you had to take it. When the thunders of war were sounding in your ears you set your faces toward the batteries, and advanced with steady tread; but when he turned on the terrors of his war-whoop, you advanced in the other direction, and mighty glad of the chance, too. When he called for soothing syrup, did you venture to throw out any side-remarks about certain services being unbecoming an officer and a gentleman? No. You got up and got it. When he ordered his pap bottle and it was not warm, did you talk back? Not you. You went to work and warmed it. You ever descended so far in your menial office as to take a suck at that warm, insipid stuff yourself, to see if it was right -- three parts water to one of milk, a touch of sugar to modify the colic, and a

drop of peppermint to kill those immortal hiccoughs. I can taste that stuff yet. And how many things you learned as you went along! Sentimental young folks still take stock in that beautiful saying that when a baby smiles in his sleep, it is because the angels are whispering to him. Very pretty, but too thin -- simply wind on the stomach, my friends. If the baby proposed to take a walk at his usual hour, two o'clock in the morning, didn't you rise up promptly and remark, with a mental addition which would not improve a Sunday-school book much, that that was the very thing you were about to propose yourself? Oh! you were under good discipline, and as you went fluttering up and down the room in your undress uniform, you not only prattled undignified baby talk, but even tuned up your martial voices and tried to sing! -- Rock-a-baby Baby in the Tree-top, for instance. What a spectacle for an Army of the Tennessee! And what an affliction for the neighbors, too; for it is not everybody within a mile around that likes military music at three in the morning. And when you had been keeping this sort of thing up two or three hours, and your little velvet-head intimated that nothing suited him like exercise and noise, what did you do? You simply went on until you dropped in the last ditch. The idea that a baby doesn't amount to anything! Why, one baby is just a house and a front yard by itself. One baby can furnish more business than you and your whole Interior Department can attend to. He is enterprising, irrepressible, brimful of lawless activities. Do what you please, you can't make him stay on the reservation. Sufficient unto the day is one baby. As long as you are in your right mind, don't you ever pray for twins. Twins amount to a permanent riot. And there ain't any real difference between triplets and an insurrection.

Yes, it was high time for a toast-master to recognize the importance of the babies. Think what is in store for the present crop! Fifty years from now we shall all be dead, I trust, and then this flag, if it still survive (and let us hope it may), will be floating over a Republic numbering 200,000,000 souls, according to the settled laws of our increase. Our present schooner of State will have grown into a political leviathan -- a Great Eastern. The cradled babies of today will be on deck. Let them be well trained, for we are going to leave a big contract on their hands. Among the three or four millions cradles now rocking in the land are some which this nation would preserve for ages as sacred things, if we could know which ones they are. In one of those cradles the unconscious Farragut of the future is at this moment teething -- think of it! -- and putting in a world of dead earnest, unarticulated, but perfectly justifiable profanity over it, too. In another the future renowned astronomer is blinking at the shining Milky Way with but a languid interest -- poor little chap! -- and wondering what has become of that other one they call the wet-nurse. In another the future great historian is lying -- and doubtless will continue to lie until his earthly mission is ended. In another the future President is busying himself with no profounder problem of state than what the mischief has become of his hair so early; and in a mighty array of other cradles there are now some 60,000 future office-seekers, getting ready to furnish him with occasion to grapple with that same old problem a second time. And in still one more cradle, somewhere under the flag, the future illustrious commander-in-chief of the American armies is so little burdened with his approaching grandeurs and responsibilities as to be giving his whole strategic mind at this moment to trying to

find out some way to get his big toe into his mouth -- an achievement which, meaning no disrespect, the illustrious guest of this evening turned his entire attention to some fifty-six years ago; and if the child is but a prophecy of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt that he succeeded. -- End -- End of Breaking Up General Grant by Mark Twain for Arthur's Classic Novels

<http://arthursclassicnovels.com/arthurs/twain/babies10.xml>

A BRITISH WRITER LOOKS AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS THAT UNDERLAY THE CIVIL WAR!

American citizens treat their constitution like scripture. If the rhetoric of political campaigns and school textbooks are any guide, most US citizens believe, in words attributed to President Coolidge [1923-29], that 'to live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race'. Since its ratification by the original 13 states – Rhode Island being the last in 1790 – the world's oldest written constitution has had few critics at home and many admirers abroad. Blessed by the Founding Fathers, it continues to be seen as a wellspring of good government, a beacon of freedom and the foundation stone of American exceptionalism. As President Obama observed soon after his election, 'the values and ideas in those documents are not simply words written into ageing parchment; they are the bedrock of our liberty and our security'.

In the decades after the Founding Fathers, discussion of the constitution entered a period of complacency. America expanded, trade prospered and the Union, despite the divisions, held together. There was much muttering of the words of the ageing parchment, but the constitution's failings became increasingly apparent after Andrew Jackson's time, as the quality of American presidents deteriorated and tensions mounted between the northern and southern states. Yet there were no American successors to Alexander Hamilton or James Madison – no updated *Federalist* papers – to provide learned commentaries on the impending constitutional crisis brought about by the irreconcilable differences between the free and slaveholding states.

Enter the English man of letters Walter Bagehot (1826-77), an avid student of government and the greatest constitutional writer of his time. Calls for suffrage reform in Britain in the 1860s increased Bagehot's fear of egalitarian democracy and prompted him to turn his mind to American government. 'The greatest and best of presidential countries' provided a parallel to Britain and a contrast

between what he called the 'presidential system' and the 'cabinet system'. A comparison between the two countries' constitutions became a compelling theme in his political writings, not least in his masterpiece, *The English Constitution* (1867).

At the time, American critics thought his observations 'weighty' and 'well considered', if not always just. In our day, when rival priesthoods translate the constitution with literal exactitude or loose construction, Bagehot's 'wise chat', as one reviewer called it, is worth revisiting. It is all the more relevant in an era undergoing another crisis in political affairs, when many Americans view their constitution by the light kindled at their own particular altars.

Bagehot believed the dead weight of a written document made sacred for want of a hereditary sovereign was an impediment to resilient, effective governance. No Englishman, he wrote, would be impressed with arguments that assumed that 'the limited clauses of an old state-paper can provide for all coming cases, and for ever regulate the future'. His trenchant remarks on the American Constitution were born of wide-ranging reflections on political structure and the practical effects of government.

Bagehot never visited the United States though he admired its energy, pluck and respect for the law, which he took to be characteristically Anglo-Saxon. As a banker and financial journalist he had an interest in fiscal policy and the cotton trade. As a man who hated slavery, he had little sympathy for traditions of southern chivalry. But it was the effects of the Civil War on American politics that turned his mind to essential constitutional issues. 'It is impossible,' he wrote in 1861, 'not to observe that the whole mischief has been, not caused but painfully exacerbated by the unfortunate mixture of flexibility and inflexibility in the United States Constitution.'

Bagehot wrote over 30 articles on America in the 1860s. At the heart of these was an analysis of the 'purely pernicious' defects in the constitution. He singled out for blame the peculiarity in the American government of having a president elected for a set term but largely independent of the confidence of Congress. He was convinced that the slave states would not have reacted so violently, or unanimously, if a congressional defeat could have given them relief, as parliamentary defeat did in England. Clearly there was a momentous defect in the constitution, for at the time of its framing the Founding Fathers did not provide a remedy for dealing with slavery apart from the courts.

The more Bagehot studied the American constitution, the more enamoured he became of Britain's unwritten one. For him, the sovereignty of an abstract, written document was harder to fathom than the sovereignty of a living monarch who disguised the complexities of the British government. An ancient but malleable British constitution was to his mind 'like an old man who still wears with attached fondness clothes in the fashion of his youth: what you see of him is the same; what you do not see is wholly altered'. The ageing body under the dated clothes was all too apparent in the American constitution, which has 'no elastic element, everything is rigid, specified, dated'. The difficulty in amending it was a singular defect:



Every alteration of it, however urgent or however trifling, must be sanctioned by a complicated proportion of States or legislatures ... The practical arguments and the legal disquisitions in America are often like those of trustees carrying out a misdrawn will – the sense of what they mean is good, but it can never be worked out fully or defended simply, so hampered is it by the old words of an odd testament.

A woodsman at the helm

One of Bagehot's principal objections was that presidential and congressional terms were for fixed periods. Electoral rigidity sapped the nation's democratic vitality and left it unresponsive in an emergency. Moreover, the electorate, far removed from the law-making process, had little influence. Apart from the electing moment, 'it has not the ballotbox before it; its virtue is gone, and it must wait till its instant of despotism again returns'. The long hiatus between elections and inaugurations, which has often frustrated American voters, added to the problem. Although the British constitution might strike many as absurd in theory, to Bagehot it was efficient in

operation for it allowed shifts of opinion to change prime ministers without waiting for a fixed election. In a crisis, the British people could choose a new leader, changing 'the pilot of the calm' for 'the pilot of the storm'. Since an election could be called at any time, the press and the voting public consequently paid close attention to the facts and debates and felt that their judgement had influence. On the other hand, the President of the United States is virtually irremovable. As Bagehot noted, 'The Times has made many ministries', but the Washington newspapers, 'can no more remove a president during his term of place than The Times can remove a lord mayor during his year of office'. For Bagehot, such a politics was folly, for 'the time when a sovereign power is most needed, you cannot find the supreme people'. The election of an obscure, untried backwoodsman in 1860 seemed to illustrate this very issue.

For Bagehot, a cardinal failing of the American government was that it lacked the simplicity provided by a single supreme authority, which the House of Commons provided in Britain. The framers of the American constitution created a system of ingenious devices, which simply 'aggravated the calamities of their descendents'. The paper checks and balances and competing branches of government were to ensure that the state did not degenerate into tyranny, but they slowed down the process of government and, most damagingly, erected barriers between the executive and the legislature.

The American president reigned largely independent of Congress, but he was also isolated from congressional influence, which made him far more personally responsible for policies that needed occasional modification. Unlike the British prime minister, whose cabinet was drawn from elected officials, the president did not share responsibility with his parliament nor have to defend his policies before it:

Congress, being a quite unfit body for executive resolves, does nothing, and finally leaves everything to the President. But what is really wanted for the effective administration of a free country in times of excitement, is that the government should be in such connection with the people as to direct the national policy in harmony with their gradually forming convictions. For this purpose, the ruler must himself belong to the representative body.

Bagehot understated the role of Congress in shaping legislation, but he had a point in that the separation of the executive and legislative branches, which the Founding Fathers thought essential to a good government, had serious shortcomings. The exclusion of ministers from Congress resulted in cabinet officers being deprived of parliamentary careers. More often than not cabinet officers are called to serve the president without previous political experience and without political prospects. As he saw it, the lack of a political training for administrative statesmen led to the degeneration of public life.

Nor did the separation of powers enliven Congressional legislators, who, isolated from the executive, tended to resentment and antagonism. Their debates and votes could not depose a president and were thus 'prologues without a play':

To belong to a debating society adhering to an executive ... is not an object to stir a noble ambition, and is a position to encourage idleness. The members of a parliament excluded from office can never be comparable, much less equal, to those of a parliament not excluded from office. The presidential government, by its nature, divides political life into two halves, an executive half and a legislative half; and, by so dividing it, makes neither half worth a man having.

In Bagehot's opinion, the constitutional separation of powers in a nation with competing sovereignties between the states and the federal government contributed mightily to the outbreak of the Civil War. He agreed with *The Times* in London, which observed in 1862 that the American crisis was emphatically 'the battle of a constitution' in which there was no self-interpreting power that could decide which reading was correct. There was a crucial flaw in the instrument itself, for at the time of its framing the Founding Fathers disagreed as to its meaning and spirit and the latent issue of slavery had been glossed over by compromise. When it was suggested that a written constitution presented the potentially dangerous consequences of rival interpretations, the framers assumed that the Supreme Court could settle all difficulties with its irresistible authority. To Bagehot, this was wishful thinking, for when such passions were aroused and such issues were at stake no judicial authority could resolve an extra-judicial matter beyond its competence.

An unfit instrument

Soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, Bagehot wrote an essay in the *National Review* entitled 'The American Constitution at the Present Crisis'. He praised the document for fostering commerce, which made America a nation to watch. But it contained the seeds of national dissolution, for America's stability depended on the voluntary union of the states. That the nation had survived given

its inherent contradictions surprised him. He dismissed the notion that the constitution was a fit instrument to resolve differences of opinion over slavery. In his view it was a document born in a time of confusion, framed by pressing necessity between 'two extreme plans for meeting that necessity'. An Englishman, he remarked, knows that all written documents 'will fail utterly when applied to a state of things different from any which its authors ever imagined'.

As a 'natural aristocrat', Bagehot was sensitive to what he saw as the evils of Jacksonian democracy, and its consequence – 'mob rule'. In his opinion, the constitution had created 'an almost unmitigated ochlocracy' (mob rule), in which the 'half educated' masses were 'everywhere omnipotent'. Over time, their growing political power compounded the constitution's failure to address the divisions between the states. For him, the masses intensified the tensions. He lamented America's undeniable 'vulgarity' that displeased cultivated Europeans, but observed, in a revealing sentence, that should the American Union fall, it would be 'little regretted by those whose race is akin, whose language is identical, whose weightiest opinions are on most subjects the same as theirs'.

Presidents of the United States were widely seen as ineffectual after Andrew Jackson, which did little to reassure Bagehot, who felt that American institutions and leaders had 'degenerated frightfully' by the time of the Civil War. To Bagehot, the process by which America elected its presidents was laughable. The candidates propelled by the British electoral system were household names, indeed 'household ideas'. The unhappy history of the United States under President Buchanan (1857-61) suggested to him that it was 'a singular defect in the working of the American constitution that it gave power at the decisive moment to those least likely to use that power well'.

To Bagehot, the rot started in the American primary campaigns, in which few cared little whether a man was fit for the job, preferring to dwell on his attractiveness as a candidate. He blamed the constitution as much as the voting public. The framers had been anxious to avoid momentary gusts of popular opinion but desired that the president be widely representative. Accordingly, they created the 'farce' of a 'double election', in the hope that the 'electoral college' would exercise discretion and provide a check on popular ignorance. The effect, in Bagehot's mind, and to many other critics since, was to create futile complications that turned out to be woefully at odds with the constitution's original design.

In reality, the 'Electoral College' exercises no choice; every member of it is selected by the primitive constituency because he will vote for a certain presidential candidate ... and he does nothing but vote accordingly.

In a nation split into disparate sections, each with its peculiar enmities and traditions, rivalry for the presidency becomes intense. Bagehot believed that in such a context, men running for office are bound to have said something that would offend some large constituency. As a result presidential elections can only be secured after long deliberation. In practice, each party caucus selects the

most unexceptionable member available, typically a trimmer with little talent and commonplace views:

If a man of wit had devised a system specially adapted to bring to the head of affairs an incompetent man at a pressing crisis, it could not have devised one more fit.

Desperate measures

This was the system that in 1861 elected Lincoln, which, according to Bagehot, placed him in the most invidious position ever experienced by a politician. At the very moment when the state was collapsing, the president had to spend his precious energy turning out the friends of his predecessor and appointing friends of his administration. Bowed down by the minutiae of office, he had 'the detestable necessity of deciding on the respective fitness of 5,000 men for 500 postmasters' places'. At the time of emergency, the president 'ought to be able to call to his aid a popular assembly, animated by all the feelings which a great crisis calls forth in a great people'. But Congress was elected years before when no such crisis existed, made up of men, many of them sworn enemies of the administration, who had different priorities. Given the constitutional separation of powers, Congress was useless as a partner and potentially dangerous as an opponent.

That the Union survived was a tribute to President Lincoln, whom Bagehot initially saw as the type of man who tended to emerge under the defective electoral system created by the constitution. In June 1861, Bagehot wrote that the President was

... a nearly unknown man – who has been little heard of – who has had little experience – who may have nerve and judgement, or may not have them – whose character, both moral and intellectual, is an unknown quantity – who must from his previous life and defective education, be wanting in the liberal acquirements and mental training which are the principal elements of an enlarged statesmanship.

Some years later, he observed that the notion of elevating

... a man of unknown smallness at a crisis of unknown greatness is to our minds ludicrous. Mr Lincoln, it is true, happened to be a man, if not of eminent ability, yet of eminent justness. ... But success in a lottery is not argument for lotteries. What were the chances against a person of Lincoln's antecedents, elected as he was, proving to be what he was?

There was more than a trace of the Great Man theory underlying Bagehot's constitutional views. In England, parliamentary government encouraged great men to rise to the surface. In America, the political culture discouraged men of talent, leaving the field to untested hacks. That Lincoln rose to the occasion was the exception that proved the rule. But if Bagehot dismissed the president as a nonentity at the beginning of the Civil War, he came to worship him by the end of it. His assassination in April 1865 came as a dreadful blow:

It is not merely that a great man has passed away, but he has disappeared at the very time when his special greatness seemed

almost essential to the world, when his death would work the widest conceivable evil, when the chance of replacing him, even partially, approached nearest to zero. ...His death destroys one of the strongest guarantees for continued peace between his country and the external world.

To Bagehot, Lincoln triumphed over extraordinary difficulties by establishing a strong central government. The difficulties were manifold. Firstly, for reasons to do with federal corruption and states' rights, the dislike of the American people for government in Washington had reached the level of 'a quasi philosophical theory'. Secondly, the constitution created a federal system deliberately calculated to frustrate the exercise of central power. Thirdly, the constitution had 'the moral weight of a religious document' and was thus virtually impossible to alter. The combination of public sentiment and constitutional dogma guaranteed that government was unable to act decisively.

For Bagehot, weak presidencies were the natural result of a defective constitution, which was, it should be remembered, drafted before the formation of political parties in the America. It took a president of political genius to overcome the defects of the very constitution to which he swore an oath.

Happily for Bagehot, President Lincoln was so shrewd a politician that he provided a cure for the constipation of American politics. Lincoln combined such a degree of sagacity and sympathy that he attained a 'vast moral authority' that made 'the hundred wheels of the Constitution move in one direction without exerting any physical force.' In Lincoln, Bagehot found his ideal American ruler, an enlightened despot whose 'dictatorship' was excused by the extreme circumstances of the day:

We do not know in history such an example of the growth of a ruler in wisdom as was exhibited by Mr Lincoln ... A good but benevolent temporary despotism, wielded by a wise man, was the very instrument the wisest would have desired for the United States.

Lincoln was an uncrowned monarch: Bagehot described the presidency as 'an unhereditary substitute' for a king in *The English Constitution*. It is a curious feature of the American presidential system that while born out of revolution it still closely resembles that of England in 1776, with an executive-cum-head of state – reminiscent of George III – who is treated with much of the reverence that attends a sovereign. Meanwhile, the British political system has moved on, mixing constitutional monarchy with parliamentary government, with a ceremonial head of state separated from the executive prime minister. While the American president is now often regarded as 'imperial', the British prime minister is now the monarch in Britain, but without the ceremonial trappings that enlarge the presidency and shield it from the derision dished out in a parliamentary system.

Bagehot's critical legacy

Bagehot's critique of American government still resonates after a century and a half, if only because the constitution is still there, largely unchanged. But it was unduly severe, seen through an

English lens and shaped by the exceptional circumstances of the Civil War. Since his writings, there have been increasingly powerful presidents who have tested the constitutional constraints on the executive. There have also been 17 constitutional amendments, though they have not much changed the structure of government. Britain has waned and the United States has replaced it as the world's leading power. Just how much the ascendancy of America can be explained by its written constitution is moot. Americans have perhaps overrated its significance. Britain, after all, did quite well without one, though an elastic constitution did not prevent its decline.

For Bagehot, the Founding Fathers had been unwise to encumber the nation with a constitution so inelastic yet difficult to amend, which led to civil strife, political inertia and legal dissension. In his mind, constitutions were not simply about legality, stability and authority, but also about flexibility, form and aesthetics. The American constitution was inelegant to a man who admired structural coherence in government under a unified authority; this is why he saw such beauty in the biddable English constitution. Still, at the end of the Civil War, he applauded Americans for letting daylight in on the constitution by the abolition of slavery; and, despite their 'vulgarity', praised them for their 'genius for politics' in giving sway to Lincoln.

What would Bagehot think of President Obama, another Illinois lawyer who makes claims to be Lincoln's heir? Can Obama, another 'unknown man' facing another 'crisis of unknown greatness', rise above the constitutional barriers that have hindered all but a handful of his predecessors? Can he negotiate the 'aging parchment' that he so admires, but which may impede his presidency? For Bagehot, Lincoln's political wizardry confirmed that the 'limited clauses of an old state-paper' were neither adequate nor decisive in a crisis. As he discovered during the Civil War – and Americans will discover in time with President Obama – effective change may require a benevolent monarch creating and tapping a shifting public mood. When it has suited them, most of America's more memorable presidents have disregarded the constitution they profess to revere.

Frank Prochaska teaches history at Yale University. His last book was *The Eagle and the Crown: Americans and the British Monarchy* (Yale 2008). He is currently working on a study of British writers on the American government.



Figure 1 PHOTOS FROM BILL RAFTERY FROM 2009 WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA