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**Another President from Illinois is getting more
attention as the 150th anniversary of the
Civil War draws near**

Ulysses S. Grant is remembered as a champion of civil rights

GALENA, IL — Whether for his association with the Civil War or civil rights, another United States President from Illinois is currently getting more attention as the nation draws closer to the 150th anniversary of the War Between the States in 2011.

Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th President of the United States, was elected in 1868 while a resident of Galena, Illinois and visitors to that town may still tour his fully restored home. His two terms in office, spanning the years 1869 - 1877, saw some of the most important civil rights activity the nation would experience for nearly 80 years and have caused some historians to re-evaluate his presidency.

A new book by presidential scholar Alvin S. Felzenberg, *The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game* places Grant in a tie for seventh place among Presidents Zachary Taylor, William McKinley, Harry Truman and John F. Kennedy. Felzenberg argues that Grant "was the last president before Dwight D. Eisenhower to send federal troops to the South to protect the right of blacks to vote." He also destroyed the earliest version of the Ku Klux Klan, Felzenberg says, and signed the Civil Rights Act of 1875.

Although Grant's administration was plagued by scandals, "when compared to scandals of more recent vintage, those that transpired under Grant were of short duration, inflicted no long-term damage on governmental institutions, did not involve Grant personally, and did not encroach upon the civil liberties of other Americans," writes Felzenberg.

A recent C-SPAN poll of 65 historians moved Grant up from 33rd place to 23rd. And although few would place Grant in the top ten, the 150th anniversary of the Civil War in 2011 is certain to focus more attention on the Galena, Illinois leather merchant who led the Union Army to victory and was twice elected our Chief Executive.

Ulysses Simpson Grant was born in 1822, the son of an Ohio leather tanner. He went to West Point, graduated in the middle of his class, and fought in the Mexican War under General (later President) Zachary Taylor. During the Mexican War, Grant fought alongside many of the men who would have key roles in the Civil War, including Robert E. Lee. He married Julia Dent in 1848 and served in several other military posts before joining his brothers as a clerk in the Grant & Perkins Leather Shop in Galena.

Less than a week after the April 12, 1861 firing on Fort Sumter that started the Civil War, Grant presided over a meeting in Galena as part of President Lincoln's call for troops. Colonel Grant was given command of a volunteer regiment, soon promoted to Brigadier General, and embarked on a campaign that saw several major Union victories, including the battles of Shiloh and Vicksburg. Grant was promoted by President Lincoln to Lieutenant General in 1864 and was given command of all Union armies. He accepted Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865.

Grant returned to Galena, Illinois as a hero and the grateful townspeople presented him with a brick Italianate style home on top of a hill. This home, now operated as a historic site by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, is open for public tours five days per week. Grant was nominated the Republican candidate for President in 1868; his campaign headquarters were in the DeSoto House Hotel in downtown Galena, and he awaited the election results in the Galena home of Congressman Elihu B. Washburne. Both fully restored buildings may still be visited. President-elect Grant received well-wishers at his home the day after the election, November 4. When he was inaugurated on March 4, 1869, the 46-year-old Grant became the youngest man to hold the office up to that time. He was subsequently re-elected in 1872.

President Grant's efforts to protect the civil rights of African Americans carried Abraham Lincoln's legacy forward and were the strongest such measures taken for nearly 80 years. He announced the ratification of the 15th Amendment that guaranteed the right to vote regardless of race; signed Enforcement Acts to protect black voting rights; and signed the Civil Rights Act in 1875 that prohibited several forms of racial segregation.

Grant also established Yellowstone as the United States' first National Park.

The Grants traveled the world after he left the Presidency, and were received like royalty nearly everywhere. They returned to the United States in 1879 and settled in New York City. When Grant died of throat cancer in 1885, more than one million people lined the streets of New York to view his funeral procession. His pallbearers included Union Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Sheridan and Confederate Generals Simon Bolivar Buckner and Joseph Johnston, and three U.S. Presidents were part of the procession - Rutherford B. Hayes, Chester A. Arthur, and then President Grover Cleveland. Grant's Tomb, constructed with donations from more than 90,000 people, overlooks the Hudson River in New York City.

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