

**A Lost Cause Found: Vestiges of Old South Memory in the Shenandoah  
Valley of Virginia**

**BY**

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**DISSERTATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines issues of neo-Confederate collective memory, heritage, and geographical imagination within the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. I analyze a whole range of material cultural practices throughout the entire region centered on the memory of the Civil War including monuments, battlefields, museum exhibits, burial rituals, historical reenactments, paintings, and dramatic performances. These mnemonic sites and rituals throughout the Great Valley of Virginia serve to circulate a dominant and mythologized reading of the Civil War past, one that emphasizes the Lost Cause myth of the Confederacy. In addition to uncovering neo-Confederate forms of memorialization, I also examine how normative lessons of morality, honor, patriotism, masculinity, and hyper-militarism become naturalized as a result of Lost Cause remembrance. The dissertation combines qualitative, practice-based modes of research with a Foucauldian influenced archival methodology that attempts to uncover particular silenced and alternative versions of the past that do not fit with normative versions of heritage.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### *The Research Question*

In this dissertation, I investigate certain aspects of American Civil War heritage and collective memory to consider how particular mythical notions of the past may continue to influence identity, pedagogy, and politics in the present. I am particularly interested in examining and deconstructing embedded versions of Southern history, memory, and identity present within the heritage institutions and landscapes of Virginia. The dissertation is a series of discrete interventions into the topic of Civil War memory, each with a different theoretical focus on a particular cultural space or activity related to contemporary forms of Civil War remembering. Each of the essays in this dissertation is a reflection into the Civil War past in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. They are highly personal in nature and reflect my sense of how Civil War heritage groups and practices remember the South in particular ways.

One of the aspects of this topic of Civil War memory that attracted me most is that I have always been interested in the history of the Civil War. I grew up in Western Virginia, went to college at James Madison University located in the Shenandoah Valley city of Harrisonburg and was a Civil War “buff” as a child. I watched all of the epic mini-series *The Blue and Gray* and *North and South* as a child and was an avid viewer of the Ken Burns PBS documentary *The Civil War* in 1990. As argued by Stuart Hall, work in cultural studies should “have something [personal] at stake” for the author (quoted in Gray 2003, 61). Simply put, the best work in cultural studies tends to be material that is personally important for the researcher to examine. In my case, I admit to feeling somewhat duped and misled by the Civil War texts and memorial spaces that I was exposed to as a child growing up in Virginia. My experience as a young history student in Virginia’s public schools, for example, included field trips to visit the graves of Confederate heroes in Lexington and to the Museum of the Confederacy as part of a class visit to Richmond. I view this dissertation as an examination not only of how the past shapes the present, but also how the past *shaped my own identity*. It is a personal journey through my own past as a citizen of Virginia and my transformation from a young man obsessed with the Civil War and indoctrinated into Old South ideology into becoming a critical unionist who rejects the tenets of Lost Cause ideology.

This dissertation contributes to a larger body of critical interdisciplinary research centered on collective memory, nationalism, and heritage commemoration. Noting the

importance of collective memory to identity construction, Myszal (2003, 15) writes, “Memory, when employed as a reservoir of official sanctioned heroes and myths, can be seen as a broad and always invented tradition that explains and justifies the ends and means of social action and provides people with beliefs and opinions.” I ultimately am engaged in this dissertation in a process of examining how very particular normative versions of the Civil War come to be learned and replicated within the Southern states. In his book *Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion*, a text I cite quite often in this dissertation for its insight into the mythology of the Commonwealth of Virginia, author Marshall Fishwick (1959, 155) refers to the period after the Civil War in Virginia as “Civil War II... [which was] a literary affair. It is waged with words and metaphors and legends, and conjures up the vision of ante-bellum Eden and heroes on horseback.” As alluded to by Fishwick, the normative version of the Civil War past in Virginia is one that emphasizes the mythical and presumed ideal notions of Southern identity- honor, heroism, loyalty, evangelical Christian beliefs, Protestant morality, military sacrifice, duty to your homeland, common sense values, aggressive military masculinity, Old South feminine grace, and obedience to authority.

Nearly all of the chapters in this dissertation examine the memory of the two most prominent mythical military heroes of the South, the Virginians Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Heroes of the South during the war, the legendary status of these two men grew in the decades following the end of the war, as both came to embody and represent these normative values of ideal Southern masculinity. Lee was idealized by Southern heritage organizations as a true Southern and American hero, a “marble man” to use Connolly’s (1977) famous phrase, who was invincible as a soldier and impeccable as a role model for Southern boys to emulate. The post-war Lee became the archetype of the Southern aristocrat, an honorable upper class man of impeccable grace and charm devoted to his evangelical Christian God, his family, and his “country” and homeland of Virginia. Stonewall Jackson, on the other hand, came to represent the values of the working class Southern male, the yeoman farmer who honors his family, his God, and his country with his service to the cause. Having grown up in poverty in the mountains of present-day West Virginia, Jackson rose up from these humble beginnings and, as a result of his hard work, eventually graduated from West Point and became an instructor at the Virginia Military Institute. A pious Christian, he served his homeland of Virginia during the Civil War and ultimately sacrificed his life for the cause of Southern Independence. He was the first true

Southern hero of the war and his death secured his legendary status as the general whose death sealed the doomed fate of the Confederacy.

The memory of Lee and Jackson continues to loom large in the South, as both men remain iconic figures throughout the region. In Virginia, home state to both men, they are remembered along George Washington as the preeminent historical figures in state history. Virginia celebrates the state holiday of Lee-Jackson Day on the Friday before the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday on the third Monday in January. Until they were separated by state legislative act in 2000, Virginia actually honored all three men on the same day as Lee-Jackson-King Day, a bizarre and dubious holiday celebrating the memory of two rebel slave holders alongside one of the great champion of African-American rights in the United States. Additionally, Virginia is planning a year-long celebration of Robert E. Lee's 200 year birthday in 2007. Among the events planned for the year are a restoration of Lee's statue on Monument Avenue in Richmond, a candlelight memorial at his plantation birthplace Stratford Hall, and an academic symposium at Washington & Lee University. The state is also issuing new commemorative license plates to mark the event, featuring a picture of the General on the left and text along the bottom reading "200 Years the Virginia Gentleman." According to Virginia Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., R-Mount Solon, a small town in the Shenandoah Valley county of Augusta, his reasons for introducing the legislation was because, "I'm proud that Virginia has a background of good people. Some of the healing process that maybe is still not complete can be made better through education about why they did the things they did and what motivated them" (Goldstein 2006).

As a result of the success of reconciliation discourse within Southern heritage groups of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lee and Jackson were presented as American heroes whose normative greatness stretches well beyond the Mason-Dixon Line. Mead (2002) identifies Lee and Jackson-inspired normative traits as part of broader "Jacksonian" tradition within American foreign policy, named after the legacy of President Andrew Jackson's administration.<sup>1</sup> This Jacksonian tradition in American foreign policy stresses affect over nuance, military power over negotiation, as well as proto-Southern masculine traits of honor, nationalism, and military sacrifice. The iconic figures of Lee and Stonewall Jackson embodied all of these traits and remain role models for contemporary Southerners [and

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<sup>1</sup> Jacksonian here refers to the policies and legacy of former president Andrew Jackson, though Mead notes that this particular cultural and political tradition was not founded by Jackson per se.

Americans] to emulate in times of foreign crisis. Indeed, as Ó Tuathail (2003) and Phillips (2006) both argue, the foreign policy of the second Bush Administration can be classified as Southern, Jacksonian, and Christian-nationalist in its orientation, representing a triumph of Southern Christian and military values some one-hundred and forty years after the bitter defeat of the Southern states during the Civil War.

Using textual analysis and reflexive ethnographic work, I explore this normative, Lee/Jackson version of Southern history and identity, often referred to as the Lost Cause myth. My research examines how the Lost Cause myth continues to gain authority, legitimacy, authenticity, and ultimately normative status within contemporary cultural texts, everyday spaces, and media representations of the Civil War past. These include Civil War themed films, television shows, museum exhibits, reenactments, and memorial sites. Gallagher (2000, 12) describes the Lost Cause as “an American legend, an American version of great sagas like Beowulf and Song of Roland...the legend tells us that the war was a mawkish and essentially romantic and heroic melodrama.” The Lost Cause emerged in the years following the Civil War as an attempt on the part of ex-Confederate politicians and generals to come to terms with the trauma of defeat and to justify the Southern cause during the war (Foster 1987). Though the origins of the Lost Cause myth can be traced to this period immediately following the end of the Civil War, it has not remained static over time. Instead, like all discursive forms of remembrance, the Lost Cause myth is a pliable and malleable set of relations and memories which can be tapped into at different moments for different political and social purposes. The Lost Cause of the 1920’s, for example, was quite different from the original antagonistic version of the 1870’s and 1880’s and reflected the particular historical, cultural, and political needs and values of the period.

Though this early 20<sup>th</sup> century version of the Lost Cause certainly has much in common with the earliest versions of the Lost Cause myth, it is ultimately one of a number of different Lost Cause myths which emerge during particular moments in American history.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation examines multiple Lost Cause myths in an attempt to uncover the particular normative versions of this epic story utilized by present-day neo-Confederates and their supporters. The study amounts to an extended meditation on the Lost Cause and its heroes and I position myself throughout the chapters in direct opposition to the racist

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<sup>2</sup> I detail these different versions and uses of the Lost Cause myth in both Chapter Two and Four of this dissertation.

and divisive elements of this mythology. It is my contention that the past is polyvocal in nature and that simplistic understanding of history and memory must be rejected in favor of a more heterogeneous and nuanced inclusive methodological approach.

The included chapters in this dissertation examine Civil War media texts and heritage practices in an attempt to read how particular traces of the Lost Cause continue to reside within contemporary practices of remembering. In doing so, I attempt to not only reveal the discursive traces of the Lost Cause myth, but also to actively oppose them. As Barthes (1957) reminds us, myths live and circulate within the spaces of everyday life, providing citizens with semiotic maps on how to make sense daily of the world around them. He further contends that myths operate through everyday texts as part of larger signifying systems where they are constantly read and where their meanings are uncovered. Similar to Foucault, he ultimately believes these myths to be part of a great system of perpetual power that shape and structure our cultural and political identities. Chapter Four of this dissertation, for example, is an examination of the tele-traditional of the Civil War, an analysis of Civil War cinema texts for their reliance on meta-narrative myths of the past (Luke 1990). As noted by Cullen (1995), popular media texts focused on the Civil War operate within powerful contemporary signifying systems that continue to shape our understanding of what the Civil War “meant.” Civil War films and television shows, such as *Gods and Generals* and *North and South*, reinforce supposed “lessons of the past” that might be applied to the perceived chaos of the present. The work of both Barthes and Cullen speak to how certain myths, such as that of the Lost Cause, gain legitimacy and authority in society and may ultimately become regarded as normative historical truths.

A number of additional essays examine Civil War museum and heritage displays, as well as the tourist literature distributed by local and regional tourist boards to lure heritage travelers to Civil War sites, for the discursive traces of Lost Cause mythology. As Luke (2002) and Crang (2003) contend, museums serve to indoctrinate visitors into widely accepted rubrics of the Civil War past that present a timeless vision of the endless possibilities of the future. Heritage museums serve to freeze time and present national artifacts that normalize and naturalize idealistic and mythical versions of the American past. All history museums are centers of disciplinary knowledge, places where the myths of the past gain authority and societal value within the architectural power grid of museum space. Attempts by museums or other heritage sites to break from these scripts, such as presenting

an alternative version of the past deviating from the standard mythical rubrics, tends to be met with a good deal of resistance. This dissertation also includes an examination into subjugated and alternative Civil War memories, narratives, and accounts that do not fit easily into one of the normative and dominant meta-narrative scripts of the conflict.

As a cultural geographer, I am interested in examining the role that certain archetypical historical landscapes, monuments, and contemporary heritage practices play in the construction and circulation of Civil War mythology and normativity. The masculine and militaristic “Jacksonian” Southern myth of the Lost Cause, for example, gains power, legitimacy, and authority at battlefield and monument sites that glorify both the fallen heroes of the Confederacy and the sacrifices made by the common, everyman soldier. Indeed, nearly every small Southern town contains a memorial to the sacrifices made by the common soldier during the Civil War and the majority of these monuments and statues are placed geographically near to courthouses or other symbolic structures of governmental authority. Historical sites where something of “historical significance” was deemed to have taken place, such as battlefields, birthplaces of historical figures, or sites of death and tragedy, serve as important semiotic markers where historical values and lessons are transmitted. Mitchell (2000) contends that such historical landscapes suggest the link between “blood and soil,” cementing these spaces into the national collective weft of the mythic and sacred.

Finally, in the spirit of Foucault and Benjamin, I am not only concerned in this study with how the Southern past is explained through contemporary texts which emphasize Lost Cause normativity. I am also interested in examining the phenomenon of “forgetting,” noting what local and regional memories are left out of dominant historical discourse. Historical myths such as the Lost Cause are conspicuous for what they do not say about the past. In other words, what is forgotten within mythical texts may be just as important to study as what is remembered. Scholars of nationalism such as Anderson (1983), and Billig (1995) note the importance of forgetting elements of the past as part of creating and sustaining a national history, a phenomenon Billig (1995) refers to as “collective amnesia.”

The chapters in this study focus on exclusion, as well as inclusion. Following the methodological lessons of Foucault, I examine particular examples of how heterogeneous, multi-layered versions of the Civil War past are silenced by dominant, nationalist versions of the conflict. In doing so, I am engaged to some degree in uncovering cases of what Dwyer (2004) refers to as “symbolic accretion.” Dwyer (2004, 431) defines this term as

“commemoration characterized by attempts to condense and harden a layer of meaning above all others- symbolic accretion calls attention to the primal struggle between remembering and forgetting.” My attempts to note cases of symbolic accretion in this dissertation include my analysis in Chapter Seven. This chapter examines a little-known history of resistance within the American South within the anti-slavery Mennonite and Brethren communities of the northern Shenandoah Valley. Such stories provide a counter-memory to Lost Cause normativity and provide empirical evidence of a polyvocality of heritage and memory within the Southern states.

*Stonewall Country*

I make my home in Stonewall Country  
Down a shady lane  
Where the fields are so steep and rocky  
Took such toil to claim  
Now the plows run deep in Stonewall Country  
The ground gives good yields....  
I may leave the Shenandoah  
But she'll never leave my heart  
Stonewall Country, Clear-Eyed Daughter of the Stars.<sup>3</sup>

On July 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2004, I attended the final performance of the musical *Stonewall Country*, the completion of a twenty year run at the Lime Kiln Theatre in Lexington, Virginia.<sup>4</sup> A sold out crowd of over three-hundred and fifty, entirely white apart from the two African-American company members, celebrated the end of the longest running play in the history of the Lime Kiln.<sup>5</sup> Amongst the packed crowd in attendance were Robin and Linda Williams, who wrote the music and lyrics to the play, and its writer and original director, Don Baker. None of the group had been back to see the musical performed at Lime Kiln for over ten years and all three of them expressed amazement over how popular the play had become throughout the area . As an article in the *Roanoke Times* on the closing of the musical stated:

Tonight at Lime Kiln theatre in Lexington, the ground will shake, the sky will fall, and the theater will slowly sink into the sea. Or maybe it just seems that way. This much is certain...one of the picturesque outdoor theater's first and surely its best-known production, synonymous in many minds with Lime Kiln itself, shuts down tonight after a 20-year run (Kittredge 2003, E1).

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<sup>3</sup> All lyrics cited in this chapter written by Robin and Linda Williams, copyright 1984.

<sup>4</sup> A portion of the play was performed a final time the following night as part of a gala closing night celebration. The final complete performance of the play, however, took place an evening earlier when I attended.

<sup>5</sup> I based this count upon my own observations as an attendee of the performance.



Figure 1.1

Stage of *Stonewall Country*

Picture of the stage during the final performance of *Stonewall Country* (Bohland)

*Stonewall Country* details the life and times of Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, the famous Confederate general and former professor at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. The play depicts Jackson as a conflicted and pious man of “Scotch-Irish stock,” a soldier who saw no conflict between his staunch Christian beliefs and his passion for warfare and bloodshed.<sup>6</sup> As is typical of musicals, the play relies upon songs to recall complicated historical events and occurrences in a simplistic fashion. The split between North and South and the ultimate secession of the Southern states, for example, is explained away through one particular rousing musical number entitled “Battlin’ Anthems.” In the song, the Northern chorus chastises the Southerners for being “no good Christians” who commit adulterous sins upon “Negro women in drunken orgies and their lecherous debaucheries.” Conversely, the Southern chorus dismisses the “Godless Yankee hypocrites” who sell the slaves to the South and who “have no respect for women” and are “cowardly and rude.”

Once secession takes place, Jackson is ultimately portrayed as having been pulled into the events of the Civil War, a conflict that he did not wish to occur. He enlists for the Confederacy not out of a desire to preserve slavery, an institution he suggests in one monologue to be:

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<sup>6</sup> All of the included dialogue from this section is from the script of *Stonewall Country*, written by Don Baker, copyright 1984.

Both a responsible and a troublesome one. It is not a desirable thing but is allowed by Providence for ends which it is not my business to determine. I prefer to see the Negroes free, but the Bible teaches that slavery is sanctioned by the Creator himself who maketh man to differ and instituted laws for the bond and the free.<sup>7</sup>

Rather, Jackson enters the war within the text of the play primarily because of his undying beliefs concerning the sacred Southern manly duties of honor and sacrifice to one's God and to his "homeland" of Virginia. The song "Duty" explains the powerful pull of duty and obligation to God for Jackson, noting:

Behind all existence, there is a pattern, from chaos a grand design.  
Circumstance is the servant, not the master. Providence guides this soul of mine.  
Duty is mine to follow, consequences I leave to God.  
He purifies me with our sufferings, He holds us to measure with his rod.

When the actual fighting begins, Jackson is depicted as the consummate eccentric warrior, an uncompromising and fearless man who once picked blueberries during a battle as bullets whizzed by his head. The legendary moment when Jackson earns the nickname "Stonewall," refusing to retreat his green and inexperienced Valley bred soldiers from a Union advance at Manassas, comes across on stage as but the first of many examples of Jackson's heroism and valor in the field. It was during the 1862 Valley Campaign, in particular, where the play suggests "he got his reputation...he [was] about the only Confederate general doin' any winnin'." The Valley Campaign, a series of battles throughout the Shenandoah Valley, where Jackson was "outnumbered four to one" by the Union of Army, comes alive during the musical number "Proud Valley Boys". During this song, both Jackson and soldiers in his army from the Shenandoah Valley proudly describe their triumphs in the field during the spring of 1862:

*Soldiers:*

Proud Valley Boys, when the war was new, we looked so very young in the Spring of '62.  
Proud Valley Boys, fighting for their lands, along with Taylor's Tigers, the wild Acadians...  
The Army of the Valley, took no council of its fears, outnumbered four to one,...  
Our maneuvers did mislead, and kept them mystified. Proud Valley Boys, sixty thousand Yanks,  
We whipped the Union generals, Fremont, Shields, and Banks.

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<sup>7</sup> It is also mentioned in the play that Jackson freed three slaves in his lifetime and "gave a four year old Negro orphan Bible lessons three times a day." The theme of Jackson as the benevolent slave owner is consistent throughout the play.

*Jackson:*

I told them from the start, we'd fight to the last man, there'd be no wounded left behind,  
While I was in command. Their duty was to follow. My duty was to lead.  
And all together we'd march down the road to victory...I had their trust, they never let me down.

The final act of the play includes Jackson's final battles as a Confederate General from 1862-1863, scenes detailing his relationship with his second wife Anna, and his ultimate death on the battlefield at the battle of Chancellorsville. Confederate General A.P. Hill is introduced to the audience as one of Jackson's best friends, though in his solo number "A.P.'s Blues," he questions how Jackson can call himself a Christian yet seemingly enjoy the killing of so many Union soldiers. Indeed, the musical not does suggest Stonewall to be completely above criticism. The musical number "Seven Day Freakout," for example, details his tactical errors during the 1862 Seven Days Campaign. Despite these relatively minor critiques, Stonewall emerges at the end of the play as a pious, mythical figure that heroically served his God and his homeland. Jackson's funeral scene includes a speech from his sister-in-law Maggie who proclaims:

My heart overflows with sorrow, never have I known a Holier man.  
He lived only to please God; his daily life was a daily offering up of himself.  
How fearful the loss to the Confederacy! The people made an idol of him, and God  
has rebuked them!

The beauty and mystical power of the Valley itself is highlighted in the final scene, as the entire cast joining in a reprise of the opening number "Stonewall Country". The eternal legend of Jackson lives on within the Shenandoah Valley, a region presumed to have been permanently marked by the legacy of the Civil War. A final solo voice emerges from the chorus with the final song of the play:

I hope to quit this world in Stonewall Country and as the years roll round  
My bones will turn to limestone and my soul will look down on the blue haze hills  
of Stonewall Country. And Valley green to watch the golden fields of autumn  
turn to winter white and clean, then blossom into spring...

The play *Stonewall Country* ultimately provides an example of the type of text and visual performance critiqued and analyzed throughout this dissertation. I read this play as a hyper-real text which represent and reinforce the normative, Lost Cause version of the Civil

War. The extended popularity of the play suggests the lasting power of certain Lost Cause texts-literally thousands of persons in the area (and beyond) attended a performance of the musical during its twenty year run. *Stonewall Country* served to influence, indoctrinate, and reinforce to the audience certain key mythical themes concerning the meaning and legacy of the Civil War period. These myths gain legitimacy at the performances of *Stonewall Country*, just as they do within history classrooms, museum exhibits, films, monument sites, and battlefield landscapes.

In an attempt perhaps to subscribe to contemporary liberal mores, the play offers a modest critique of the Southern cause during the Civil War. In doing so, the play follows the typical role of the universalizing historical myths of the past within the United States that present a version of the past stressing a number of key narrative themes. The themes include America as the “home of the free,” as a “laboratory of democracy,” and as a unified nation with a rich history of tolerance, free expression, and democratic values which can serve as an example for other nations. The typical American historical myth presents versions of the past that stress the sacred nature of the American experiment and a linear notion of progress underpinning American patriotism and nationalism. In *Stonewall Country*, the song entitled “Burying Day,” for example, is performed by a freed slave and details the evils of the slave system. The slave system is described by one of the narrators in the play as having “never fit with the system of government we picked out for ourselves. It always stuck out like a sore thumb – with a wart on it.”

On the whole, however, the play’s depiction of slavery and the Civil War is similar to other Lost Cause texts that glorify the Southern states and provide little critique of the Southern cause. Not surprisingly, proponents of the Lost Cause myth have been particularly concerned with issues of slavery, as they attempt to put a “positive spin” on Southern slaveholding prior to the onset of the Civil War. The war, they claim, was not fought over slavery- it was instead a justified sectional affair fought between two different nations and cultures (Foster 1987). The image of the “faithful, happy slave” also merged out of Lost Cause infused historical texts, as did multiple stories of caring and benevolent slave owners- the antitheses of Beecher Stowe’s villainous Simon Legree.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Notable examples here would be fiction from Margaret Mitchell, Thomas Nelson Page, and Joel Chandler Harris, as well as a whole series of films discussed in chapter four.

In the contemporary Lost Cause text of *Stonewall Country*, Stonewall Jackson is depicted as a pious man deeply troubled by the slave system. He, like other deeply religious Southerners, ultimately concludes that since slavery is permitted in the Bible, it is an institution sanctioned “by God himself.” The evangelical religious beliefs of Jackson can thus be read as a sort of justification for his involvement in the protection of the slave system during the war, an argument that can be extended to many equally “pious” Southern soldiers. Jackson’s kindness to slaves is also highlighted and lauded, including his bravery in defying the slave codes by operating a Sunday school for black children. Finally, it is suggested that Stonewall bought three slaves simply out of a desire to later let them buy their own freedom. The narrator then comments that these slaves were “good investments” for Jackson, as they rarely missed their payments to Jackson and he ultimately made money on the transactions. Jackson thus represents the normative values of the archetypical “good” Southern slave master, the paternalistic and loving model slave-owner who disciplines Anglo-Christian beliefs and principles of self-reliance within his slaves.

As is typical within Lost Cause texts, *Stonewall Country* glorifies the virtues of Southern culture and Christian military masculinity. As noted by Foster (1987) and Gallagher (2000), fictional Lost Causes tales such as *Gone With the Wind*, suggest the supposed superiority of the Southern male. The typical Southern male soldier is said to possess inherent qualities of loyalty, honor, duty, patriotism, and valor. These values are taught to them within the humane and superior cultural spaces of the Southern states. The everyman Southern soldier was imagined as “invariably heroic, indefatigable, gallant, and law-abiding” (Nolan 2000, 17). In the play *Stonewall Country*, Jackson’s piety and duty to the Confederate cause, for example, are not characteristics suggested to be unique to his personality. They are instead presented in the play as intrinsically normative Southern masculine qualities that every Southern man, the proud and loyal “Valley Boy,” can identify with and hope to embody themselves.

Though Stonewall Jackson is depicted as a “typical Southerner,” one replete as well with a series of bizarre quirks and mannerisms, the play should not be read as an attempt to minimize the mythical legacy of Jackson by representing him as a common man. Instead, it is his status as a common man that continues to appeal to many Southerners who view him as a Horatio Alger like figure who raised himself “up from the bootstraps” into a position of prominence and power. As he did after his own death throughout the Southern states,

Jackson emerges at the end of *Stonewall Country* as a true Southern *and* American patriot, a saint-like man that fought and ultimately gave his life for his country and his cause. In his extended biographical praising of Jackson, the Civil War scholar James I. Robertson Jr. posits that Jackson's supposed piety and duty "remain treasured legacies of the American people just as they are inspirations to people everywhere" (quoted in Nolan 2000, 18). Such claims are part of a long standing attempt by Southern apologists, reconciliationists, and heritage organizations to assert that Jackson is not only a hero of the South- he is also a true American hero in the pantheon of American military idols such as Washington, Grant, Patton, and Eisenhower.

Indeed, the heroic military skill of Jackson on the battlefield is a theme throughout the play, which depicts him as a natural leader of men who demanded and received unquestioning loyalty from his men. His death at the end of the play symbolizes the beginning of the end for the Confederacy, a soldier of such skill that he could never be replaced. This is also consistent with Lost Cause mythology which stresses that the South did not actually lose the war. According to the Lost Cause script, the loss of great and noble warriors such as Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, and A.P. Hill ultimately proved too much for them to overcome. As a typical Lost Cause influenced text, the play emphasizes the great odds facing the young men that defended the South during the War. The loss of so many Johnny Rebs and brilliant chieftains such as Jackson could not be overcome by the heroic South. Indeed, the play suggests that it is only through the exceptional leadership of officers such as Jackson and the courage of the "everyman" Southern soldier that the South was able to hold out as long as it did.

Finally, *Stonewall Country* suggests a deep connection that Southerners have with "their" land and soil, as the Shenandoah Valley is presented as an idyllic rural heartland heimat that must be protected from Yankee invasion. Virginia and the hauntingly beautiful and fertile landscapes of the Valley, referred to in the play as "Stonewall Country," are said to "never leave your heart." The song "Proud Valley Boys," for example, emphasizes how Jackson's men "fought for their land" against Northern aggression. Nairn (1999) contends that rural spaces such as the Shenandoah Valley are critical to nationalist projects, suggesting that the "spell" of nationalism tends to be located geographically within idyllic rural spaces. Confederate officials, in their attempt to whip the population into a nationalist fervor and rally the South to the cause of a war fought primarily over slavery, stressed to their

population that the “sacred soil” of the Southern nations/states must be protected. Virginia is imagined as a nation for its inhabitants, a Teutonic heimat binding its citizens to its fertile and sacred soil at birth. Though it is likely true that a majority of Southern soldiers believed they were fighting for their homelands, it is also important to note that this was the official cause presented to them by Confederate officials and wealthy plantation owners within Confederate political discourse.

As I left the Lime Kiln to return to my home in Roanoke at the end of the final performance of *Stonewall Country*, I began to think about the play in the context of the Civil War and its legacy within this part of Virginia. Why had this fairly modest musical performance, a play which had never been performed outside of Lexington, managed to run as long as it had? It was clear to me that the myths and memory of the Civil War past continue to mean something incredibly significant to the people in this region within the present. Indeed, as I passed through the downtown of Lexington on my way out of town, I noticed that the entire townscape continues to bear the mark of the conflict. The edifices of the buildings within what is widely regarded as a quaint downtown, all appear to have been renovated to make the visitor feel he/she has stepped back in time. Many of the shops advertised selling “Civil War memorabilia” and signs pointed visitors towards the direction of the Stonewall House Museum and the Robert E. Lee Chapel. As I finally exited the town, I noticed a sign labeling the road as the “Lee-Jackson Highway.” I then thought back to the title of the play marking this area as “Stonewall Country?” Can this be challenged and reshaped or will it always echo the ghosts of the Confederate past?

*The Regional Focus*

Like the play *Stonewall Country*, the chapters on Civil War myth and memory in this dissertation are regionally “set” within the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia. Of the published academic and popular work focused on history and heritage in the Shenandoah Valley, there is very little critical work to date that seeks to challenge the normative and dominant Confederate myths of the Civil War past present within the region. It is my contention that the vast majority of the work on the Civil War in this area serves to glorify the legacy of the Confederacy and underpins the power and authority of such historical myths through academic knowledge and discourse.<sup>9</sup> The Shenandoah Valley is typically defined by physical geographers as encompassing the watershed area for the Shenandoah River and its tributaries between the Alleghany Mountains and the Western Blue Ridge. This area includes the Virginia counties of Rockingham, Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Rockbridge, Highland, Warren, and Page; the independent cities of Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, Staunton, and Winchester; and Jefferson County in the neighboring state of West Virginia.

For the purposes of this study, I also include the Roanoke and New River Valleys of Western Virginia, including the counties of Franklin, Craig, Bedford, Carroll, Floyd, Montgomery, Botetourt, and Roanoke as well as the independent cities of Bedford, Salem and Roanoke. These additional counties are part of the greater Roanoke Valley and are part of the coverage area of both the *Roanoke Times* newspaper and the Roanoke area television stations. Though some of these counties and cities do not lie within the Roanoke metropolitan statistical area (MSA), they do at the very least share important economic, cultural, and political links with the largest city in Western Virginia. In redrawing the traditional map of the Shenandoah Valley, I am following the lead of the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, which includes Roanoke in their hyper-tourist “re-imagining” of the Shenandoah Valley on their website (Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, 2006). Despite it not lying within the watershed of the Shenandoah River, Roanoke is increasingly included on regional maps of the Shenandoah Valley. In doing so, the Shenandoah Valley adds an urban and racially diverse anchor at its southern terminus as well as a transport hub for would be travelers to the area.

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<sup>9</sup> I expand on the work of these scholars in the next chapter of the dissertation.

In developing a regional framework for this study, I am following an extensive tradition within the discipline of human geography of regionally based analysis. Indeed, the study of regions comprised the major focus of research programs within the discipline during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pudup 1988). The traditional form of American regional geography, practiced beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, involved dividing and grouping the world into well-organized micro and macro sized regional units based upon cultural, economic, political, or physical similarities. Research projects were designed in this era to comprehensively gather and examine data on the historical, political, economic, social, and demographic make-up of a particular region (Pudup 1988; Gilbert 1988). Pudup (1988, 370-371) contends that:

The principal tasks of [regional] geographers were discovering and assembling related facts about these places....taken as a whole, the approach retrospectively interprets contemporary regions with the apparent goal of capturing their spirit and momentum; discovering what made regions tick.

The traditional regional approach thus favored a type of descriptive study that attempted to “make sense” of the places and a culture within a particular region. Following the advice of influential geographers Carl Sauer and Pierce Lewis, regional geographers often engaged in field work designed to “visually gather” cultural data through extensive observational methods. In defending such an approach, Lewis (quoted in Pudup 1988, 374) contends that:

That tangible visible world is the hard basic stuff of geography, and all students should be encouraged on a regular basis to...go outdoors and sample these wonders...That world is full of evidence....go out and take a look.

Beginning in the 1980s, a new approach to regional studies emerged within the discipline that challenged the methods and assumptions of traditional regional geography. These “new” regional geographers, influenced by social theory and scholarship outside of the discipline, criticized the traditional regional approach for failing to ask complex questions concerning how and why the people within a region might come to understand the world as they do (Pudup 1988, 376). In doing so, the new approach to regional geography sought to move the discipline beyond description and encouraged geographers to challenge the epistemological assumptions present within visually-dominant forms of geographic study. As Pudup (1988, 374) notes, “The acts of looking and seeing [within traditional regional

geography] essentially confirm what the observer thought before he/she even looked. The practice of empirical confirmation is inescapable in research of any sort.” Denis Cosgrove (1984, 1985) critiqued the epistemological foundation of the entire visual tradition, a practice he claimed could be traced back to the art of the Renaissance, as landscape artists began to train themselves to “see the truth” of the world in linear perspectives of their paintings. He further contends that geographers trained to “use their eyes,” as Lewis suggests all qualified geographers should be, have actually been disciplined into a particular bourgeois “way of seeing” that naturalizes the power of the capitalist order within space (Mitchell 2000). Following the lead of “expert” geographers, humans learn to interpret space in a similar bourgeois-dominant fashion.

The conceptualization of the region itself was also a concern of these new regional geographers in their critiques of traditional regional geography. Specifically, there had been little articulation within previous studies concerning exactly what a region was and how regional processes take shape over time as a result of disparate historical, social, and economic forces. Regions were simply assumed to be natural spatial entities to be examined. A traditional regional study, such as mine on the Shenandoah Valley, need not analyze how the Valley came to be understood as a unique American region. Instead, a region such as the Shenandoah Valley was a naturally self-given entity as a result of physical geographic formations. Consequently, within a traditional regional analysis, “the definition of the criteria and boundaries that distinguished specific regions was often arbitrary... [the sub-discipline] failed to develop the means to deal with the changes taking place in the world it sought to interpret” (Smith and Dennis 1987, 165-66). Thus, traditional regional geography ignored the fluid nature of regional formations. It failed to theoretically examine how dynamic and complex local, national, and global social, economic, and cultural forces continue to shape and change regional formations over time.

In seeking to redefine the goals of regional studies, “new” regional geographers argued that the region should be understood as complex and interdependent entities, made real through human actions in space. Neil Smith (1988, 149-50) contends that:

Regions are the real products of human activity, not merely conceptualizations-and it is important that we make more concrete the societal rationale for regional constitution and differentiation; regions are continually made, unmade, and differently remade as the geographical fabric of certain processes of capital accumulation, political change and cultural development.

Following Smith, new regional studies engage in a process of synthesis in order to analyze the various historical, economic, cultural, and social phenomena present within the specific area being studied. As Gilbert (1988, 221) notes, “A regional synthesis should then allow an interpretation of the region as a product of the interconnectedness of different scales... [these] processes are not necessarily complementary, indeed [they are] often antagonistic.”

These new theoretically influenced regional approaches represented a shift in the way geographers approached historical work. The traditional methodological historical approach involved a linear or “genetic” approach to historical regional analysis. Traditional regional studies consisted of a series of descriptions of sequential historical in an attempt to explain how a region and its people developed and progressed over time. Historical geographers looked for clues in the cultural landscape of a region that might lead the researchers towards a greater understanding of the past within a particular area (Gilbert 1988, 220). In rejecting such linear conceptions of history, Foucault contends that the past must always be understood as a set of dynamic discursive processes which are constantly updated and revised in the present (Miszta 2003). He argues that our memories of the past are not linear, but multi-layered, an “unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath” (cited in Matless 1992, 51). He ultimately urges scholars to follow a “counter-memory” approach to historical study in an effort to uncover those stories and voices silenced by the linear history present in dominant and hegemonic historical meta-narratives.

Influenced by Foucault and post-structuralism, new regional geographers began to re-conceptualize history as a methodological tool. Within this archival approach, the progressive construction of a region over time is replaced by a Foucauldian-derived “layering” of time and space (Massey 1984). Regional structures are not envisioned as linear progressions. Instead, they are constantly in flux and altered over time as part of the re-imagining and re-conceptualization of time that occurs within regional spaces. As Gilbert (1988, 220-221) explains, “The focus is on the evolution of the social conditions for the emergence of regions, on their dynamic...to recognize the multidimensionality of time.” Regions are therefore understood to be dynamic ontological entities, continually produced and re-produced by the material and cultural practices of human history (Pudup 1988).

A final crucial component of the new regional approach is that the particular regional perspective utilized within a study must be both clearly specified and justified as part of their particular research program. Geographers began to utilize critical and social theory as part of their regional study, “devoting a whole chapter or more to the presentation of the theory underlying the synthesis” (Gilbert 1988, 219). Geographers such as Thrift (1983) and Smith (1988), for example, utilize a Marxist theoretical framework in their regional studies, arguing that regions result primarily from the inherent and contradictory nature of capitalist production and accumulation within specific areas. As Smith (1988, 150) notes:

It is possible to see regional formation as a geographical compromise between equalization and differentiation. The dialectic of opposing forces is rooted in the contradictory tendencies of capital accumulation and finds a specific if always transitory resolution in the formation of regions....as production ‘platforms’ or networks, [regions] develop from the investment of fixed capital in the landscape for an extended period and in specific configurations, without which capital accumulation would be difficult.

A more recent study by Hague and McCarthy (2004) illustrates how race might be utilized as a framework for analysis within rural American regions. In particular, they engage how certain rural and interior areas of the United States, such as found in the small towns in the Shenandoah Valley, serve to reinforce whiteness as the “invisible norm” within the American heartland. The study notes that the majority of studies within geography on race focused primarily on nonwhite populations within urban areas-issues of racial identity in rural America, however, remain relatively understudied and somewhat un-problematized by academics. They state that, “There is an urgent need to look at the dynamics of racialization in areas of the United States implicitly or explicitly defined as normal in dominant political discourse-often non-coastal, non-urban, predominantly white areas” (Hague and McCarthy 2004, 388).

In the spirit of new regional geography, I do not claim the Shenandoah Valley to be a natural region simply as a result of its unique physical geographic location between two mountain ranges. I believe that it is necessary to develop a specific framework for why the Shenandoah Valley might be understood as a viable region for academic study. In doing so, I am following Pudup’s (1988, 380) assertion that “place and region constitute ontological, not merely empirical categories, of the way in which we are human in the world.” Indeed, in the

tradition of Marxist regional geography, I perceive the Valley as a dynamic rural economic region interconnected to the local, state, and global economy through its agricultural, educational, and industrial structures. It can also be understood as an archetype region of rural whiteness of the type highlighted Hague and McCarthy (2004). Despite a relatively recent influx of Hispanic migrant workers attracted by jobs in poultry and apple processing, the region remains primarily white and religiously conservative.

The primary conceptual framework utilized in this study, however, is a Foucauldian derived historical approach to regional analysis. It is my contention throughout this dissertation that the legacy and collective memory of the Civil War past continues to shape the regional formation of the Shenandoah Valley in the present. This dissertation analyzes the Valley through the landscapes, texts, and contemporary discursive practices of Civil War memory as one principal way in which the Shenandoah Valley becomes geographically imagined and constructed as a distinctly archetypal Southern rural and historical heartland region. I argue throughout each chapter that a variety of normative heritage discursive processes contribute to the regional imagining of Western Virginia as part of the Civil War era Dixie, a process which also serves to silence other possible geographical imaginings of the Valley. For example, the Valley is rarely conceptualized by historians or state tourism boosters as a transit and quasi-industrial corridor. Indeed, it is a region that historically served as a transportation gateway between the Northern and Southern states and as a well-traveled westward route for East Coast settlers moving to the wild and untamed interior. Though there are many other possible ways to conceptualize the Shenandoah Valley as a region- such as a center of equine economics and culture, a rural farming heartland, or a transport hub along Interstate 81- the experience of the Valley and its residents during the Civil War continues to be a major way in which both its own citizens and visitors to the area come to understand it regionally.

There is little doubt among scholars of the Civil War as to the importance of the Valley to both sides during the conflict. As a result of its strategic geographic location as a transportation and supply line between the North and South, the Valley was the site of almost constant skirmishing between both armies. According to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields foundation, over 300 military engagements (including fourteen major battles) took place in the region between the years of 1861-1865, making it one of the most militarily

contested regions in the entire war (Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation 2006). The region was home to Stonewall Jackson's most famous military campaign of the Civil War, the so-called 1862 Valley Campaign, as well as the location of Jackson's adopted hometown of Lexington, Virginia. The strategic city of Winchester, located some seventy miles from Washington D.C. in the northern Shenandoah Valley, is said to have changed hands over seventy times as result of near constant raids by the Union Army.

The Shenandoah Valley also served as an important agricultural region for the Southern army. Due to the wheat production of its farms during the War period, the Valley was sometimes referred to as the "Breadbasket of the Confederate Army." The successful 1864 Union military campaign led by General Phillip Sheridan targeted the agricultural base of the Valley in an effort to destroy one of the primary sources of food for the Confederate Army. Indeed, Sheridan is remembered in the Valley as a villainous figure, akin to General Sherman and his legacy in Georgia. According to some historical accounts, Sheridan is said to have ordered his men to "take all provisions, forage, and stock needed and such as cannot be consumed, and destroy...do all the damage to railroads and crops you can. If the war is to last another year, we want the Shenandoah Valley to remain a barren waste" (Sorrells 2006).

Following the end of the war, the Shenandoah Valley served as one of the key regions where the newly emerging Lost Cause myth generated resonance and power within the American South. The primary originators of the Lost Cause myth were ex-Confederate generals and politicians living in Virginia, including General Jubal Early, a somewhat non-descript Confederate general known primarily during the war for having lost the Valley to Sheridan's Union forces in 1864. Both Early and fellow Virginian Robert Dabney wrote early post-war memoirs of the Confederacy, replete with accounts of the merits of the Southern cause and a Biblically-based defense of the slave system. The publication of the books were actually approved and encouraged by Robert E. Lee, a man who is usually represented by Southern mythology as a model example of national reconciliation during the final years of his life (Foster 1987, 51). Early and the so-called "Virginia Coalition" also oversaw the formation of a number of Confederate historical organizations throughout the South that would ultimately play a critical role in shaping Southern Civil War memory. These organizations collected money for locally-based memorials to Confederate heroes, worked to have state holidays enacted on key dates in Confederate history, and supported a

mandate that would have required all Southern educational institutions to dedicate part of their curriculum for teaching stories about Confederate heroism during the war (Foster 1987, 48). In doing so, they not only served to honor the fallen heroes of the Confederacy. They also actively worked to oppose Reconstruction, periodically bringing together ex-Confederates in a spirit of antagonism against an interfering and occupying Federal government (Blair 2004).



Figure 1.2

Downtown Lexington, Virginia.

The town has restored parts of the downtown to simulate a 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape (Llewellyn Lodge).<sup>10</sup>

Of all the towns of the Shenandoah Valley, the southern Valley town of Lexington emerged during the post-war period as the most significant early site of Confederate mythologizing and memorializing. Stonewall Jackson, a former professor at the Lexington based Virginia Military Institute, was first buried there after the war and later reburied in a new site as part of an elaborate post-war ceremony.<sup>11</sup> The Virginia Military Institute is a small Southern military school that supplied hundreds of soldiers to the Confederacy during the war. During the 1864 Battle of New Market, cadets from V.M.I. marched up the Valley from Lexington to make up the bulk of the victorious Confederate forces. The story of the sacrifice of these cadets soon became mythologized at V.M.I. and throughout the South as part of the earliest versions of the Lost Cause myth. The V.M.I. cadets who fought at New Market were praised as everyday military masculine idols for future Southern boys to emulate, archetypes of Mead's (2002) Jacksonian Southern masculinity. They were loyal to

<sup>10</sup> All Llewellyn Lodge photographs courtesy of Jason Roberts, used by permission.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter Five for a discussion of this particular event and a more thorough reading of Lexington as a whole.

their family and their state, obedient to those in command, and willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a heroically doomed cause (Foster 1987, 195).

In addition to VMI and Jackson's burial site, post-war Lexington also became home to the most celebrated mythical Confederate hero of the entire Civil War- Robert E. Lee. From 1865-1870, Lee served as the final president of Washington College, later renamed Washington and Lee University following his death at his Lexington home in 1870. He was buried on the grounds of the college, though there was some discussion of moving his remains to a position of prominence in Richmond. Lee's tomb remained in Lexington and his death sparked a movement throughout the entire South to build a suitable memorial to his legacy in the town where he spent the last five years of his life. The dedication of the Lee Chapel on the grounds of Washington College took place in 1883, only six years after the infamous Compromise of 1877 which had effectively ended Federal military reconstruction and legitimized Jim Crow Laws throughout the American South. Though General Early and a whole range of ex-Confederate generals and dignitaries involved in constructing and circulating the original divisive and antagonistic Lost Cause myth attended the event, the speeches on that day framed Lee as a model of reconciliation as part of a new, less-aggressive and conciliatory Lost Cause. Those in attendance gathered to hear John W. Daniel deliver a speech that celebrated the character and military legacy of "Marse' Robert" and celebrated him as both a Southern and an American hero (Foster 1987, 88). Communities throughout the Shenandoah Valley constructed monuments and held similar ceremonies in their town centers remembering the Confederate cause throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though some of these monuments honor specific Confederate heroes, the majority of them honor the everyman Confederate soldier, men who like Stonewall Jackson himself, performed their duty to homeland and God during the war with honor, sacrifice, and distinction (Savage 1999).

As a result of its association with Lee and Jackson, the town of Lexington became one of the earliest sites for Civil War heritage tourism in the United States. War veterans came to Lexington to pay respects to Lee and Jackson and the now sacred spaces of the Lost Cause. Though heritage tourism and the practices of memorialization of the Civil War lessened a bit during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the death of the final veterans of the war and public preoccupation with both World Wars, renewed interest in the Civil War picked up again during the social upheaval of the 1960's. Lexington sought to capitalize on this

development by passing a series of preservation and restoration laws for the downtown. Downtown Lexington soon became a series of restored antebellum-era structures designed to make the visitor feel they have stepped back into the Civil War era. Tour operators offered carriage rides to the local monuments and new museums at Stonewall Jackson's former house and at V.M.I. became new heritage based tourist attractions.

Throughout the rest of the Valley region, other local communities and historical societies followed the example of Lexington and sought to develop their heritage tourist infrastructure. Fishwick (1959, 164) noted the emergence of heritage tourism in Virginia during the mid-twentieth century, writing that "Being Confederate pays off. Tourists want to visit ante-bellum gardens, tour battlefields, buy trinkets...thousands of Virginians, white and colored, use [heritage tourism] as their chief source of revenue." Seeking to cash in on Civil War heritage tourism, a number of Shenandoah Valley towns established Civil War themed museums during the twentieth century that both honor the fallen dead and celebrate the vital role that the region played during the war. There are now over a dozen museums dedicated to the Civil War throughout the Valley, as well as several well-preserved battlefields that thousands of heritage tourists visit each year. The largest of these Civil war heritage museums is the Hall of Valor Museum in New Market, Virginia. Operated by the Virginia Military Institute and the Commonwealth of Virginia, it opened in 1970 on the site of the 1864 Battle of New Market, and is the site for the largest annual Civil War reenactment in the United States. The reenactment continues to draw thousands of heritage tourists to the Valley each year and was performed in 2004 for the 140<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

As Weeks (2003) and Cullen (1995) note, there was a significant upturn in Civil War tourism in the 1990's following the success of the 1990 PBS documentary series *The Civil War* and the release of Civil War oriented major motion pictures such as *Gettysburg*, *Sommersby*, and *Glory*. In an attempt to further tap into the economic profits of heritage tourism, local tourist boards and agencies throughout the Shenandoah Valley now cater and market to Civil War heritage travelers interested in visiting the historical sites of the region. Additionally, as part of this renewed interest in the Civil War, a number of local agencies began to push for more extensive and coordinated plan for battlefield preservation in the region. This led to the creation of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District and Commission Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996, which now oversees both regional battlefield preservation and serves to coordinate heritage tourism planning

throughout the region through its on-line website. Finally, the Virginia Film Office has also played a significant role in the heritage development of the region, as it worked to bring the filming of the 2003 Civil War themed *Gods and Generals* to the Shenandoah Valley.

The legacy of the Civil War continues to unite and bind the Valley geographically. Though the towns and landscapes of the Valley share other economic and social ties that bind it as a viable region, it is through the memorial spaces of the past that the Valley is ultimately imagined and mythologized as distinctly Southern. In his written reflections on his native state of Virginia, Marshall Fishwick (1959, X) once wrote that “Virginia can only be understood in terms of its mythology. What Virginians think they are has a lot to do with what they have become. Neither the people [of the state] nor their historians have been bound by the tyranny of facts.” The mythologized history of Virginia lives on in the specters of the Civil War past which continue to haunt the towns and spaces of the Valley. As Foster (1987, 198) puts it, “the New South of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remained a land haunted by the ghosts of the Confederacy. The ghosts had helped to make it a conservative, deferential society.” It is these same “ghosts” that I attempt to locate and analyze within this project. These lingering shadows and specters still have much to tell us about how we understand and use the Civil War past within the contemporary commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the entire American South.

Analyzing the Civil War past also provides one window into the ascendant rise of Southern cultural values within contemporary American politics and society. Since the political rise of evangelical Christianity during the 1980’s, the Jacksonian masculine values so idealized in Southern mythology, finally emerged triumphant within the United States. As argued by Phillips (2006, 130), “From presidential-election dominance to military adventurism and Southern Baptist expansionism, more Dixie ambitions have been fulfilled than any Confederate war veterans’ conference could have ever imagined.” In locating the Lost Cause throughout the Valley, I am engaged in a process of uncovering and tracing the power of Southern and Jacksonian masculinity at one important regional site. Since the Shenandoah Valley continues to loom large in the mythos of Southern nationalism and Confederate identity, it is an especially useful place to investigate what Phillips (2006, 132) refers to as the “Southernization” of the United States. The chapters in this dissertation examine particular sites of Civil War memory throughout the Shenandoah Valley where the divisions of the past continue to be waged as part of a cultural war regarding how we

understand the meaning of that conflict today. Has the South actually “won” the war over memory and culture, due to the rise of Southern Christian conservatism in American society and politics, as Phillips (2006) and Applebome (1996) have both suggested? What counter memories remain excluded by the dominant master narratives of Civil War memory?

## **Chapter Two: Methodology and Field of Study**

### *Collective Memory and Heritage*

This dissertation complements an emerging interdisciplinary field of work in heritage and collective memory studies. This field of research is relatively new within the academy, as scholars began to examine the importance of commonly shared and collective memories in the shaping of individual and group identities. As Blight (2002, 2) notes, “What scholars used to call and examine as myth transformed in the 1980’s and 1990’s into the study of memory.” Contemporary scholarship in collective memory investigates the power of myth, ritual, commemoration, and tradition within everyday life, particularly how certain versions of the past might serve a particular political purpose in the present. Billig (1995) highlights the critical role that politicians, public schools, and the media play in the dissemination of the national past, usually sanitized to include only the highly-glorified and heroic tales of old. Collective memory is now studied as a social construct as narratives of the past are constantly rewritten to suit contemporary needs. Indeed, scholars such as Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Shackel (2001), and Blight (2002) contend that modern nations generate much of their power from the heroic and glorified tales of a shared, collective, and linear national past.

Prior to the interest in collective forms of memory, the majority of academic and medical research on memories of the past centered on individuals and the role of the brain in either recalling certain prior events or repressing them. The work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), for example, explored how techniques of psychoanalysis might be used to arouse our repressed childhood memories that may have been repressed due to a past trauma. Freud’s work suggested that what is remembered in the present may not actually be “real”- it may be an invented memory that serves to cover up painful past memories. The later work of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) further suggested that individual memories are always incomplete- they comprise only reconstructions of the past that cannot ever fully recover historical context.

The first scholar to begin to fully examine the role of social memory construction was Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). The main contribution of Halbwachs to the study of memory was in his assertion that memories are always socially framed, that individuals cannot remember images of the past without associating them within the frameworks of the social group in which that memory was created (Miszta 2003, 51). In rejecting Freud’s

notion of stored, unconscious memories, Halbwachs emphasizes the role of the present and the collective in memory construction, commenting that, “It is only in the group context that we are able to reconstruct a body of remembrances” (Quoted in Misztal 2003, 53) Though the individual plays a critical role in the collective memory process for Halbwachs, this individual is always located him/herself within a group context when he/she draws upon a particular memory and attempts to understand its meaning and power. Halbwachs’ legacy is mixed-his rejection of the individual perspective and his conceptual schema of ‘social frameworks’ in memory was groundbreaking and continues to guide mnemonic research in the present. His analysis, however, tended to devalue the importance of the living practices of the present in memory formation and gave little agency to individuals that might try to escape the impact and influence of dominant national memory on construction of their personal identity.

The influential work of Pierre Nora (1989, 1996) examines particular geographic and institutional sites of memory in France in an attempt to engage the “archives of memory” dispersed within the spaces of everyday life (Till 2003). Nora articulates four “realms of memory”: symbolic sites (pilgrimage spaces and commemorations), functional (commemorative groups and associations), monumental (buildings, statues, and ceremonies), and topographic (archival, libraries, and museums) (Misztal 2003, 105). These are semiotic sites where the traces of the past are “no longer alive but not yet entirely dead, like shells left on the shore when the sea of living history has receded” (Nora 1996, 7). Nora (1989, 22) further posits that memory and history are opposed to each other, claiming that “memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events,” suggesting that some historians are guilty of being too critical and suspicious of contemporary memory practices.

Nora’s arguments concerning collective memory practices and the traces of the past are certainly not above criticism. Like Sturken (1997) and Tonkin (1992), I find Nora’s notion of “living history” and the binary he sets up between history and memory problematic, particularly in his highly-nostalgic and non-critical lamentation over the loss of a “real” and living national past. I prefer Lowenthal’s (1996) suggestion that critical work in history can serve the important role of undermining the sanitized and mythical versions of the past found within many heritage spaces. Savage (1994, 146) notes that, despite Nora’s claims that memory practices are disappearing within modernity, localized and less

celebrated forms of commemoration continue to be practiced throughout the world. In the case of Civil War memory, he notes:

The proliferation of public monuments, reliquaries, and document collections coincided with equally ubiquitous ritual observances, veterans' reunions, and organizational meetings, as well as less formal activities of remembering in the home, church, or street. These various memory networks were not mutually exclusive and may in certain ways have been mutually reinforcing.

Though interest in preserving historical sites and remembering particular historical narratives is hardly a new phenomenon, there has been a significant rise in heritage development and tourism over the past thirty years, particularly within Western Europe and the United States.<sup>12</sup> Urry (2002, 94) notes, for example, that over 50% of the nearly 1,800 heritage museums in Great Britain have opened since 1971. Urban areas throughout the United States have also been major sites of heritage development, including gentrifying urban neighborhoods where developers utilize historical districts as a tool to evict working class citizens. Heritage development offers the alluring promise of large profits and the revenue generated by heritage tourism can be of significant economic importance at both a macro and micro spatial level, particularly for regions struggling for economic development as a result of the shifts within globalization. Local tourist boards often design heritage corridors that promote both history museums and tourist landscapes within a particular region. The Shenandoah Valley Tourist Board, for example, now markets the entire region as a heritage corridor and features many of the local Civil War museums on its website as key tourist attractions for the area.

As the number of heritage and historical sites has proliferated throughout the last thirty years, tourist theorists have also begun to research what attracts contemporary travelers to these heritage landscapes. MacCannell (1976) famously argues that all tourists desire authentic experiences on their travels, seeking 'real' places and timeless historical periods separate from their own modern existence. Similarly, Hewison (1987) claims that heritage tourists seek connection to the traditional past as a result of their own rising sense of disaffiliation and confusion within the chaos of a postmodern world. In a similar vein, Strong comments that, "Heritage represents some kind of security, a point of reference, a

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<sup>12</sup> Lowenthal (1985) traces the "addiction" to heritage and nostalgia back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, emerging as a reaction to early proto-industrial developments throughout Europe. For studies on the rise in heritage tourism development, see Hewison (1987), Dicks (2000), Urry (2002); Lowenthal (1985, 1996); Timothy, M. J., Boyd, S. (2002); Scarpaci (2004); and Graham, B., Ashworth, G.J., and Tunbridge, J.E. (2000)

refuge perhaps, something visible and tangible which seems stable and unchanged” (quoted in Hewison 1987, 47).

“Dark tourist” heritage sites such as prisons, concentration camps, and battlefields are among the most heavily visited tourists destinations throughout the world (Lennon and Foley 2000). The heritage tourism at these sites takes on a quasi-religious pilgrimage like nature and may also be an important way in which one (re)affirms their own sense of patriotism and national identity (Lowenthal 1996). Such visits tend to be somber and reflective ones, as heritage tourists imagine the sacrifices made by past mythical heroes. Urry (2002) suggests that heritage travel should be considered as an important ritualistic cultural practice whereby individuals choose to visit the historical monuments and landscapes that bind together the nation in a collective and imagined sense. Heritage travelers may also seek to visit memory sites out of a desire to learn about the past at the place where it happened, as the “sacred soil” of a particular memory site affords it a particular normative authority and power for tourists to gaze upon and soak in while on their visits.

This understanding of heritage sites as interpretive, highly selective versions of the past illustrates the controversial nature of heritage development. Landscapes of memory are highly contested spaces, sites where competing interpretations of the past take place in the present. Till (2003, 291) notes that:

Recent work by geographers demonstrates that places of memory are more than just monumental stages or sites of important national events. They also constitute historical meanings, social relations and power relations....far from being rooted or stable, places are porous networks of social relations that continually change because of the particular ways they are interconnected to (and in turn shape) other places and people.

Following Till’s analysis, groups marginalized or excluded from powerful, “official” versions of history may ascribe wholly different alternative memories upon so-called sacred landscapes. Shackel (2001) contends that the forgotten histories of the past serve to delegitimize and complicate sanitized narratives of a glorious and progressive past. He notes, “The perception is that American history is linear and straightforward. This uncomplicated story only occurs when we leave others out of the picture” (Shackel 2001, 4).

As noted in the introduction, scholars of nationalism such as Anderson (1983) and Billig (1995) suggest that broad historical narratives present within the United States are also conspicuous for what *they do not say* about the past. Far from simply unifying the nation,

these foundational myths also suggest who or what is excluded from the tradition of the national past. The frontier myth of the United States, for example, conveniently glosses over the death of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans, the dubious diplomatic deals in land buys, the military theft of much of the west as a result of the Mexican war, and the history of labor conflict within the many of the mining camps and company towns of the mountain states. Recent work within cultural studies examines this phenomenon of “heritage invisibility” through analysis of race, class, and gender at particular memory sites. Till (2003, 292) comments that, “gendered symbols of social identities and power relations in the landscape implicitly or explicitly construct a national ‘norm’ that becomes an unquestioned experience of everyday life.” Work by Sharp (1996), Nash (1994), Rose (1993), Dowler (1998), and Johnson (1994, 1995, 1999) emphasize the masculine nature of national memorial landscapes and the lack of female representation within most memorial and monument sites.<sup>13</sup> Harvey’s (1979) analysis of Sacre Cure in Paris and Mitchell’s work on Johnstown, Pa. (2000) similarly illustrate processes of heritage invisibility, as both articles note how memory sites fail to recognize working class histories at these sites that challenged bourgeois hegemony.

In analyzing and exposing the nationalist themes embedded in heritage spaces, texts, and rituals, scholars engage what Nietzsche called “monumental history,” a mythical and often fictionalized version of the past that serves to orient citizens into the weft of the national collective. Monumental forms of history emphasize mythical heroes of the past, particular military figures who won glorious victories or suffered tragic defeats on behalf of the nation. This form of history is also highly reverential and nostalgic; it implies the existence of golden ages of the past when life was simpler, more traditional, religious, and less decadent and corrupted than modernity (Landy 2001, 3). It serves to reinforce and circulate nationalist rhetoric regarding mythologized versions of the national past. Nietzsche ultimately believes monumental forms of historical memory to be dangerous and destructive, noting that:

As long as the past has to be described as worthy of imitation, as imitable and possible for a second time, it of course incurs the danger of becoming somewhat distorted, beautified...incapable of distinguishing between a monumental past and a mythical fiction (quoted in Landy 2001, 3).

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<sup>13</sup> The feminine representations that do exist tend to be “mother of the nation” images that reinforce existing nationalist gendered stereotypes.

Heritage sites and texts also contain elements of what Nietzsche describes as “antiquarian history,” a type of history that emphasizes respect for ancestors, authenticity of historical artifacts, and a certain degree of detailed minutia regarding representation of past memories. Antiquarian forms of history attempt to control the present by preserving the past and keeping it alive. Examples of antiquarian forms of history can be seen in the obsessive-like attention to recreating the past correctly at living-history sites. Their costumes must be made to be as authentic as possible, simulated battles should be waged in exactly the same formations as the original, and the accents of the actors must match the way that people talked “back then.” The antiquarian approach ultimately attempts to “get inside the head” of the dead and buried and to present a version of history closest to the way it actually was back in the past. According to Nietzsche, antiquarian forms of history are no more critical in nature of the events of the past than monumental versions. Through its reverential worship of the authentic past, antiquarian forms of historical memory tend to disconnect the objects of the past from the events that created them (Landy 2001, 4). Critical engagement with the past becomes lost in a never-ending quest for an authenticity and a truth that can never be obtained. As Handler and Gable (1997, 223) argue in their critical work on Colonial Williamsburg, “The dream of authenticity is a present-day myth. We cannot recreate, reconstruct, or recapture the past. We can only tell stories about it in present day language, based on our present day concerns.”

The research for this dissertation includes both reflexive-based ethnographic work and textual and discursive forms of critical analysis. My aim with this study is not to provide one single, definitive reading of heritage tourism in the Valley. As my earlier research questions indicate, I am most interested in examining particular questions of national and regional identity in the region. The research for the project included multiple trips to the heritage sites of the Valley beginning in the autumn of 2004 and ending in May of 2006. In my travels throughout the Valley, I visited several Civil War museums, toured the valley with heritage tourists looking at battlefield sites on a trip organized by the Civil War Education Association (CWEA), attended a “meet the Generals” session at a Civil War festival in Bedford and, as noted in the introduction, witnessed the final production of the Civil War themed play *Stonewall Country* in Lexington. Along the way, I engaged in and had access to personal interviews with re-enactors, members of local heritage organizations, and local authors of Civil War themed books.

Until fairly recently, qualitative research traditions presupposed and suggested the possibility of “objectivity” and detachment from the subject(s) being studied (Western 1992; May 2002). More recently, however, this has been exposed by academics for what it truly is—an impossibility (May 2002; Flick 1998; Western 1992). As stated by May (2002, 2), “The knower (as researcher) is now implicated in the construction of the known (the dynamics and content of society and social relations.” Reflexive social research became the standard way in which the researcher can relate to his/her subject while at the same time grounding him/herself within the project (May 2002; Flick 1998; Creswell 1998). Further trends within qualitative research since the end of modernity suggest the re-emergence of the importance of oral history, narrative and textual studies with traditional social science research programs, and the need to historicize and contextualize problems being studied (Flick, 1998). Despite this move away from the universal within qualitative studies, researchers continue to focus on the meanings and patterns inherent within their various research projects (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Eisner 1991; Merriam 1988; Creswell 1998; Flick 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994; Taylor and Bogdan 1998).

Qualitative research data, as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994, 1) is, “Usually in the form of words rather than numbers, have always been the staple of some fields in the social sciences, notably anthropology, history, and political science.” Though I agree with

Hammersley (1994) that such a definition might be too simplistic and ignores the inherent connections between quantitative and qualitative research data, I do believe it provides a useful general definition for scholars to use in determining their research methodologies. As a broad category of research programs, qualitative research can and does include a whole variety of diverse methodological approaches in its attempts to unmask meanings and patterns within society (Creswell 1998; Flick 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994). These techniques include, but are not limited to: ethnographies, case studies, textual analysis, discursive analysis, biographies, participant observations, and interviewing (Pratt, 1986; Western 1992; May 2002; Creswell 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994; Taylor and Bogden 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Merriam, 1988).

The paradigm I adhere to in this project is a cultural studies methodology informed and influenced by a social constructivist epistemology. As a social constructivist, I believe that multiple forms of knowledge and meanings exist and these meanings are continually shaped, influenced, and revised by cultural and social forces (Gupta and Lincoln 1985, 113). Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 4) note that, “All associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts. This is as true for the classical style of “peoples and cultures” ethnography as it is for the perhaps more culturally chaotic present.” It is then the goal of the researcher operating within a cultural studies methodological framework to attempt to uncover and ultimately interpret important cultural practices and texts present within culture. I see cultural studies as an approach rooted in symbolic interactionism allowing the researcher to examine the historical, textual, and popular media-driven forces that continually shape, produce, and articulate meanings within culture (Giroux 1992; Hall 1992; Fiske 2000). My own version of symbolic interactionism throughout this dissertation is one rooted in the practices of ethno-methodology. Instead of using surveys and other standardized forms of data acquisition, this approach emphasizes the use of participatory observations, textual analysis and informal interviewing with participants as a way of uncovering cultural and social meanings taking place in active group settings (Blumer 1969; Garfinkel 1967). This particular methodological approach is not value free and, as noted in the introduction, I freely admit this dissertation reflects my own political and social beliefs as I seek to understand the Civil War past and its continued normative impact on groups and individuals in the present.

I support the notion that critical theorizing is an important practice crucial to any reflexive cultural studies research program (Gray 2003, 25). Shurmer-Smith (2002, 95) views methodology “as not just a matter of practicalities and techniques; it is a matter of marrying up theory with practice.” I perceive critical theory to be an important lens for use by researchers who engage in important questions regarding meaning in culture. I also contend that theory should not be privileged and reified to the point that it becomes divorced from the cultural practices of everyday life (Shurmer-Smith 2002, 11). Theory should instead be used by the researcher as an important tool by which researchers more thoroughly engage the inconsistencies and contradictions present within their work, as well as guiding the researcher towards analyzing culture from multiple perspectives. My own readings of poststructuralist theory, for example, influenced me to explore research questions in the dissertation concerning the connections between power and particular forms of historical knowledge and to resist sweeping meta-narratives which attempt to explain the past with an epic and often nationalistic script. Instead, I support the poststructuralist understanding that the past is open to interpretation, is polyvocal, and is a fluid and contested discursive terrain where oral histories of resistance to nationalism and capitalism lie outside of the framework of dominant meta-narratives and remain unexplored by researchers (Foucault 1977).

Following Kellner (1995), I utilize a variety of theoretical frameworks with my study. I support his assertion that cultural studies research should be informed by critical and social theory and ideally “multi-perspectival” in nature. This is a “tool-box approach” to theory that advocates using multiple theoretical frameworks to address research issues from a variety of theoretical frameworks. Kellner (1995, 2003) further suggests that studies of culture examining the mass media must involve “critical theoretical interrogations” that seek to uncover dominant discourses embedded within media texts and expose them as seductive forms of power/knowledge which undermine human freedom and creativity. Cultural studies research, influenced by the pioneering work of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, has traditionally engaged in intense and reflexive ethnographic work that seeks to examine “lived cultures” within the everyday group practices where they are observable (Gray 2003). Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and Von Savigny (2001) define group practices as arrays of human activities that include rituals, commemorative practices, and symbolic activities, all of which are critical for cultural researchers to engage when examining how cultures are lived and practiced within the spaces of everyday life. Swidler (2001, 76) comments that:

Culture cannot be treated as some abstract stuff in people's heads which might or might not cause their action. Rather, cultural practices are action, action organized according to some more or less visible logic, which the analyst need only describe...defining the nature of this logic becomes a primary challenge for cultural analysis.

Like Swidler, I support a cultural studies methodology that examines the social world as an active field of material practices to be researched through a variety of reflexive ethnographic techniques and strategies. In researching the active heritage practices of the Valley, I engaged in both reflexive ethnographic practices and participatory observations. I interviewed re-enactors and living history actors, for example, at museums in Winchester and at the Bedford Civil War Days celebration as part of an effort to better understand not only the reasons why people choose to participate in these contemporary practices, but also their adherence to Lost Cause mythology.

This project is not a quest to obtain some sort of greater "truth" regarding Civil War memory in the Shenandoah Valley and throughout the entire country. As poststructuralist scholars such as Jacques Derrida suggest, there is no one true reading of a text or a particular discursive practice. In noting this, I fully acknowledge that the essays within this dissertation are very much my own personal interventions into issues of contemporary Civil War remembering in the region. In the tradition of feminist scholarship, I understand my work in this dissertation to be both highly *personal and political*. My motivations for engaging in this study involve revealing and opposing racist and divisive contemporary traces of Lost Cause mythology and the discursive formations and practices which continue to support this ideology. In doing so, I follow a long tradition of work within cultural studies which seeks to resist, critique, and ultimately oppose cultural texts and practices which naturalize racism, sexism, and oppressive capitalist ideologies (Kellner 1995).

For my own research on Civil War heritage and collective memory in this study, I am particular reliant upon Michel Foucault's archival and genealogical methodologies. Misztal (2003, 62) describes Foucault's conceptualization of collective memory as a "discursive practice [which] provides memory with a 'discursive materiality' and therefore allows for its investigation 'in the different discursive formations.'" As noted by Howarth (2001, 52), Foucault "stresses the constitutive role of discursive practices in forming and determining objects, rather than the converse." A Foucauldian discursive approach to studying collective

memory research allows the researcher to investigate and reveal the particular discursive practices which create, regulate, support and disseminate the historical myths and sweeping historical meta-narratives. Entire histories of local “subjugated knowledge” lie buried within the annals of history, waiting for researchers to reveal them through archival research (Foucault 1980). Following Foucault’s method of archival discourse analysis, I examine an inventory of the discursive possibilities of the past, a window into how certain heritage stories and mythical narratives of the Civil War past became naturalized and normalized within various contemporary texts.

Foucault notes the importance of what he terms popular or counter memory, a form of collective knowledge possessed by people that according to Pearson (1999, 179), “are barred from writing, from producing their books themselves, from drawing up their own historical accounts—these people nonetheless do have a way of recording history, of remembering or of keeping it fresh and using it.” Foucault frames popular/counter memory in opposition to a dominant, normative memory that disqualifies and silences alternative forms of remembering. Foucault (1977, 144) notes that, “counter memory must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality...it must cultivate the details and accident that accompany every beginning and [describe] the endlessly repeated play of [historical] dominations.” He sees counter memories as important discursive practices that challenge, undermine, and resist the discourse of dominant heritage memory and suggests that by revealing the complexity of the past the researcher can reveal the “unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile interior from within or underneath” (Foucault 1977, 146).

Foucault’s emphasis on discontinuity and dissonance in heritage attracts scholars interested in challenging pre-existing heritage normatives and confronting the power of these dominant heritage discourses within educational institutions. Zerubavel (1997, 11) notes, “Counter-memory turns memory into a contested territory in which groups engaging in a political conflict promote competitive views of the past.” As Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge (2000) suggest, heritage activities typically engender dissonance, due to the highly-charged political nature of attempting to represent particular memories of the past. Foucault-influenced heritage studies, such as those by Connerton (1989), Fentress and Wickham (1992), Johnson (1994), Till (1999), and Young (1993), analyze collective memory using a bottom-up approach. They emphasize how defining one’s cultural heritage,

particularly for groups traditionally marginalized by dominant forms of power, can use the past as a form of resistance against contemporary state and regional oppression. Rather than suggesting like Halbwachs that humans are powerless against the discursive practices of dominant memory, a Foucauldian influenced counter-memory approach highlights how groups resist heritage hegemony through their own locally-based practices of memory.

For Foucault, discursive practices not only regulate what can be written, said, or understood; they also work to exclude forms of knowledge located outside of disciplinary systems of knowledge. Foucault suggests that “textual archeologists” dig a bit deeper in order to uncover the silenced, disparate voices and histories, those that lie hidden within the archive of the past waiting to be rediscovered in the present day. As Hannam (2002, 114-15) contends, archives are far from neutral repositories of information. Instead, archives “impose ideas of what constitutes valuable heritage upon other more marginal groups...they help to define what a nation means and fail to explain the autonomous domain of the actual, everyday politics of people.” Texts operate and gain their meaning within discursive systems that both constrain and situate the speaker. Foucault therefore offers a particular method for discursive analysis whereby the archival researcher seeks to uncover the particular rules, regulations, and limits imposed by discourses. Chapter Eight follows a Foucauldian approach to the study of heritage and memory. It is an examination of a particular subjugated history from the Civil War era in the Shenandoah Valley, in this case the resistance activities of the Mennonite and Brethren communities within the Central Shenandoah Valley as they fought against Confederate hegemony in the region.

Foucault’s link between power and knowledge also serves as influential methodological framework throughout the dissertation. Foucault (1980, 52) stated that, “The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.” In making this claim, he is noting how particular institutions and “expert scholars” actively promote their own interpretations of the past to further their own agendas. Institutions such as schools and museums operate as powerful disciplinary sites, authoritative spaces which disseminate particular forms of knowledge while often eliminating or masking alternative histories which do not fit within their own master framework. My own reading of Civil War museum displays follows Foucault’s conception of power/knowledge in an attempt to identify how mythical versions of the Civil War past gain public authority and acceptance as a result of being displayed within museum space.

### *Textual Analysis*

The majority of research compiled in this study falls into the broad category of textual analysis. Couldry ((2000) argues that the emphasis on textual analysis within cultural studies work distinguishes its methodological approaches from the more traditional practices within anthropology and sociology. Gray (2003, 127) notes that:

Cultural studies is interested in the production, circulation, and consumption of 'texts' written, verbal, broadcast, visual, musical, etc. and as an interdisciplinary project, cultural studies is able to incorporate an understanding of lived practices with some exploration of the consumption and use of texts. Cultural studies has insisted upon the constitutive role of 'texts' in everyday lives and in the production of experiential accounts...[a central purpose] is to investigate the text in its wider socio-political context.

As Gray alludes to, texts should be broadly understood to include not only written texts, but also visual ones including films, television shows, internet web sites, museum exhibits, musical performances, and artwork. This dissertation includes critical examinations of whole range of texts including newspaper articles, Old South mural paintings at the Hotel Roanoke, scripts from Civil War oriented theatre performances, transcripts of speeches delivered by local heritage leaders and re-enactors, articles from Civil War heritage oriented magazines, newsletters, pamphlets and journal articles, official and unofficial websites of heritage and neo-Confederate organizations, Civil War school worksheets for elementary and middle school children, and Civil War fiction. Utilizing Kellner's (1995, 59) Gramscian derived concept of "ideology critique," I critically engage these texts throughout the dissertation in an effort to reveal how particular racist, sexist, and nationalist fragments of Lost Cause ideology become constituted and continue to be naturalized as legitimate forms of historical knowledge throughout the Shenandoah Valley region. Kellner (1995, 59) defines "ideology critique" as a methodological approach in which the researcher "doing ideology critique analyz[es] images, systems, myths and narratives, as well as propositions and systems of belief." This approach defines ideology as "part of a system of domination which serves to further oppression by legitimizing forces and institutions that repress and oppress people" (Kellner 1995, 61). This dissertation attempts to deconstruct the oppressive foundations of Lost Cause ideology through a series of critical interventions which oppose

racist and hyper-masculine versions of collective memory from the Civil War era Southern states.

As in Kellner's approach to ideology critique, the textual analysis throughout this dissertation relies upon fundamentals of Derrida's methodological approach to deconstruction to reveal binary oppositions present within discursive formations. In his critique of structuralism, Derrida (1976) reveals the extent to which all positive terms in Western language rely upon binary opposites for their meaning. According to Howath (2001, 37), "Derrida's critique of binary oppositions is part of his general attack on binary distinctions in Western thinking...he argues that if the outside is required for the definition of the inside, then it is just as necessary as the inside itself." Deconstruction seeks to collapse binary distinctions by revealing how ideologies and identities cannot be understood without an "other." Following this methodological approach, my analysis of a whole range of Lost Cause texts within this project attempts to disclose and destabilize binaries related to Civil War memory and the Lost Cause. Lost Cause mythology, for example, claims the Old South to be a "God-fearing Christian region" replete with "honorable gentlemen farmers" who engaged in a "defensive" campaign during the Civil War. Such language relies on the binary opposition of a North presupposed to be "godless and "dishonorable" industrial capitalists who waged an "aggressive invasion" against the Southern states. By revealing the binary foundations of the Lost Cause, the entire ideology is revealed for what it is: a mythological meta-narrative used to justify and glorify the legacy of the Confederacy and its soldiers during the post-war period.

Finally, my investigation into Lost Cause mythology employs Roland Barthes' understandings of myths and their formation and deployment within Western culture. In his work *Mythologies* (1975), Barthes explores the ways in which particular myths and legends become circulated within society. In Barthes framework, disparate cultural practices and events such as wrestling matches and images on magazine covers serve to disseminate long-standing cultural myths present within Western societies. Similar to Kellner's usage of the term "ideology," these same myths ultimately promote, naturalize and engrain citizens within sets of normative values and beliefs promoting the interest of particular groups (usually dominant ones) within society. To reveal these myths requires a particular methodological approach referred to as semiology in which the researcher attempts to find hidden connotative meanings embedded within texts and images. Rather famously in the book,

Barthes (1975, 116) analyzed an image of an African boy saluting the French flag by noting that the image suggests, “That France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.” My own reading of images throughout this dissertation follows such a semiotic approach. The critical analysis of the historical paintings and murals located in the lobby area of the Hotel Roanoke in Chapter Seven, for example, employs semiotics in an attempt to understand exactly what these Old South paintings mean and how they naturalize Lost Cause mythology and memory.

### *Visual Texts*

Chapter Five of this dissertation engages Civil War films in a critical attempt to uncover their meanings and reliance on mnemonic themes of Reconciliation and Lost Cause mythology. Within new cultural geography, television shows and cinematic films are understood to be powerful geographic texts that serve to shape our own understanding of particular places and regions. Work on film within cultural geography is part of a trend within cultural studies towards inter-textual work, described by Da Costa (2003, 191) as “the idea that meaning is not simply produced in the relationship between a text and the thing it represents (the outside world) but in the space between a variety of texts.” It is through a variety of cultural texts (including films, books, photographs, television shows, and museums) that we come to understand our world and to give it meaning (Barnes and Duncan 1992). Given the proliferation of mass media texts within contemporary society, it can be argued that visual texts are being read by far more people throughout the world than more traditional textual forms. They must be understood to be increasingly powerful textual sites where knowledge is constructed, disseminated, and ultimately legitimized throughout the world.

The setting of films is of major interest to cultural geographers, who examine how various spaces and places are imagined in a visual context. Entire places and regions become “real” to viewers within visual texts, many of whom will never actually visit the places featured on the film. According to Hopkins (quoted in Da Costa 2003, 192):

The cinematic landscape is not, consequently, a neutral place of entertainment or an objective documentation of the ‘real’, but an ideologically charged cultural creation whereby meanings of place

and society are made, legitimized, contested, and obscured. Intervening in the...cultural landscape will...contribute to the more expansive task of mapping the social, spatial, and political geography of film.

Textual viewers may, for example, construct their understanding of the people and neighborhoods of New York City, for example, primarily through the hundreds of films and television shows set in the city. Similarly, through the textual narrative and setting of films like *Gone with the Wind*, the antebellum American South becomes imagined by viewers as mythical and romantic place where the harsh realities of slavery are hardly in evidence (Campbell 1981). Indeed, particular dominant representations concerning places and region exist throughout the history of American cinema, suggesting alternative interpretations and meanings of particular times and places may be obscured, devalued, or simply ignored by the visual text.

The representation of the past in film has only recently become a focus for scholars in cultural studies as a crucial and powerful form of “folklore history” or what Gramsci termed “a popular philosophy of common sense” (Landy 1996, 1). In Gilles Deleuze’s writings on cinema, he argues that our understanding of the past comes to us from a number of different fractured cultural sites and spaces, noting that mass media historical narratives act as “sheets of the past” that affectively influence our own personal identities (Landy 1996, 7). Deleuze ultimately suggests that film should be understood both as a major form of how we learn about the past and as a marker of how we actually teach the lessons of the past within particular nations (Landy 2001, 6).

In the spirit of an interdisciplinary approach to historical study, I support a Foucauldian influenced notion that understands films to be powerful visual texts where knowledge of the past is constructed and disseminated to the mass public. To Foucault, films are more powerful textual devices for the circulation of normative and dominant forms of memory than traditional books (Foucault 1989, 123). Films, including both popular Hollywood cinema texts as well as Nazi propaganda films, tell stirring stories of military and national heroes while simultaneously omitting any story of popular resistance and struggle. According to Foucault, “people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been...if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles” (Foucault

1989 123-124). Historical films act as pedagogical texts, knowledge fields where viewers are instructed in particular normative truths regarding the past (Luke 2002). As Foucault (1983, 212) states:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categories the individual, marks him by his individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals.

There are certainly a number of difficult issues to consider when engaging in a critical analysis of cinema texts. It is entirely possible, for example, that the embedded hegemonic narrative of the films analyzed may not actually be interpreted by the audience in the way that the filmmaker(s) intended. As the scholars of the so-called Birmingham School of Cultural Studies remind us, viewers constantly resist the dominant messages present within media culture. My reading is, however, not an attempt to engage the multiple ways that audiences actually resist the messages embedded within Civil War texts and may ultimately interpret films critically. I contend throughout this dissertation that film texts, similar to museum exhibits, target a particular “ideal reader” that is presumed to understand and relate to the hegemonic nationalist narratives present in the film (Crang 2003). Historical films rely upon particular hegemonic political techniques, symbols, narratives and strategies that they believe will resonate with a large portion of an already disciplined American audience.

### *Museum Exhibits*

Civil War museum exhibits serve as another textual site for analysis within this study. I view museums as important educational sites where particular meta-narrative and mythological versions of Civil War collective memory are dispersed to the public. For my research on the texts of museum displays in the Valley, this involved an examination of the presumed “ideal reader” of Civil War museum exhibits and how this is manufactured by the choices made by curators (Crang 2003). The ideal reader at Valley Civil War museums, for example, does not often gain possible valuable insight into the legacy of slavery, the mythology of the Lost Cause, and how the waging of the war continues to impact race relations within contemporary society (Handler and Gable 1997).

Scholars such as Luke (2002), Bennett (1995), Coffey (2003), Crang (1994), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), and Handler and Gable (1997) examine the normative role that museums play in disciplining and constructing history and memory within their displays. Luke (2002, 14) contends that, “[Museum displays] serve to orient American toward their future by way of certain widely approved rubrics. Particular ideological frames, cultural values, or discursive assumptions circulating through governmentalizing forms of discipline can be deployed to dictate authoritatively the shape and substance of the cultural matter put on display.” Museums attempt to freeze time and welcome its viewers into a particular version of the past that is often sanitized, nationalistic and devoid of alternative critique. Traditionally, museums in the American South provided visitors with a blatant endorsement of white supremacy and neo-Confederate remembrances of the Civil War past (Brundage 2005, 293). Beginning in the late 1970’s, however, some Southern museums began to revisit the way they exhibited the Civil War past to their visitors. These museum professionals practiced what Brundage (2005, 297) calls the “new museumology,” a set of didactic and discursive practices which challenged presupposed notions of historical truth in museum settings. Colonial Williamsburg, for example, attempted to more openly present its “historical warts” through displays and discussions focused on histories of African slavery and working class oppression in the community. Beginning in 1978, even the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia has attempted to present a more inclusive set of exhibitions as part of its collection, adding permanent exhibitions focused on the horrors of Southern slavery and the role of women in the war to a museum that was previously the exclusive domain of Lost Cause forms of remembering (Brundage 2005, 298-99).

Despite this revisionist shift in museum exhibition within some Southern museums, museum professionals from the region still face intense pressure to present American history using simplistic and hyper-nationalist narratives. Southern museums often receive pressure from neo-Confederate heritage groups not to sell out to forces of liberal revisionism by diluting their traditional focus on the glorification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century American South. At Colonial Williamsburg, the museum receives millions of dollars from both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Anheuser-Busch Corporation to the annual operating fund. As noted by Handler and Gable (1997), this produces pressure to produce “happy history” at Colonial Williamsburg, both direct and perceived, as dictates from corporate headquarters may lead history museums to scale-back attempts at incorporating revisionist and alternative historical scripts within their displays or theatrical performances. As part of my textual reading of Valley museums throughout the dissertation, I uncover examples of “feel good” history displays, particularly how sensitive and divisive elements of the Civil War past such as slavery are presented as mistakes which America has overcome as part of its natural progress as the greatest nation on Earth.



Figure 2.1

Stonewall Jackson Museum Children's Exhibit

At the tiny Stonewall Jackson Museum at Hupp's Hill in Strasburg, VA, children are encouraged to have their picture taken while riding a horse and in Confederate uniform (Bohland).

The majority of Civil War museums I researched for this study were small, local operations that operate on very low budgets by museum boards dedicated to presenting their own version of the Civil War to the public. Though heritage sites and museums have traditionally been managed and maintained by national agencies, private, locally-based

heritage groups are now increasingly more involved in contemporary heritage development (Hewison 1987; Thrift 1989). In doing so, local heritage groups utilize local museums and historical sites as educational sites where their own particular readings of the past can be disseminated to the public- often children on field trips to learn about the past in a more exciting museum setting. As Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge (2000, 2) contend, heritage is:

A view from the present, either backward to a past or forward to a future. In both cases, the viewpoint cannot be other than now, the perspective is blurred and indistinct and shaped by current concerns and predispositions, where the field of vision is restricted to a highly selective view of a small fraction of possible pasts or envisioned futures. None of these conditions are in themselves significant as rendering heritage less accurate, less real, or less important than other ways of treating the past....simply it is different.

The trend towards smaller, locally based heritage museums is also of great significance when examining the changing trends and future purposes of the postmodern museum. Over the past twenty-five years, there has been a marked growth in the number of small, local museums devoted to regional histories and identities. Mary Coffey's (2003) study of regional museums in Mexico contends that such regional museums serve as important spaces where local groups and cultures can reaffirm and celebrate their own identities, some of which may have been traditionally marginalized or excluded by hegemonic versions of the national past. Utilizing Foucault's work on governmentality, Coffey claims that museums dedicated to the preservation of local history and identity are increasingly promoted and emphasized by the state as a way of constructing a certain type of docile, hybrid citizen who values both their own distinctive regional identity while still understanding their own place within a multi-ethnic, liberal state.

Though private heritage development does allow the possibility of groups traditionally marginalized by dominant readings of the past an alternative space to present their own historical narratives, it also allows for the possibility that particular marginalized groups might utilize such sites to spread their own version of the past (McDonald 1997). Indeed, many local museums contain many of the same "heritage traps" found in larger, national heritage museums. Lowenthal (1996) further notes that, in celebrating their own distinctive cultural identity within museum, local groups tend to glorify and stereotype their own past in an effort to please their own small constituencies. Owen Dwyer's (2000) study

of local Civil Rights museums in the Deep South, for example, argues that these museums often gloss over stories of local violent struggles over Civil Rights in favor of more feel good stories of Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks.

### *Landscape Texts and Ritual Practices*

Following trends in ‘new’ cultural geography, this study includes readings of the memorial landscape texts of the Shenandoah Valley region. Following the work of Roland Barthes (1983) in semiotics, cultural geographers Barnes and Duncan (1992) contend that landscapes can be also be considered a type of text, as system of signs that can be read by individuals in space on a daily basis. Within this approach “everything, then, is a text ready to be decoded, read for meanings, and rewritten in our everyday cultural practices. We are all cultural readers” (Mitchell 2000, 122). Mitchell (2000, 123) notes that authors of texts often intend to present a single, true perspective that involves important issues of power. Cultural researchers should not only examine the multiple meanings embedded within particular material texts. They must also consider how particular notions of truth and meaning are presented to *seem true or real* within the textual practices of everyday life.

As previously noted in this chapter, the work of Pierre Nora highlighted the importance that particular heritage sites play in circulating collective memory within society. Indeed, Shenandoah Valley heritage sites serve as anchors of Civil War remembering, theatres of memory where the memorialization of the past gains resonance and legitimacy, particularly as local or national heritage groups seek to draw upon the mystical power of memory at such sites and preserve eroding memories of the past (Boyer 1994; Till 2003; Shackel 2001). Halbwachs (1992) similarly emphasized the importance of time and space in studies of and collective memory, arguing that particular ‘timeless’ spaces and landscapes serve to anchor group memories. It is through these particular heritage spaces that the past remains relevant to contemporary populations and subsequently continues to endure within the collective memory of the nation. As Till (2003, 291) contends, “The dense experiential and social qualities of place and landscape therefore not only frame social memory, they also situate and spatially construct group remembrances.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Examples of exemplary historical and geographic studies combining work in memory and landscape include Charlesworth’s (1994) study of Auschwitz, Johnson’s (1994; 1995; 1999) work on Ireland, Schama’s (1995) analysis of sacred natural landscapes in Europe and America, Gruffudd’s work on Wales (1995), Schwartz,

Memorials and monuments are amongst the most studied of these mnemonic landscapes, due in no small measure to the important symbolic and political meanings associated with these sites.<sup>15</sup> By publicly erecting a monument, power groups seek to permanently instill their particular version of the past and their own sense of civil authority on the cultural landscape (Dwyer 2004). The erection of monuments and memorials began during the classical era of Western Europe, as Greek and Roman leaders built ornate monuments to celebrate great victories and to pay respects to the gods that granted them victory. Monument building enjoyed a resurgence following the Renaissance, as nations used the monument as powerful public tools in establishing their political legitimacy. As Savage (1994, 146) notes, the rise of monuments during this period was connected to “the nationalist demand for tangible symbols and traditions that could make the idea of the nation credible...and to make collective memory real, physically rooted, to make the collective real.”



Figure 2.2

Our Soldiers Confederate Cemetery and Monument

The Our Soldiers Confederate Cemetery and Monument in Mt. Jackson, VA, a small town just north of Harrisonburg. The plaques pictured above were re-dedicated in 2003 in a ceremony sponsored by the Virginia SCV and UDC (Bohland).

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Zeruvabel, and Barnett's (1986) study of Masada, and K. Anderson's (1991) research on Vancouver's Chinatown.

<sup>15</sup> Contemporary studies on monuments and memorials include Atkinson and Cosgrove's work on 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy (1998), Osborne's (1998) study of the Cartier monument in Montreal, Nuala Johnson's work on World War One memorials(1999), Exemplary studies examining particular monuments or memorials to fallen heroes are numerous and wide-ranging; they include studies of American Civil War monuments by Savage (1998), Davis (1982), Shackel (2003), and Widener (1982).

Lowenthal (1985, 323) further contends that monument building should be seen as a type of “burial act,” as societies seek closure from the often painful events of the recent past in an effort to heal the wounds of the nation. Perhaps more importantly for this study, however, is how monuments symbolically elevate one particular version of the past over all other possible interpretations of that event or person. Monuments nearly always present a highly militaristic version of masculinity, typically honoring heroic figures from the past, soldiers, or political leaders that exemplify the ideal national (male) citizen. As noted previously, women and other less militarized versions of masculinity are silenced by these structures. Monuments dedicated to the anonymous male common soldier, for example, began to appear in the United States following the end of the American Civil War and in Europe after the First World War (Savage 1999). Such monuments were most often paid for and dedicated by locally based heritage groups in an effort to remember the heroic sacrifices of local soldiers and to present future generations with a heroic, proto-masculine model to emulate.

Historical sites of death, war, and mass slaughter, the ultimate landscapes of chaos and disorder during the conflicts of the past, also become stable heritage reference points within the present. Battlefield sites become sacred spaces, landscapes for future generations to visit in an effort to remember the regional or national past. They are themselves monuments of a type, entire geographic areas that serve to honor the fallen dead and providing salient warnings of the catastrophic consequences of war. Foote (1997, 9-10) contends that battlefields become sacred spaces when they are clearly set apart from the local area, bounded and preserved as something unique and significant within a particular geographic area. The preservation of battlefield sites is a particular contentious issue within the United States, as local developers and heritage groups often clash when “sacred” battlefield landscapes of the past become threatened by modern development plans.

### *Interviews and Practice Based Research*

In addition to textual analysis, the research for this dissertation also involved investigations into how the Civil War continues to be actively remembered within contemporary material cultural practices held throughout the Great Valley of Virginia. According to Raymond Williams, to engage in cultural studies necessitates an analysis of the various struggles that take place over meaning the culture throughout public life. These struggles over culture take place everyday within practices, arrays of human activity where humans make sense of their world and learn normative values within a group setting (Billig 1996). Swidler (2001, 79) further defines cultural practices as “structures, [that are] simultaneously material and enacted, but also patterned and meaningful, both because they enact schemas and because they may be read for the transposable schemas they contain.” These struggles over meaning within culture become observable and readable within the material practices and rituals held by groups and organizations.

For this study, my research involved a great deal of participatory observation of the shared and active practices of Civil War remembrance. I attended and/or witnessed a number of Civil War related practices during my year of field work including Civil War reenactments, weekend festivals, lectures, heritage tours and Confederate Memorial Day services.<sup>16</sup> A number of these Civil War heritage events include living history displays designed to make Civil War history come alive for both the participants and for the audience viewing the events. As Weeks (2003) and Cullen (1995), Civil War living history practices encourage everyone involved to step back in time and imagine that they are watching history unfold before their eyes. Thus, reading living history events involves an analysis of the theatrical element of such practices and how play and fantasy serve to present a version of history that is entertaining and considered to be more interesting for children than traditional, textually-driven forms.

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<sup>16</sup> As part of my research into heritage organization in the Roanoke Valley, I used videotapes of local heritage events filmed by Aarolyn Cobbs, a graduate student at Hollins University. I discuss her and my methodology in greater detail within the final section of Chapter Seven.



Figure 2.3

Liberty Battle Re-enactment

The Battle of Liberty re-enactment, Bedford VA. 23 July, 2005 (Bohland)

More formal and ritualized cultural practices, such as Memorial Day and Lee-Jackson celebrations, serve a critical role in binding people to a particular organization and their own particular philosophies and ideologies. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) note that the majority of these commemorations and ancient traditions celebrated at memorial sites are modern creations, invented by governments and heritage groups in an attempt to propagate myths of a continuous, linear past. They also serve to justify past oppression or subjugation of a people and to glorify the sacrifices of fallen, hyper-masculine military heroes. Commemorations allow participants to join particular imagined communities of like-minded persons, small nations of a sort where individuals learn about the mythical and heroic past of their group or their cause (Anderson 1983; Billig 1995). As noted previously, these Civil War memorial rituals often take place at aging monuments and former battlefield landscapes, allowing heritage organizations to gain a sense of authority from their perceived association with these sacred spaces (Foote 1997).

My reading of the Civil War rituals and practices that I attended while researching for this dissertation, is an extended attempt to critique these events as narrative sites where particular Lost Cause scripts and storylines continue to be disseminated to both participants and audience members. Stories and narratives attach communities together with a common history, cause and purpose. As noted by Davies and Harre (1990):

One speaker can position others by adopting a story line which incorporates a particular interpretation of cultural stereotypes to which they are 'invited' to conform, indeed are required to conform if they

are to continue to converse with the first speaker in such a way as to contribute to that person's story line... In telling a fragment of his or her autobiography a speaker assigns parts and characters in the episodes described, both to themselves and to other people, including those taking part in the conversation. In this respect the structure of an anecdote serving as a fragment of an autobiography is no different from a fairy tale or other work of narrative fiction.

As I observed Civil War heritage events, my interest in reading and encoding these practices led me to note how often portions of the Lost Cause narrative script emerged out from their language and their actions. At a number of different moments during my field work for this dissertation, for example, I was particularly struck by how many individuals I heard speaking almost identical language about the Civil War past, deviating little from their own cultural positioning as neo-Confederate heritage activists. One female re-enactor from a Northern state that I met at a heritage festival in Bedford, Virginia remarked to me “how much real history I’ve learned since becoming an active living history performer.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, it clearly did not take long for a new participant to become disciplined into believing and espousing the pre-approved narrative script of the Civil War favored by Confederate re-enactors. Indeed, as discursive set of mythical narratives, Lost Cause and Old South stories contain all the elements of a powerful and popular epic: romance, heroic men and beautiful women, tragedy, religious faith, and personal redemption.



Figure 2.4

Meet the Generals Session

The “Meet the Generals” session at the Battle of Liberty re-enactment, 23 July, 2005. In this photograph, the actor playing General Lee speaks to a small crowd about Civil War history while “in character” (Bohland).

<sup>17</sup> My discussion with this woman and other reenactors is documented in Chapter 7.

In addition to participatory research, I also engaged in a number of personal conversations and interviews with heritage participants. These interviews were semi-structured in their design and often involved simple conversations with re-enactors and heritage advocates about their beliefs and general interest in Civil War memory. The goal in doing so was to get participants comfortable and to speak freely about their beliefs without self-censoring their comments (Maxwell 2005, 92). Indeed, when I revealed to participants that I was engaged in a study of Civil War memory as a graduate student at Virginia Tech, they simply assumed that I must be pro-Confederate in my beliefs. I never corrected them or revealed too much of my own viewpoints in these interview conversations, preferring again to create a space where the participant felt free to elicit racist and offensive Lost Cause influenced scripts as part of our conversations if they so chose. I did not, however, intentionally bait them into these comments, preferring instead to let the conversations occur organically without a predetermined script.

Unless they offered their statements in public settings or events, as in the case of the “Meet the Generals” session at the Battle of Liberty weekend, I kept the names of all participants confidential and attempted to be purposefully vague in describing the interviewees. As I knew before the project began that most of my views on Southern history and memory would be in direct contrast to many individuals I studied within the dissertation, I made the strategic decision to not develop strong relationships with heritage groups in the Valley. I did so because I ultimately believed, quite correctly in hindsight, that I would be treated with suspicion by many people within these organizations and unlikely to gain too much insight from speaking with them in formal interview sessions. Additionally, I did not want to be confronted with a situation where I rewarded individuals, some of whom might well have treated me kindly by granting me time to interview out of their own busy schedules, with scathing critiques in this dissertation of their neo-Confederate beliefs and membership in heritage organizations. I did, however, gain some second hand access to local heritage organizations in the Roanoke Valley through a student of mine at Hollins University. Her experiences while making a film on Confederate memory in the Roanoke Valley is detailed in the final section of Chapter Seven.

Finally, the last two chapters include four interviews with individuals whose views on heritage I am politically aligned. My interviews in these cases were more formal in orientation and involved a set of predetermined questions asked to the participants. My

interest in these interviews was quite different from my other investigations into the practices of Civil War memory. All four of these participants engaged in counter-memory research that goes against Lost Cause ideology and supports new and alternative ways of thinking about the Civil War past within the region. My interest in these interviews was in framing their work within Foucault's conception of subjugated knowledge and his writings of popular memory and resistance.

### Chapter Three: A Literature Review of the Lost Cause Myth(s)

#### *The Early Lost Cause*

This dissertation is a series of critical interventions centered on the persistent and lasting normative legacy of the Lost Cause myth within the heritage sites and texts of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The Lost Cause is, as Nolan (2000, 12) suggests, a particular “American legend,” the history of which is examined in detail by scholars such as Foster (1987), Wilson (1980), Connolly (1977), Gallagher and Nolan (2000), and Osterweis (1973). The texts, speeches, and monuments of the Lost Cause portrayed the Civil War as a war of “Northern aggression,” one fought by white Southerners to protect a highly-romanticized version of the so-called Southern way of life. The discourses of the Lost Cause typically served to defend slaveholding, suggesting that slavery was neither the critical issue that began the war nor as vicious an institution as typically portrayed by Northern abolitionists and liberal scholars (Nolan 2000, 16). The Lost Cause myth posits that the Southern military, replete with an entire pantheon of heroic and legendary generals, did not actually lose the war due to particular military mistakes or miscalculations of their own. It instead suggests that the Southern cause was ultimately doomed to fail as a result to the massive numerical advantage of the Union army. Indeed, it is only as a result of the leadership of great military heroes such as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, men who lived by a code based on masculine honor, valor, and military sacrifice that the South nearly won the war despite the impossible odds it faced.

As noted in the introduction, however, the Lost Cause myth is not a monolithic and unchanging discursive repository of Confederate heroic memory. There are multiple versions of the Lost Cause myth, each of which shares much in common with the original Lost Cause myth of the 1870’s, but also the different needs and values of particular historical periods since the end of the Civil War. As I detail in this chapter and explain in relation to Civil War tele-traditionalism in Chapter Four, there are at least five different identifiable and mutated versions of the Lost Cause myth since the end of the Civil War in 1865:

- *The original Lost Cause*: a set of discursive myths first propagated by ex-Confederates Jubal Early, Robert Pollard, and other Virginians immediately following the end of the Civil War. Opposed to the Northern Cause Victorious, this version of Southern memory was kept in circulation within

popular culture by Confederate memorial groups including the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

- *The “New South Creed”*: A reconciliationist tinged Lost Cause of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century which sought to reunite North and South in a spirit of nationalism, New South industrialization, Jim Crow era racism and American imperialism (Gaston 2002). A union of both the original Lost Cause and the Union Cause Victorious that included romanticized remembrances of the Old South in literature and was later imagined in films such as *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*.
- *New Nationalist Lost Cause*: A New Deal and World War Two era version of the Lost Cause which emphasized the need for American sectional unity and nationalist military power as both sides fought against new, common foes. Present in Hollywood films of the 1940’s and 1950’s set in the American West. This remains the dominant version of Civil War memory today and is best illustrated by Ken Burns’ film *The Civil War*.
- *The Civil Rights Era Lost Cause*: A quasi-populist and rural Southern version of the Lost Cause used to actively oppose integration and the Civil Rights Movement. Results in usage of the Confederate battle flag as oppositional symbol and icon of racial hatred and cultural rebellion in the region.
- *Neo-Confederate and Paleo-Conservative Revivalism*: A return in the 1980’s to the original set of oppositional values of the Jubal Early version linked to fringe Southern nationalist groups and evangelical Christian zealotry. A reaction to the failures of the Old and New South in a period of globalization and increased immigration in the American South.

It is important to note that the discursive power of the various versions of the Lost Cause myth are rooted in Confederate nationalist discourse that actually began in the years prior to the beginning of the Civil War itself and intensified once the conflict began. There is a long history, for example, of key Southern intellectuals seeking to justify the slave system in the wake of scathing critiques from Northern abolitionists. Similarly, the “moonlight and magnolias” version of Southern history and landscape presented the South as an idyllic,

God-fearing and romantic agrarian space in contrast to the burgeoning Industrial and Secular North. Though such binary distinctions between the Old South and the Industrial North certainly intensified after the war largely as a result of popular culture fantasies, the romantic discourses of the Old South already existed within the United States prior to the onset of the war. Goldfield (2002, 7) notes that:

At times, northerners have looked upon the South as an idyllic land of grace and gentility, where personal character and charm counted more than bank accounts and business savvy; a region of unspoiled beauty, of small towns and large farms where the ills of urban civilization scarcely penetrated; of loyalty to family, God, and place as a counterpoise to a mobile, disjointed, secular society....white Southerners cultivated these positive images even as they understood them to be exaggerations or outright fantasies; they again, were living in an artifice, and the promotion of the lie came naturally.

Far from a unified nation at the beginning of the Civil War, the towns and cities of the South were bitterly divided over secession, slavery and other issues central to the legitimization of a Confederate national government (Ayers 2003; Nolan 2000; Gallagher 1997). The portrayal of the noble and ideal South intensified prior to the onset of the Civil War as the new Confederate national government sought to justify the war and to rally a fractured white southerner base to fight against the Union Army. The June 1860 issues of the journal *Southern Literary Messenger*, for example, included a series of articles suggesting that Northerners were descendants of “Anglo-Saxon” tribes conquered by the noble French-Norman cavaliers at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 (Nolan 2000, 16).<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Confederate government engaged in a classic blood and soil argument once war was declared, suggesting that patriotic Southerners must rally to defend their homeland against the invading forces of an alien army. In doing so, they managed to convince tens of thousands of poor, Southern “everyman” southern soldiers that their military service and sacrifice was part of a defensive campaign designed to protect their own local rural heimat from the hoards of Northern invaders. This strategy denied the reality that the war actually served to protect the institution of slavery for wealthy Southern landowners, an oppressive system that benefited poor whites relatively little. Indeed, if the Confederate government attempted to sell the war as a conflict to save the slave system, it is doubtful that they would

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<sup>18</sup> This idea has since been altered by the historians and intellectuals of the present-day League of the South to suggest that Southerners were “Celtic” peoples, exploited by English/Anglo-Saxon forces just as other Celtic peoples (Irish, Scottish, and Welsh) had been historically.

have likely engendered the nationalist enthusiasm needed to convince working class soldiers to enlist and possibly die for the Southern cause.

Not all of the members of the new Southern army, however, required convincing of the merits of secession and the legitimacy of the Southern cause. Gallagher (1997, 96) contends that a core group of young slave-owning Confederate soldiers, many of them from the Commonwealth of Virginia and graduates of the University of Virginia, were amongst the most ardent early Confederate nationalists.<sup>19</sup> Gallagher's study *The Confederate War* (1997) provides one of the only thorough scholarly examinations of Confederate nationalism, suggesting that Southerners did indeed come to understand the Confederacy as a particular nation both before the war and during the waging of the conflict itself. He notes that this particular group of young Southerners participated in a series of university lectures and debates concerning Southern identity in the years prior to the war, including extended discussions over the falsehoods present in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ardent defenses of the slave system, and calls for Virginia to join in secession in 1861 (Gallagher 1997, 98-111).

Many of these young men volunteered for the new Confederate army, where their letters and correspondences during the war suggest the majority of these officers understood themselves to be fighting, and in many cases dying, for this fledgling Confederate nation. During the war years of 1861-1865, the Confederacy relied primarily upon its military leaders to engender the strong feelings of national identity necessary to mount a substantial war effort. Military leaders such as Robert E. Lee came to embody the Confederate national spirit, rallying both soldiers and Confederate citizens to fight for the new Confederate nation. Gallagher notes that, "Testimony [given by soldiers] from April and May 1865 leaves no doubt that when Lee surrendered his army, many Confederates deeply mourned the death of their four-year republic" (Gallagher 1997, 64).

In claiming the presence of a distinct and viable Confederate nationalism, Gallagher goes against the established claim typically made by leading neo-Confederate historians that the Confederacy- and indeed the entire American South- were never truly united by a prevailing nationalist discourse before or during the war period.<sup>20</sup> Stamp (1980, 255-256), for example, claims that, "After Appomattox the myth of southern nationalism died,

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<sup>19</sup> Gallagher (1997, 98) notes that 44% of Lee's officers attended university in Virginia and continued to live in the state following graduation.

<sup>20</sup> Contemporary Civil War scholars that hold this view include Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, William Still, Kenneth Stampp, and Alan Nolan.

remarkably soon.” The suggestion that the Confederacy never truly engendered a powerful sense of nationalism also served as an excuse for many Lost Cause influenced Southern historians to explain why the South lost the war. As Gallagher (1997, 71) notes:

Too often historians identify an absence of nationalism as both cause and symptom of Confederate failure. The Confederacy lost because its people never developed a true sense of nationalism; if they had their struggle would have been determined enough to achieve independence....

Confederates by the thousands from all classes exhibited a strong identification with their country and ended the war still firmly committed to the idea of an independent southern nation....although these people finally accepted defeat because Union armies had overrun much of their territory and compelled major southern military forces to surrender, that acceptance should not be confused with the absence of a Confederate identity.

### *Genesis of a Myth*

Once the war ended, promoters of the Lost Cause myth sought to tap into the lasting remnants of Confederate nationalism in an effort to both defend the actions and explain the defeat of the South during the war, as well as to develop and maintain a distinct and separate cultural identity separate from the North. This original version of the Lost Cause myth ran counter to the emerging dominant nationalist memory of the war in the Northern states, a set of discourses which saw the war as a “trial by fire” which ended the horrible practice of slavery and will eventually lead to a stronger and truly unified nation. To support the Lost Cause initially was to reject what Neff (2005) refers to as “the Northern cause victorious.” Neff (2005, 7) contends that the newly-emerging Lost Cause myth allowed “Southerners to warm themselves at the banked embers of a waning nationalist fire.”

The themes of the original and more defiant Lost Cause myth remained embedded in Southern memory, including the preoccupation with honor, valor, heroism and the nobility of the “Southern cause” (Foster 1987). As suggested in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, scholars trace the origins of the Lost Cause myth to a series of post-war books and lectures that sought primarily to both justify and romanticize the Confederate cause and to sanctify certain Confederate military heroes such as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. As Foster (1987) indicates, the most significant of the earliest Lost Cause authors were from Virginia, as a result of a group of Virginians gaining organizational control of the Southern Historical Society in 1869. These early Lost Cause “ghost dancers”-

to use Foster's language- sought somewhat paradoxically to justify and glorify the Confederate cause, but also to claim that Virginia had been dragged into the war against its will. In doing so, this argument removed Virginia from the culpability of actually beginning the conflict (Foster 1987).<sup>21</sup> These authors and orators also contributed to Virginia's dominance in matters of Civil War military history, as the battles of the "Eastern Theater" of the Civil War, most of which were located in Virginia, became the primary geographic area of focus for Civil War military scholarship.<sup>22</sup>

Lost Cause writer Edward Pollard, whose book *The Lost Cause* (1866) serves as one of the founding texts for the movement, noted the importance of the continuing a "war of ideas" against the North to replace the military struggle. This was the beginnings of a protracted culture war in the South, a call for the "Southern nation" to "cultivate her superiority as a people; to maintain her old schools of literature and scholarship; to assert, in the forms of thought, and in the style of her manners, her peculiar civilization" (quoted in Schviesbusch 2001, 59). The battlefields of this new culture war in the South would be multi-faceted and include school classrooms, local cinema houses, and libraries, all of which would later prove to be ideal spaces for the dissemination of Lost Cause discourse. As noted by Wilson (1980, 1), "The dream of a separate Southern identity did not die in 1865... The cultural dream replaced the political dream; the South's kingdom was to be of culture, not of politics." It is this "cultural kingdom"- one built on the tenets of Southern Baptist conservatism, Lost Cause memory, and Jacksonian nationalism and militarism- that the proponents of the so-called Southern way of life eventually succeeded in extending well beyond the borders of the Confederacy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is a process that both Applebome (1996) and Phillips (2006) refer to as the "Southernization" of United States culture and politics.

The Southern "victory" during this extended national culture war was waged on a variety of social and political fronts. Religion, for example, played a critical role in this new culture war over the meaning of the Civil War past and the vindication of Southern values and identity. As Goldfield (2002, 77) suggests, "History and religion have reinforced each

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<sup>21</sup> I'm using Foster's phrasing of ghost dancers here. Foster suggests the most prominent figures in the Virginia school of the Lost Cause to be Edward Pollard, Jubal Early, Albert Bledsoe, Robert L. Dabney, and Dabney H. Maury.

<sup>22</sup> This is a trend that in Civil War scholarship that has continued into the present day, as the battles and figures of the "Western Theater" still tend to be undervalued in comparison to the battles that took place in and around Virginia.

other for so long in the South that white Southerners have attained a comfort zone with respect to evangelical Christianity.” Hague and Sebesta (2002) assert that evangelical Southern ministers during the Civil War framed the conflict using binary, crusader discourse, preaching to their parishioners that the conflict was a holy war waged between the godless, heretic North and the holy forces of true Southern evangelical Christianity. After the war, many of these same ministers used the pulpit to promote Lost Cause mythology. In his study of the early Lost Cause myth entitled *Baptized in Blood* (1980), Wilson argues that the Lost Cause is best understood as a series of quasi-religious cultural rituals designed to celebrate both the glories of the Southern past and to promote Southern traditions and ways of life. The Lost Cause became what Wilson (1980) terms a particular “civil religion,” a series of cultural rituals where memories of the past were tied to Southern evangelical Protestantism- predominantly Southern Baptist- through theology, ritual, and fiery speeches from the pulpit by pro-Confederate clergymen.

Many of the cultural rituals of Confederate memory took on a sacred quality, as local heritage groups saw their own particular memorial activities as “holy” and sanctioned by God. As argued by Stowell (quoted in Phillips 2006, 132), “The primary duty of Southern ministers and editors was to convince themselves and their congregations that God had not deserted the South.” In doing so, ministers gave sermons that tied the Confederate cause to God, claiming the Civil War to be a religious trial that the South must overcome in during its post-war reconstructive quest towards becoming an agrarian, evangelical Christian paradise and to vindicate the Southern way of life (Phillips 2006). As Phillips (2006, 130) notes:

Southern clergymen routinely sermonized that God had chastened his beloved South between 1861 and 1865 but had never abandoned it. Thus, when the last Yankee troops withdrew from the South in 1877, in the wake of considerable Northern disenchantment, God was proclaimed to have kept faith with a South that had kept the covenant.

During the post-war period, the leaders and preachers of Southern evangelical Christian denominations were not content to merely lecture their congregations on the Lost Cause and heroic Southern memory. These sects, particularly the Southern Baptist convention, sought to expand their reach and power beyond the borders of the former Confederacy. The post-war membership in Southern churches went up dramatically, as white Southerners returned to the pulpit seeking answers and deliverance from their wartime

destruction.<sup>23</sup> The Southern Baptist church, in particular, grew significantly after the war and became the largest and most powerful denomination throughout the South, eventually extending its influence to the Plains states and the Mountain West. With the increase in membership, the power of evangelical, white Christianity grew in the South to the extent that Phillips argues that the ministers of Southern Baptist churches became “leading cultural figures throughout the South” (Phillips 2006, 152). Phillips (2006, 156) notes that Baptist congregations served as “church[es] of Southern memory,” spaces where Lost Cause memory and the fundamentalist cultural values of evangelical Christianity could be disseminated across the states of a new, “greater South.”

The Christian church was only one of the many cultural spaces and practices crucial to the dissemination of Lost Cause mythology throughout the post-war South. Fahs (2001; 2004) notes the significance, for example, of popular literature in the construction of a particular pro-Confederate version of Civil War memory in the region. Though popular children’s books from the 1880’s and 1890’s often included themes of national Reconciliation and reunification embedded within their fictional tales, Southern adolescent Civil War fiction also served to reinforce long standing Lost Cause themes of white supremacy and Southern military masculinity (Fahs 2004). In the realm of non-fiction, she details how even some Northern authors, in the post-war explosion of wartime memoirs, chose to explain their own memories of the war within a Lost Cause frame of reference. One such author, a woman from Indianapolis named Annie Nellis, aligned her memoir with the themes of the Lost Cause so that she could market the book to a Southern audience (Fahs 2004, 310). This decision proved to be a profitable one, as she sold over fifty copies of her memoir within the first two weeks of its publishing.

Another cultural arena where Confederate heritage activists sought to influence young Southern minds was within the halls of public education. Newly-formed heritage organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the United Veterans of the Confederacy (UCV) participated in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century campaigns to eradicate “false history” from Southern schools (Brundage 2005). As noted by Brundage (2005, 46), UDC member Mrs. W.C.H. Merchant told an audience at a 1904 UDC gathering

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<sup>23</sup> As Phillips (2006, 151) notes, these churches summarily excluded African-American members from their congregation, marking the church as one early and powerful cultural space of segregation during the Jim Crow Era South.

that “owing to the efforts and influence of the United Daughters, every Southern state had adopted textbooks sympathetic to the Lost Cause.” Throughout the South, these activists encouraged Southern schools to adopt textbooks which presented the Old South and the Confederacy through a nationalist framework embedded in Lost Cause mythology. One popular text of the time entitled *The Southern States of the American Union* (1895), written by a leading Southern educator named Jabez Curry, suggested that the South was a region “rich in patriotism, in intellectual force, in civil and military achievements, in heroism, in honorable and sagacious statesmanship” (quoted in McPherson 2004, 69). Similarly, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) distributed a catechism on the history of the Confederate States, published in 1934, to Southern churches and civic leagues. The pamphlet includes questions and answers to various Civil War questions for children to memorize and recite to their teachers. For example, one excerpt reads (West 1934, 11-12):

Q: Was it disloyal for General Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, and others to resign from the United States army?

A: NO! Because the Constitution of the United States provided for a Union of independent and self-governed states and a citizen’s first duty was to his state. Secession was a legal right....

Q: How were slaves treated [in the South]?

A: With great kindness and care in nearly all cases, a cruel master being rare, and lost the respect of his neighbors if he treated his slaves badly. Self-interest would have prompted a good treatment if a higher feeling of humanity had not.

Q: What was the feeling of the slaves towards their masters?

A: They were faithful and devoted and were always willing and ready to serve them....[during the war itself] they nobly protected and cared for the wives and children of soldiers in the field....though often prompted by the enemies of the South to burn and plunder the homes of their masters, they were always true and loyal.



Figure 3.1

Hero Wall at UDC Museum

The Hero Wall at the UDC Warren Rifles Confederate Museum in Front Royal, VA. The wall features pictures of the great heroes of the Lost Cause including Davis, Lee, Stuart, and Stonewall Jackson (Bohland).

It is the members of newly-formed women's Confederate heritage groups, such as those that published and distributed this above catechism, who proved to be perhaps the most significant single force in the circulation of Lost Cause mythology throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. White Southern women's memorial groups, in particular the UDC, became according to Mills (2003, xvi) "the most important keepers of war memory" throughout the Southern states. Founded in 1895 as a merger of several ladies auxiliary memorial organizations, the mostly wealthy and all-white women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy proved to be perhaps the most important organization in maintaining and disseminating Lost Cause mythology and Confederate history throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cox 2003). Leaders of the UDC such as Anna Davenport Raines and Mildred Lewis Rutherford proved to be particularly important in rallying Southern women to the cause of Southern memory. Rutherford, a long serving historian of the UDC, actually published a series of pamphlets articulating the Lost Cause tradition to a "new generation" of Confederates in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cox 2003; Blight 2001; Gulley 1993). According to Cobb (2005, 101):

By the end of the nineteenth century, groups like the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy measured the 'truth' by how well it squared with the basic tenets of the Lost Cause... Recognizing the importance of keeping the Lost Cause alive in the minds of white Southerners, Mary Singleton Slack reminded her UDC compatriots that "thought is power" and

declared that the greatest monument the UDC could erect would be a “thought monument” in the “pulsing hearts and active brains” of the South’s white youth.



Figure 3.2

Graveyard at St. Helena’s Episcopal Church

The typical small Confederate graveyard on the site of St. Helena’s Episcopal Church in Beaufort, SC. Graves of Confederate veterans have new Confederate flags planted in front of them and are tended to with regularity by members of the local UDC chapter (Bohland).

In addition to pressuring local school boards to adopt pro-Southern textbooks, the women of the UDC tended the graves of the Confederate fallen, raised funds for the erection of monuments, Southern crosses of honor, and statues to Confederate soldiers. UDC women also sponsored the publication of historical literature dedicated to the memory of the Confederate cause and opened community museums filled with Confederate war artifacts<sup>24</sup> The collection of essays in Mills and Simpson (2003, eds.) examines a series of Lost Cause oriented monuments and gravestones throughout the South. The majority of Confederate monuments and statues, around 60% of all Confederate monuments according to Shackel (2003, 80), were built between 1880-1910 partially with funds provided by local UDC chapters and other ladies heritage associations. Though women played a key role in the process of Lost Cause remembrance, only a select few of the monuments actually included images of Southern women. The few women’s Civil War monuments that do exist typically portray the Southern woman as the “defender of the home-front,” as the ideal mother that kept both the household running during the war and trained her sons to fight

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<sup>24</sup> I critically examine one of these UDC museums in Chapter Six of the dissertation.

for their honor in battle (Mills 2003, xxi). According to Cox (2003, 1), these women participated in memorial activities:

Not simply to pay homage to the Confederate dead. Rather, UDC members aspired to transform military defeat into a political and cultural victory, where states' rights and white supremacy remained intact. By preserving and transmitting these ideals through what I call "Confederate culture," UDC members believed they could vindicate their Confederate ancestors.

In the realm of Southern politics, Lost Cause memorial rituals served to reinforce regional hostilities directed against Northern occupation during the period of Reconstruction following the end of the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> Blair (2004) argues that Confederate commemorative activities gave local officials a near-constant platform to speak out and organize resistance against perceived Yankee interference in the governance of the post-war South, including the rejection of Civil Rights for the newly-freed African-American community and acts of racist intimidation carried out by new hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>26</sup> Rather than facilitate a re-inclusion back into the American nationalist weft, these memorial ceremonies and commemorations actually concentrated and directed white Southern post-war anger, defiance, and hostility (Blair 2004; Neff 2005). Neff (2005, 6-7) further contends that, "To commemorate the dead was to recall and honor the men themselves, the cause they championed, and especially the relationships between the dead, their cause, and the living." As surviving Confederate soldiers began to die of old age in the decades after the war, communities throughout the South held near-constant commemorations of their Confederate dead. Whenever particular Confederate heroes such as Lee or Davis passed away during the post-war period, they became near instant nationalist martyrs and their burials served as large-scale rallies for the Lost Cause legend and politicians espousing anti-Reconstruction platforms (Foster 1987; Nolan 1991; Neff 2005).

The most ornate and lavish example of Confederate monumentality is Richmond's Monument Avenue, a series of sacred statues depicting the pantheon of Lost Cause heroes-

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<sup>25</sup> In addition to Mills and Simpson's (2003) collection, exemplary work on Confederate monuments and memorials include Stephan Davis (1982), Foster (1987), Winberry (1983), Savage (1994; 1999), Essex (2002), Leib (2002), and Widener (1982).

<sup>26</sup> One of the figures most associated with the organization and leadership of the early Ku Klux Klan was the Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest remains a hero of the modern neo-Confederate movement and a number of small heritage organizations throughout the South are united under his name.

Lee, Maury, Jackson, Stuart and Davis (R. Wilson 2003; Leib 2002)<sup>27</sup> The UDC controlled the planning and construction of the “Confederate Mt. Rushmore,” the giant stone carving of Confederate heroes at Stone Mountain, Georgia (Brundage 2005; Essex 2002). More banal, but no less important, examples of Confederate monuments can be found within many Southern county seats and small towns. These monuments honor the heroic sacrifices made by the fallen dead from a particular county or region, tying each small community of the South to the larger nationalist project of war and Southern resistance (Savage 1999; Currey 2003). Indeed, the vast majority of the thousands of local Confederate memorial monuments erected in the American South honor the masculine military heroes of the conflict, most notably the bronzed image of the anonymous, “everyman” white Southern soldier (Savage 1999).<sup>28</sup> These monuments and memorials established a permanent legacy for the Confederacy throughout the South and are somewhat ubiquitous features of the contemporary Southern cultural landscape.



Figure 3.3

Confederate “Everyman” soldier statue

In front of the Old Court House Museum in Winchester, VA (Bohland).

<sup>27</sup> Other examples of grand Southern monuments and memorials include Stone Mountain, Georgia, Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, and the John C. Calhoun Monument in Charleston, SC.

<sup>28</sup> Shackel (2003, 80) estimates that nearly 85% of all Confederate soldier statues in the United States fall into the category of the everyman soldier monument. The popularity of the everyman soldier statue later extended to monuments honoring the soldiers of both the Spanish-American War (The “Hiker” statues) and World War I (“Doughboys”). Statues featuring these images in bronze can be found in towns throughout the United States.

Even states that were not actually part of the Confederacy or in even existence during the war, such as Montana and Washington, became sites for Confederate monument dedication. Ayers (2005, 60) notes that, “Confederate symbolism has spread to places that were staunchly Unionist in the Civil War itself,” including the mountain counties of the South and Union border states such as Kentucky, Missouri, West Virginia, and Maryland. The Commonwealth of Kentucky, a border state that permitted slavery and sent 90,000 men to fight for the Union Army as opposed to 35,000 for the Confederacy, contains 72 monuments to the Confederacy and only two for the Union (Loewen 2002). These statues and monuments mark these border-states, states that never seceded from the Union, as Confederate memorial spaces and Confederate territory. These sites also serve as important mnemonic sites for neo-Confederate memory today, as the majority of modern Confederate memorial ceremonies take place at these local sites. As Savage (1999, 7) notes, “The [Southern] public monument is not merely rhetorical space where people debated image and symbol, but was also a real physical space where publics could gather and define themselves at ceremonies and rallies.” Horowitz’s (1998, 100-10) contemporary study of the South, for example, documents a Confederate monument in Todd County, Kentucky. The monument, a 351 foot obelisk shaped like the Washington monument, honors the birthplace of Confederate president Jefferson Davis.<sup>29</sup> The monument serves in the present day as a site for an annual “Miss Confederacy” pageant, held annually on the anniversary of Jefferson Davis’ birthday.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the monument building women of the UDC increasingly saw themselves as protectors of a fading Confederate memory. Partially as a result of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century American nationalism which accompanied America’s entry in the Spanish-American War, the UDC feared that the divisive elements of Confederate memory of the Civil War were dying out. Additionally, the deaths of many former Confederates and radical Lost Cause activists left pro-Confederate advocates with fewer heroes to “rally the troops” as they had during the first few decades after the war. It was soon left to the UDC and other smaller heritage organizations to keep the discourses of the

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<sup>29</sup> This monument “claims” Davis for Todd County, even though the county did not exist at the time he was born and there is conflicting evidence on where in Kentucky Davis was actually born. Davis only spent two years of his life in Kentucky and never actually considered himself a Kentuckian.

once-divisive Lost Cause alive against a new “enemy”: the emerging dominant nationalist meta-narrative of reconciliation. As mentioned previously, the UDC was instrumental in pressuring local school boards to adopt pro-Confederate textbooks and sponsoring lectures by the few remaining former Confederate heroes as part of their effort to spread Lost Cause ideology throughout the South. In the efforts to claim Confederate generals as American heroes, the UDC also sought to spread Confederate memory to states not part of the original Confederacy. Hague and Sebesta (2006), for example, detail how the UDC worked to actively claim sections of local and regional highways throughout the United States as part of their vision for a cross-country Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway. Between the years 1913 and 1944, the organization managed to effectively write the memory of the Confederacy into cultural landscapes as far away as California, Arizona, Washington, and British Columbia.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 3.4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Beaufort Plantation House</p> <p>The classic image of the “moonlights and magnolias” Old South, part of the preserved collection of planter-class homes in Beaufort, South Carolina (Bohland).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 3.5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Robert Smalls Statue</p> <p>One of the few public monuments to Civil War era African-Americans in the South, this statue in Beaufort, SC is dedicated to Robert Smalls. Smalls, a local former slave, fought for the Union during the war and later served as a representative to Congress during the Reconstruction era (Bohland).</p>
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As noted by Cobb (2005), by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the more divisive elements of the Lost Cause began to be silenced in favor of a more conciliatory narrative which facilitated Northern investment in New South industrialization and technological development. The divisive nature of the Lost Cause did not, however, truly disappear. Instead, new discursive fusions of the Lost Cause and the New South emerged which

avored overly romanticized remembrances of the Old South, the so-called “moonlight and magnolias” version of Southern memory. Within this new more reconciliatory Lost Cause myth, Southern military heroes were no longer remembered as traitors who abandoned their Union posts in favor of a Rebel army. Instead, Confederate generals like Lee and Jackson were re-imagined instead as true *American* heroes, heroic generals who served their country with distinction and are subsequently worthy of admiration from citizens in the North and the South alike.

In addition to supporting the New South utopian vision of an industrialized South, the new reconciliation version of the Lost Cause was also part of a national effort to end bitter sectional tensions resulting from Reconstruction and to ensure Southern support in new American military expansionism (Blight 2001). A key event in the construction of the new reconciliationist Lost Cause was the Compromise of 1877, when Northern Republicans agreed to end the military reconstruction of the South in exchange for agreeing to support Rutherford B. Hayes claims to the presidency following the disputed election results from 1876. As a result of this event, the South- to frame it in evangelical Christian terms- was finally redeemed of its sins and was once again fully allowed to govern itself politically and culturally (Phillips 2006, 145). Additionally, the massacre of Custer’s forces during that same year at the hands of Sioux Warriors in the American West highlighted the need for the United States to shore up its national base in order to move united against a new common Indian threat.<sup>30</sup>

It must be noted that the end result of this new sectional reconciliation was the abandonment of the African-American population of the South by the United States government, as the end of military reconstruction left black Southerners at the mercy of Southern race codes, racist lynch mobs, and segregation enforced by Jim Crow laws. In reconciling with the South through a new “collective victory” meta-narrative version of the Lost Cause, the Northern states abandoned their commitment to the African-American community in the American South for over seventy years (Blight 2001). This abandonment ensured the hegemony of white elites in Southern governance for the same time period, necessitating a Civil Rights movement almost one-hundred years later. Kelly (2004, 181)

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<sup>30</sup> The next chapter of the dissertation notes how this theme of Northern and Southern men coming together in the American West in a spirit of reconciliation to fight against the threat of the Native American is seen in American cinema, particular in the so-called “Civil War Westerns” of the 1950’s and 1960’s.

argues that during the key presidential election of 1896, the former Union general and Republican candidate William McKinley “crafted an electoral strategy that emphasized a renewed nationalism based on sectional reconciliation.” Once elected, McKinley made an address before the Georgia Legislature in 1898 recommending that the tending of Confederate graves and cemeteries should fall under the care of the national government (Blair 2004). The reconciliatory themes advocated by McKinley certainly had much to do with his imperialist foreign policy goals and the eventual waging of the Spanish American War. Such military actions required national consensus and the military prowess offered by the “Jacksonian” South in order to ensure an imperial victory for the fledgling new American Empire (Mead 2002).

The new dominant reconciliation memory of the Civil War combined “the mystic honor of the Lost Cause” with a nationalist celebration of new American power and industrialism to claim honor and nobility for the men on both sides, all unified under the banner of white supremacy (Blight 2001, 389). In the language of the reconciliation meta-narrative, the same quarreling “brothers” that fought so fiercely during the war would come together as one after the war to reunite for the good of the nation.<sup>31</sup> Veterans from both armies met between 1911-1915 on Civil War battlefield sites, for example, to celebrate the semi-centennial of the conflict, to erect war monuments at town squares throughout the country, and to reenact battles in a new spirit of national reconciliation.<sup>32</sup> Veterans from both armies joined with heritage organizations to ensure that major battlefield sites be preserved from development. Conspicuously absent from the new unified and dominant nationalist meta-narrative of the conflict was the framing of the Civil War as a fight for African-American equality and justice. Indeed, the African-American experience before and during the Civil War faded into relative obscurity and isolation, leaving the post-war South to emerge by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century “with a kind of victory in the long struggle for over Civil War memory” (Blight 2001, 397).

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<sup>31</sup> The reconciliation meta-narrative gave rise to a new way of framing the war, as a “brother against brother” conflict. Indeed, many fictional Civil War stories and non-fiction documentaries continue to frame the Civil War using this thematic script.

<sup>32</sup> Despite the rhetoric of reconciliation from both sides, Weeks (2002) provides accounts that many of these post-war meetings-including the later 20<sup>th</sup> century meetings-resulted in some rather contentious disputes between Southern and Northern veterans during their annual meetings in Gettysburg. This suggests that the master narrative of Reconciliation could not wholly contain the bitter sectional divisions from the Civil War era.

Rendered almost entirely invisible by the union between the Lost Cause and the “Cause Victorious” is the story of African-American oppression and slavery during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are relatively few memorials, even in the Northern states, dedicated to African-Americans from the Civil War era throughout the United States. In the South, the UDC did attempt in 1922 to raise funds to erect a statue to the faithful, female slaves of the south (McElya 2003). Following the Old South myth of the “happy slave,” this idea eventually culminated in a movement for a “National Mammy Memorial” to be dedicated in Washington, D.C., based primarily upon a prevalent racist cultural image of the time period of the faithful and nurturing black nanny (McElya 2003, 208).<sup>33</sup> Despite passing funding status from the United States Senate in 1923, the statue was ultimately never erected, primarily due to a public outcry in the North against it. Of those relatively few monuments dedicated to Civil War era African-Americans in the North, a large percentage of these memorials and statues feature stereotypically racist representations of African-American bodies, most of who are pictured kneeling in deference to white political figures—typically heroic emancipators such as Lincoln or William Lloyd Garrison (Savage 1999). These monuments, however, typically celebrate the actions of white abolitionists and anti-slavery advocates more than honoring African-American memory and resistance.

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<sup>33</sup> The image of the mammy continued to be a powerful and omnipresent symbol of the South well into the twentieth century, culminating in the character of Mammy in the wildly successful 1939 film version of Margaret Mitchell’s novel *Gone With the Wind*.

*Civil War Memory and the Lost Cause after the Semi-Centennial*

Though absorbed somewhat by the dominant master narrative of national reconciliation, the divisive sectional discourses of Lost Cause orthodoxy did not vanish from Southern culture and memory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This original and more cacophonous version of the Lost Cause remained a powerful discursive legend that could be tapped into and (re)altered by disgruntled and alienated Southerners during particular moments of national and regional discontent. Schivelbusch (2001) argues, for example, that the failure of “New South” ideologies of industrialization, modernization and progress to create a better life for the majority of working-class white Southerners served to reinvigorate Lost Cause and Old South mythology during the 1920’s and 1930’s. A new updated 20<sup>th</sup> century version of the Lost Cause emerged which once again (re)imagined the pre-Civil War Old South as an idyllic, agrarian paradise, a “counter-America [which] offered both a criticism of the status quo and a preview of a better world” (Schivelbusch 2001, 91).



Figure 3.6

Gone With the Wind Paintings

Paintings of the romantic heroes of *Gone with the Wind*, the ultimate “moonlight and magnolias” escapist story. Salem Museum, Spring 2005 (Bohland).

Escapist literature set on Southern slave plantations, similar to many novels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, became popular cultural fantasies throughout the South, idyllic remembrances of a “Golden Age” where masculine honor and gentility dominated Southern society (Fahs 2004). The most popular of these escapist fantasies, Margaret Mitchell’s epic *Gone with the Wind*, became a massive international hit both as a book and as a Hollywood film. Like *Birth of a Nation* before it, *Gone with the Wind* disseminated racist Lost Cause and

Old South mythology to a worldwide audience through the mass medium of celluloid fantasy.<sup>34</sup> The dominant cultural memory of the Civil War continued to possess a pro-Southern perspective as it had since the ill-fated Compromise of 1877.

As was the case throughout all of American society, the period of the 1960's proved to be a crucial and turbulent decade in framing how Americans understood the meaning of the Civil War. The decade was the centennial of the waging of the Civil War itself, leading to a whole series of reenactments, public lectures, films, and books focused on the legacy of the Civil War within the United States. These cultural events proved to be ideal settings for revisiting and reinterpreting the dominant memory of the conflict, particularly as African-Americans throughout the American South now challenged white racist hegemony as part of the Civil Rights Movement. As Civil Rights activists faced violence and intimidation throughout the American South, the supposed unity and justice for all Americans that was achieved as a result of the Civil War was proved fallacious. Interest in African-American memories of the conflict, silenced and rendered invisible for almost one-hundred years, now became part of a greater revisionist and inclusive effort to incorporate emancipation into the dominant meta-narrative of the conflict. As Weiner (2004, 237) notes:

What had been lost was the emancipationist vision of the war rooted in African Americans' memories of their own fight for freedom, in the politics of radical Reconstruction, and more generally in the notion that the war, by winning citizenship and constitutional equality for blacks, had reinvented the republic and advanced democracy.

In contrast, white Southern political leaders and racist organizations used the centennial to organize opposition to the Civil Rights movement and the "new invasion" of Yankees. Once again, segregationists and white supremacists resurrected the divisive and racist discourses of the Lost Cause in order to combat African-American movements for equality. Remembrance ceremonies organized by the United States government's Civil War Centennial Commission resulted in bitter acts of division. The 100-year anniversary of the bombing of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, for example, included racist comments made at a segregated, all-white lunch concerning Lincoln and the black students who recently desegregated schools in Little Rock, Arkansas (Weiner 2004, 241). Reenactments became contentious events, as Southerners opposed to the Civil Rights

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<sup>34</sup> I discuss both of these films in greater detail within the next chapter of the dissertation.

movement got the chance to wave the Confederate flag, offer Rebel Yells, and fired actual bullets at simulated Northern troops in continued symbolic acts of defiance against the Yankee government. Such actions at earlier reenactments during the centennial led to a prohibition against the Rebel Yell at the Gettysburg reenactment, as organizers sought to quell any indication of a continuation of sectional disputes (Weiner 2004, 251).



Figure 3.7

Confederate Flag at House

The most controversial and public of Lost Cause symbols, the Confederate battle flag is omnipresent in many rural Southern townscapes since the 1960's. This flag flies outside of a home in rural Roanoke County (Bohland).

Perhaps the most important Lost Cause symbol of the centennial period was the reemergence of the Southern battle flag as an icon for white Southern defiance. The Confederate battle flag became omnipresent throughout the South and emerged, according to Weiner (2004, 253) as “perhaps the most important legacy today of the Civil War centennial.” Many Southern state capitals, which began flying the flags as part of the centennial celebration, never took the down after the centennial ended in 1965. The flag became the single most important and pervasive symbol of the Lost Cause in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a “potent and ambiguous” icon to be used according to Edward Ayers (2005, 60) as a “sign of [Scotch-Irish] resistance to the boss, to the North, to blacks, to liberals, to any kind of political correctness; In their eyes, the rebel flag stands for the same thing that they imagine it stood for in 1861: Leave Me the Hell Alone.”

Many African-Americans, however, perceive the flag as symbolic of something entirely different. To them, the flag is a symbol once used during the Civil War by soldiers fighting for a government that, if victorious, would have continued to enslave them. It then

reemerged as a symbol of defiance during the Civil Rights movements by racist locals and Klansmen who carried out horrific acts of violence and hatred against people of color throughout the region. As noted throughout many of the chapters of this dissertation, Southern heritage groups tend to conveniently remove or forget the association of the flag with the anti-Civil Right movement, preferring instead to claim the flag operates merely as a symbol of Southern heritage and pride. Such controversies involving the contemporary display of the Confederate flag in South Carolina, Georgia and nearly every Southern state continue to generate local disputes and regional discord in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century South.

Some of these battles over the Confederate flag, part of the continued post-Civil War culture war fought over the meaning of the Civil War for the American South, take place in highly-charged public and political arenas. Confederate heritage organizations continue to organize campaigns to protect Confederate heritage symbols, particularly the Confederate battle flag, which they claim to be a legitimate and meaningful heritage symbol to many white Southerners.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, the NAACP and other African-American organizations continue to object to the official usage of these symbols, arguing that Confederate heritage sites and symbols celebrate a past government that fought a war to keep their ancestors enslaved and was later used by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan to rally white southerners against the Civil Rights movement in the 1950's and 1960's. As Goldfield (2002, 312) states regarding the Alabama state flag, which was redesigned in the 1890's to incorporate the Stars and Bars, "For black Alabamians watching their civil rights evaporate, the connection was unmistakable. The flag confirmed the legislature's message that the state's black population was invisible and of no account."

In the realm of contemporary memory of the Civil War, much of the continued local celebrations of the Confederacy and the Old South rely upon the leadership and practices of long standing heritage groups. The UDC, for example, continues to tend to Confederate battlefields, dedicate iron crosses of honor to the Confederate dead, and sponsor conferences and educational scholarships for students publishing non-critical work on the Confederacy and its supposedly glorious past. Similarly, local chapters of the all-male Sons

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<sup>35</sup> The most publicized of these debates was in South Carolina, where the Confederate flag flew outside of the state legislative building in Columbia until only recently. It has since been moved off-site to a Confederate memorial in the same area. Similarly, the state of Georgia has been embroiled in a controversy regarding the possible removal of the Confederate "Stars and Bars" from the state flag. This issue has been a major one in the last two Georgia gubernatorial campaigns and has yet to be resolved.

of Confederate Veterans (SCV)- formed in Richmond, Virginia in 1896 as a successor to the United Confederate Veterans (UCV)- hold meetings, educational sessions, monument dedications, and reenactment events as part of a continuing effort to disseminate their own Lost Cause version of Confederate heritage.<sup>36</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center, an extremist watchdog organization based in Montgomery, Alabama, categories the SCV as a hate group based upon their unabashed usage of racist and stereotypical images and language and the contemporary leadership of the organization which included several men with ties to white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations.<sup>37</sup> For example, the Southern Poverty Law center published the contents of an email circulated within the SCV membership following the 2005 tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast states of the American South. The email labeled the African-American victims of Katrina as “vile criminals” and “pestilent vermin” that “will go on to pollute the communities [where] they’re relocated” (Potok 2005). The same Poverty Center Intelligence Report also documented recent attempts by the Memphis, TN chapter of the SCV to book a blackface minstrel group for “entertainment” at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of a statue to Nathan Bedford Forrest in the city (Southern Poverty Law Center 2005).

Beginning the early 1990’s, a newly organized pro-Confederate organization joined the UDC and SCV in perpetuating the myth of the Lost Cause throughout the American South. The League of the South, formed in 1994 by Southern paleo-conservative academics and amateur historians, advocates both Southern independence and “truth-telling” regarding Civil War history (Goldfield 2002, 302; Hague and Sebesta 2005). The League of the South is the most prominent and visible organization within the contemporary neo-Confederate movement, organized as an attempt to provide intellectual, cultural, and academic support for their Lost Cause beliefs, supposed links to Celtic identity and history, evangelical Christian doctrine, and ultra-conservative worldviews.<sup>38</sup> Like the SCV, the Southern Poverty Law Center categories the League of the South as a racist organization, highlighting both their anti-immigrant, anti-miscegenation platform as well as their public hostility to African-American Civil Rights. The League now has over thirty chapters throughout the country

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<sup>36</sup> Chapter Seven includes a discussion of one such local SCV information session held at Hollins University in 2005.

<sup>37</sup> For further discussion of the SCV and its ties to racist organizations, see Chapter 7 of the dissertation.

<sup>38</sup> Neo-Confederate organizations routinely espouse anti-immigrant and anti-homosexual platforms, as well as supporting ultra-conservative Christian ideology. Additionally, groups like the League of the South advocate Southern re-secession from the Union and the United States leaving the United Nations.

and publishes a monthly journal entitled *Southern Patriot* with articles advocating conservative and racist positions on a number of cultural, social and political topics (Roberts 1997).<sup>39</sup> As noted by Applebome (1996, 117), “*Southern Partisan* . . . is a window onto a world- the world of the Lost Cause- that now turns out to be surprisingly robust, like a false ending in a Hitchcock film.”

In addition to publishing *Southern Partisan*, the League and its neo-Confederate allies also operate an Institute for the Study of Southern History and Culture, staffed by thirty-three neo-Confederate academics, which holds summer sessions in South Carolina for teachers interested in learning “true Southern history” (Beinrich and Potok 2004). Neo-Confederates also use popular culture as a vehicle to disseminate their views. Musical bands throughout the South, for example, perform both modern and traditional “Southern white music” at heritage festivals and neo-Confederate events. Bands such as the Rebelaires, Unreconstructed, and the Free South Band perform music replete with neo-Confederate themed lyrical content. The Free South Band’s song “Don’t Mess With Dixie,” for example, includes the following lyrics:

Hey don’t mess with the boy from Dixie  
Unless you would like to feel  
A Southern raging fire  
Burning up the hills  
Hey don’t mess with the man down in Alabam’  
Or the folks in Tennessee  
Cause the people gonna band together  
And the whole world is gonna see  
A free south by the grace of God is what they’ll be.<sup>40</sup>

In their attempt to rekindle enthusiasm for Southern nationalism and Lost Cause ideology, contemporary neo-Confederates believe they are waging an ideological war against Northern and liberal interpretations of the Civil War. In one highly public example, the SCV revoked the membership of Ken Burns, the producer of the wildly popular 1990 PBS

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<sup>39</sup> Articles from *Southern Patriot* are cited and critiqued in chapters 4 and 5 of the dissertation. The journal is not available on-line and is quite difficult to obtain, except from neo-Confederate bookstores.

<sup>40</sup> The Free South Band “Don’t Mess With Dixie.” From the CD *Free South*. (Waverly, TN, CSA Records, n.d.)

documentary series *The Civil War*, following his suggestion that Robert E. Lee was responsible for more American deaths than the Japanese during the Second World War (Southern Poverty Law Center 2000). The film itself, an epic visual text very much in the tradition of the post-centennial Civil War Reconciliation and Revisionism meta-narrative, was derided by neo-Confederates as a piece of “pro-Lincoln” propaganda and for being too focused on the African-American experience. This is despite the fact that Burns’ film is highly influenced by elements of Lost Cause mythology, as illustrated by his idolization of Robert E. Lee throughout the film and his portrayal of the South as fighting a doomed struggle against impossible odds from the onset of the war (Blight 2002, 215).

Burns’ film is credited by many scholars with helping to engender another renaissance in interest in the Civil War during the 1990’s and to the present day. Both Cullen (1995) and Horowitz (1999) document one area of culture where this interest in Civil War memory has resulted in an increased interest: Civil War reenacting and living history memorialization. In addition to participating in multiple reenactments and heritage events throughout the United States, Civil War re-enactors and heritage advocates also engage in campaigns throughout the American South to preserve Civil War battlefields from the encroaching suburban development. Though preservation of the Gettysburg battlefield was never a real issue, due to its status as both a major battlefield site and the location of a famous piece of American presidential oration, hundreds of other Civil War battlefield sites were sold to private interests following the war. Contemporary organizations including the Civil War Battlefield Trust (CWBT) work with heritage groups to raise the money to buy up battlefield land under threat from modern development. The CWBT and the non-profit Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, for example, purchased nearly 300 acres of the original site of the 1864 battlefield during a period from 1989-2000. The site was subsequently declared a National Historical Site in 2002 and continues to serve as the site for semi-annual reenactment of the battle itself.



Figure 3.8

Cedar Creek Battlefield Sign

Sign on the site of the 1864 Battle of Cedar Creek soliciting donations in order to buy portions of the battlefield for preservation (Bohland).

In their zeal to protect Civil War battlefields from the encroachment of modernity, preservationists do not often consider less-visible political and cultural issues present at many battlefield sites. It is the dominant memory of the Civil War deemed worthy of preservation at battlefield sites; all other memories and events that might have occurred within the “sacred space” of the preserved battlefield site are often deemed immaterial and are subsequently erased from the landscape. In their histories of preservation at both the Manassas and Antietam battlefields, Shackel (2003) and Tempkin (2001) illustrate how preservationists tend to freeze particular moments in time, fixing and altering the entire battlefield landscape to look as though it was still 1861 for visitors to the site. In doing so, all other traces of the past at that site, including the stories of later agriculturalists and African-Americans that lived on the land following the end of the battle, are removed from the official history of the landscape.

As noted by McConnell (2004, 258) in regards to Civil War history, “Memory has a geography...it is a kind of map on which individuals and societies locate past events relative to one another.” In regards to Civil War, the cultural wars fought over Southern memory and the contested meaning of the Civil War continue into the present day, as local communities situated in the geographic spaces of the contemporary American South continue to wrestle with the legacy of the Civil War. With the influence of postmodern scholarship in the humanities and social sciences during the 1980’s, the master narratives of

Civil War memory again became open terrain for contestation and debate. As Alderman and Dwyer (2004, 55) state, “The past remains a passionately contested terrain in the American South,” meaning that particular cultural landscapes such as monuments, statues, and even roads become sites for present-day culture wars concerning the meaning of the Civil War past.<sup>41</sup> Contemporary events throughout the American South, such as the recent controversies that took place in Richmond, Virginia regarding the dedication of separate statues to Arthur Ashe and Abraham Lincoln and the controversial erection of a Nathan Bedford Forrest statue in the Civil Rights mecca of Selma, Alabama, illustrate how the differences over what the Civil War means for contemporary Americans continue to be waged in public settings throughout the American South (Horowitz 1999; Leib 2002; Dwyer 2004). In examining the Shenandoah Valley throughout this dissertation, I am researching a series of micro-level battlegrounds in this present-day culture war over memory, identity, race, and religion within the United States.

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<sup>41</sup>Within the sub-discipline of cultural geography, Owen Dwyer and Derek Alderman have published a number of articles on the contested nature of contemporary issues of heritage commemoration in the American South, including Leib’s (2004) study of Robert E. Lee River Walk in Richmond, Dwyer’s examination of Civil Rights Memorials (2000) and the Nathan Bedford Forest statue (2004), Alderman’s (2000) study of streets named after Martin Luther King, Jr., and Alderman and Dwyer’s co-authored article on Civil War and Civil Rights memory in the Southern towns of Danville, VA and Selma, AL (2004).

## Chapter Four: Reading Civil War Cinema

### *The Celluloid Civil War*

Far from innocuous and meaningless forms of entertainment, television shows and Hollywood films should be read as powerful visual texts by which the myths and legends of the past are (re)learned, imagined, disseminated, and remembered. Luke (1989) refers to this dynamic as “tele-traditionalism,” a simulated (re) imagining of the past as mediated through the filters of Hollywood dream and image makers. A great deal of my own understanding of the Civil War came from watching Civil War themed films and television shows. I can personally attest to the power of film and television in the construction of knowledge, particularly how certain dominant readings of the past are privileged within media texts. As a Civil War obsessed young man growing up in Southwest Virginia, I recall staying up past my assigned bedtime in order to watch all three nights of the Civil War mini-series *The Blue and the Gray* on CBS television in 1983. The storyline of *The Blue and the Gray* featured one of the classic Civil War tele-visual themes—the brother against brother story-line. In the series, typical of the brother against brother script, the fracturing of the extended Geiser/Hale family symbolizes the fracturing of the nation itself during the war. Following the reconciliation meta-narrative, just as the United States eventually would reconcile after the war, so too would the surviving members of the Geiser/Hale family reunite after the war in a spirit of community, nationalism, and forgiveness.

Like many Americans, I also watched every episode of Ken Burns’ *The Civil War* documentary series on PBS in 1990, a series that rekindled my own interest in the Civil War as a university undergraduate. I recall actually skipping a day of classes with my university roommate after deciding our day would somehow be better spent by watching all nine episodes of the series back to back. Burns’ style has become so ubiquitous following the release of the Civil War that many Americans forget exactly how groundbreaking the series was in terms of historical documentary filmmaking. Indeed, that particular series is credited with leading a huge national upsurge in interest in the Civil War and is still shown today during pledge drives by local PBS channels in order to lure viewers to watch and donate money.

Reflecting on the impact of these and other Civil War visual texts I viewed as a young man, I believe they influenced my own thematic readings and understandings of the war far more than any traditional Civil War text I read, including ones written by famed Civil

War historians Bruce Catton, Shelby Foote, or James McPhearson. All these television series, though very different terms of in plot, scope, quality, audience, and filmmaking technique, rely upon and reinforce many of the same tried and true meta-narrative versions of the Civil War present within American society. Apart from the brother against brother story, examples of other particular common themes present within Civil War tele-visual texts include glorifications of the super-humanlike qualities of Civil War “heroes” such as Lee and Jackson, imagining the war as a conflict of Southern honor and traditionalism against Northern modernity, and explaining the war as the crucial step in the “progress” of a powerful and enduring American nationalism.

This chapter is a critical and personal interrogation focused on the representation of mythical and glorified versions of the Civil War past present within three Hollywood films: *Shenandoah* (1965), *Sommersby* (1993), and *Gods and Generals* (2003). I have chosen these three films from the hundreds of Civil War themed films for a number of reasons. Most importantly, both of the films are tied to the Great Valley of Virginia in some way, the regional focus of this study. The Jimmy Stewart film *Shenandoah* was the first major Civil War film set in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War, though the film itself was actually shot in Oregon. *Sommersby* was shot almost entirely in and around the Valley town of Lexington, though the film itself is set in West Tennessee. *Gods and Generals* includes a number of scenes in the film set in towns and landscapes of the Valley and was actually filmed almost entirely on location within the Great Valley of Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia.

These three films are part of a long standing tele-traditional obsession of the Civil War within American cinematic and television history. Beginning with D.W. Griffith’s infamous pro-Confederate film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, there have been over 500 films set during the four years of the Civil War, making it the most heavily covered period in American cinematic history (Chadwick 2001). Several of these films became huge box-office hits during their respective time periods, as two Civil War themed films, *Gone with the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation*, both rank within the top five grossing films of all-time with revenues adjusted for inflation (Chadwick 2001, 12). Films such as *Gettysburg*, *Glory*, and *Gone with the Wind* and network television mini-series’ *Roots*, *The Blue and the Gray* and *North and South* play on cable television regularly and thus continue to be viewed by new audiences years after their initial release. A huge number of these films and television shows are now

available on DVD, including an ever-increasing amount of some of the earliest and most racially offensive silent Civil War films.<sup>42</sup>

In perhaps the ultimate expression of how the Civil War continues to interest contemporary film and television audiences, television producer Kevin Dolan has developed a Civil War themed, *Survivor* style reality-based television show tentatively entitled *Sabers and Roses* with a 2005 release planned (Starr 2005).<sup>43</sup> The project took its name from the 1862 Sabers and Roses Ball, a dance and cotillion organized by Confederate general J.E.B. Stuart and held prior to the Battle of Sharpsburg. While interviewed on the Jay Leno Show about the project, Dolan described it as a mix between “true history and real rock and roll” (Emmitsburg Historical Society 2004). The show was to be hosted by Dolan’s “alter ego” character Johnny Reb and was filmed on locations in Texas, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Dolan brought in Civil War obsessed re-enactors to act as contestants in a weekly “battle” between Union and Confederate teams in an individual competition for one million dollars in gold. Each contestant undergoes a series of Civil War themed challenges while staying “in character.” Examples of some of the characters filmed include an Irish immigrant “just off the boat” and a female Southern plantation owner that falls in love with a Yankee soldier (Von Dobenek 2004). In describing the project, Dolan states:

The hook here is that the participants experience what it was like to live during the Civil War...but this isn't Manor House...It's Rebel versus Yankee in an intense competition of cannon fire, sword play, musket skills, horseback riding, ballroom dancing and 19<sup>th</sup> century etiquette, forced marches, scarce food and more combined with controversial issues such as states rights and slavery. I wanted to have a casting call in Gettysburg because of its enormous popularity with Civil War buffs and its proximity to the site of the Sabers & Roses ball (Emmitsburg Historical Society 2004).

Despite it never being released, the concept and filming of *Sabers and Roses* is ultimately just one example of larger contemporary trend towards a proliferation of media-oriented forms of history and living history simulations. A large number of traditionally-oriented historians, however, continue to eschew cultural studies work, relying primarily

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<sup>42</sup> Nearly all of D.W. Griffith and Thomas Ince's Civil War films and shorts are now available on DVD. Both directors made films replete with pro-Confederate, pro-Southern themes, including horrific racial representations of African-Americans.

<sup>43</sup> After having shot over one hundred hours of footage, Dolan chose to not release the film. According to an article in the *Gettysburg Evening Sun*, he now hosts a Civil War themed rock and roll radio show with plans to release a documentary based on his already filmed television footage. See Starr (2005).

upon more “legitimate” scholarly primary sources such as diaries, letters, and books. In ignoring or devaluing non-traditional forms of historical knowledge, scholars may indeed be guilty of some degree of academic and intellectual snobbery. Gramsci, for example, suggested that popular, folkloric forms of history are often too fractured and decentralized to be deemed acceptable for traditional intellectual examination and analysis (Landy 1996, 159). Indeed, film and television representations of the past are often dismissed by historians as mere entertainment or labeled simply as “bad history” (Chadwick 2001).

Rather than treating films with academic contempt and suspicion, my reading of films in this chapter follows Chadwick’s (2001, 12) suggestion that, “Americans have always seen films as their nation’s story.” Film texts are powerful cinematic windows that allow scholars to examine how societies continue to remember and ultimately utilize the past in highly-charged, political ways. As part of my reading of Civil War cinema this chapter, I broadly examine the impulse to remember the past in certain ways at certain times. Historical films are products of the contemporary eras in which they were produced and are subject to the particular cultural, moral, and political codes present within society at that time. They can never actually allow the audience a true window into the events of the past, only a highly interpretive and selective one. The imagining and representation of the Civil War past in the epic film *Birth of a Nation*, for example, reflects the normative racism present in American society during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its images and storyline cannot be divorced from the pro-Southern viewpoint of the director D.W. Griffith or from the Jim Crow era racism present in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. In a similar vein, it is difficult to imagine the same film being produced and circulated within a contemporary culture more sensitive overall to such overt visual representations of prejudice and racism. A critical reading of cinema texts must therefore include an examination of the film that acknowledges the greater socio-political climate in which it was produced.

Foucault’s power/knowledge nexus provides a particularly useful way of for scholars to read and encode the messages embedded in historical cinema and television texts. This approach emphasizes the critical role that American cinema plays in disseminating the meanings of past events to the public, in particular national wars and violent conflicts where thousands of people lost their lives in defense of the nation. As Dodds (2000, 74) contends, “In the United States it was often noted that wars tended to be fought twice: first on the battlefield and then on celluloid.” Given the proliferation and consumption of mass media

texts within contemporary society and the popularity of living history activities as instructive devices, it can be argued that a majority of Americans learn history from films they view than they do from history books. As Chadwick (2001, 12) states:

Movies are legitimate historical documents, to be studied and analyzed, just as diaries and letters were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century...books go out of print; they are consigned to dusty library shelves or to cartons for Saturday afternoon garage sales. Magazines wind up in stacks bundled up with thick brown cord and tossed in recycling bins. Films not only remain through the years but, in an American culture that consumes them, are aired again and again on television. Americans may be more inclined to watch than to read.

The American past, as represented through contemporary tele-visual texts, serves as a template for the (re)articulation and (re)production of long-lasting American myths, including the Lost Cause version of the Civil War. As Luke (1989, 71-72) argues, American “tele-traditionalism” involves an integration of particular American myths into contemporary Hollywood visual representations of history. Hollywood filmmakers continue to churn out contemporary films that circulate many of the same mythologized themes of American history present within earlier cinema texts. This suggests that though *Birth of a Nation* could not be produced or released in its original form today, a contemporary film like *Gods and Generals* or *Sommersby* may actually be circulating many of the same thematic elements of an earlier version of the Lost Cause myth found in more blatantly racist Civil War epics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These contemporary films simply repackage a more sanitized and updated version of the original Lost Cause myth to suit the socio-political expectations and cultural norms of contemporary audiences.

Informed by the critical work of Nietzsche, I am particularly interested in analyzing how the monumental myths of the Civil War past continue to be both reinforced and re-imagined by the narrative plots and structure of these three contemporary films. An example of monumental forms of history within cinema and tele-visual media texts is the usage of melodrama as a narrative device. Melodrama relies upon clichéd versions of history and trauma, utilizing cinematic techniques such as flashbacks and re-enactments in order to create operatic like tensions for the viewer. The historical melodrama often suggests that the nation is in crisis and is replete with sweeping stories emphasizing violence, power, and personal sacrifice. The struggle of the nation is reflected in the personal struggle of the characters on the screen, as individual characters strive to “do their duty” against all odds

(Landy 1996, 17). Melodramas also tend to rely upon the spectacle and the fantastic, employing stirring music during crucial moments of the film to heighten the tension and action on-screen.

Finally, reading Civil War cinema involves encoding and decoding representations and problematics of race, class, religion, and gender embedded within these three films. Following Kellner's (2003, 27) model for cultural studies work discussed in the methods section of this dissertation, I engage in a "diagnostic critique" of mass media texts in an attempt to engage how particular dominant discourses of race, religion, gender, class, and sexuality become circulated and normalized within society. A Civil War film like *Gone with the Wind*, for example, naturalizes the enslavement of African-Americans and presents rather antiquated and conservative notions of the role of women within Southern society. The diagnostic approach to cultural studies treats films as powerful sources of power/knowledge worthy of critical engagement and assessment and analyzes films as sites where the culture wars of the present are imagined and waged within the celluloid representations of the past. All three of the films analyzed in this chapter, for example, rely upon and perpetuate Christian evangelical themes, thereby becoming important vehicles for the transmission of conservative Christian values within contemporary society.

My ultimate aim in this chapter is a political one, a personal intervention, and an examination of the normative power of the Civil War cinema. All three films examined in this chapter feature examples of melodrama, racial and gender stereotypes, and narrative elements of the Lost Cause myth. My reading of *Gods and Generals*, for example, suggests the film to be a modern Lost Cause text, one replete with many of the same mythological venerations of the Confederacy that first emerged in Virginia during the years just following the end of the Civil War. It is Civil War as melodrama, an epic tale of Confederate Christian heroes that fought for "their nation" against all odds with courage and morality. Lee and Jackson subsequently become "Hollywood heroes" within the text of this film, exemplary examples of the ideal American citizen-soldier and archetypes for contemporary evangelical Christians to emulate and look to for inspiration during the culture wars of the present.

*Shenandoah: The Great Valley as an Anti-Slavery Frontier*

Prior to the 1960's, the representation of the Civil War and the American South in cinema continued to be dominated by the legacy of two films: *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*. Spurred by a renewed commemorative interest in the Civil War as a result of celebrations held in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, filmmaker D.W. Griffith embarked on a groundbreaking cinematic project that resulted in the first Hollywood epic. The film *Birth of a Nation*, based on the Thomas Dixon novel *The Clansman*, was released during a period quite sympathetic to racist, Old South, "moonlight and magnolias" cinematic renderings. This reemergence of a new and updated Lost Cause occurred during a period of social and economic upheaval in the American South, as the failures of New South industrialization left some Southerners nostalgic for the good old days of the pre-Civil War plantation economy. As noted by Schievelbusch (2001), the Old South became re-imagined as a utopian, agrarian paradise governed by a planter class ruled by their sense of duty, honor, and evangelical Christian morality. The setting of the film portrays the Old South as a mythical utopia, a Christian paradise replete with happy slaves, benevolent slave-owners, and giant cotton plantations draped with magnolia trees. This version of the Lost Cause was less reconciliatory than the late 19<sup>th</sup> century version of the myth, reflected in Griffith's heroic portrayal of the Confederacy and the Ku Klux Klan and the demonization of Northern troops and Federal agents of Reconstruction. In Griffith's warped racist version of the Civil War past, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan defend the honor of white southern women against the uncontrollable rising hoards of newly-freed African-Americans. It is the Klan that emerges as the heroes of the film, heroic men whose acts of resistance after the war led to a new nation being born, one based on the principles of white supremacy that ultimately validates the principles fought for by the Confederate states (Dyer 1996, 167).

Despite protests from the NAACP and other fledgling African-American Civil Rights organizations, the film set box office records and was eventually screened by President Woodrow Wilson at the White House. Wilson, a racist Southern Democrat from the Shenandoah Valley town of Staunton, remains a rather curious figure in the historical memory of the Shenandoah Valley. Though he achieved international renown as a result of his Thirteen Points and the creation of the League of Nations, Wilson is nowhere near as adored and beloved a historical figure as Lee and Jackson in the Valley and throughout Virginia. Apart from the Woodrow Wilson House and Museum in Staunton, there is little in

the Valley to remind citizens and visitors of his connections to the area and he remains a somewhat peripheral figure within Valley historical memory. As president, Wilson and a pro-South Congress did little to stem the tide of racial violence against African-Americans in the Jim Crow South. One of the promoters of *Birth of a Nation*, a man named Thomas Dixon, went to graduate school with Wilson at Johns Hopkins. According to Dixon, Wilson remarked to him after watching the film that, “It is like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.” Wilson’s book *History of the American People* was also cited by Griffith and Dixon as an important historical source for the film (Chadwick 2001, 122).

The most famous cinematic glorification of the Old South and this new version of the Lost Cause myth emerged in 1939. Based on Margaret Mead’s best-selling novel, *Gone with the Wind* was one of the highest grossing films of all time, earning well over \$60 million in box office receipts (Chadwick 2001, 187).<sup>44</sup> The film’s portrayal of the “moonlight and magnolia” landscapes of the Old South appealed to a national sense of nostalgia during the tumultuous pre-World War II, Depression-era United States. *Gone with the Wind* is backlash cinema, a pro-South reactionary text that stemmed the tide of nationalist, pro-Union films of the same time period. It was also classic escapism, an epic romantic story full of gross stereotypes of African-Americans and the mythic beauty of the Old South. More than any other film, or perhaps any type of text, it influenced millions of Americans understandings of the meaning and legacy of the Civil War for Southerners. The Civil War, as presented by *Gone with the Wind*, was a noble struggle for tradition, land and survival in the South, a defensive war against the aggressive forces of Northern modernity and masculinity. It is the ultimate Lost Cause text, a heroic and monumental imagining of the Southern plantation system and its supposedly romantic and idyllic way of life.

Not surprisingly, the film spawned several copycat Old South themed films in the 1940’s and 1950’s, none of which succeeded anywhere close to the degree of *Gone with the Wind*.<sup>45</sup> The massive popularity of the film continued even into future decades and the film was re-released in theatres in both 1967 and 1976 to widespread success. The Old South themed story lines reappeared in several modern visual texts, illustrating the lasting legacy

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<sup>44</sup> Chadwick notes that this amount of money translates roughly to one billion dollars in the present economy, suggesting just how popular the film was worldwide.

<sup>45</sup> Examples of such films include *The Vanishing Virginian* (1941), *Virginia* (1961), Disney’s *Song of the South* (1946), and *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947).

and impact of the original film. The epic 1985 television mini-series *North and South*, certainly mined very similar territory as *Gone with the Wind*, with its broad sweeping views of plantation life and Southern gentility.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the sequel to the original film did not actually come until 1994, when the CBS mini-series *Scarlett* was released with much acclaim and very poor reviews. Nonetheless, the Hollywood inspired re-scripting of the Lost Cause myth present in both *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind* continues to have a strong impact on contemporary imagining and remembering of the Old South and the Civil War.

Despite the long shadow cast by both of these epic productions, not every Civil War themed film followed the “Moonlight and Magnolias” script of the Lost Cause myth. The New Deal and World War Two changed the cinematic landscape of the United States, as Hollywood films began to reflect more outwardly nationalist themes and storylines. As Chadwick (2001, 169) suggests, “The ideal of a united America to weather the Depression and perhaps war, if it came, was perpetuated throughout the 1930’s in novels, magazines, newspapers, and films.” The outward sectionalism present in Civil War films like *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind* largely disappeared in favor of a return to the reconciliation themes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century where both sides were pictured as heroic, duty bound Americans. Not surprisingly, Abraham Lincoln emerged as the central heroic figure in many of these reconciliation-themed Civil War films of the 1930’s and early 1940’s, portrayed in the tradition of what Blight calls the “Cause Victorious” (2001) as a legendary commander in chief leading the nation through a similar period of horror, dislocation, and war. Two films in particular, the Henry Fonda movie *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940), garnered both critical praise and box office success.

By the early 1950’s, the “Western” was a well established genre of both film and televisual texts. Television shows such as *Bonanza* and *Gunsmoke* were among the highest rated programs on television during the 1950’s and Hollywood produced dozens of films each year set in the American West. The typical Western plotline featured “common men” fighting for family and survival in a wild, violent, and untamed land. The depictions of Native Americans in these highly racist films and television shows was typically as wild savages that refused to adapt to European civilization and modernity. The actual culture and ways of life of these “savages” rarely appeared within Westerns, as many of these films placed Native Americans (usually whites dressed in stereotypically “Indian” dress) only long

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<sup>46</sup> I include a more detailed discussion of *North and South* in the next section of this chapter.

enough on screen to get shot and die at the hands of the “superior” white military forces (Churchill 1998, 178).

There had been only a few Civil War oriented films during the 1940’s and early 1950’s, a period dominated both by Westerns and World War II films that depicted classic “good versus evil” storylines (Chadwick 2001, 234). Due to the massive popularity of the Western, filmmakers interested in approaching Civil War themed narratives began to utilize now-standard Western style landscapes, storylines, and characterizations in their films.<sup>47</sup> These “Civil War Westerns” typically are set in the period just following the war where veterans North and South join forces to fight against a common foe: the American Indian.<sup>48</sup> In a return to the reconciliatory union between the Lost Cause and the Cause Victorious after the Compromise of 1877, nationalist films like *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Santa Fe Trail* (1940), *Rio Grande* (1950), *Showdown at Abilene* (1956), and *The Last Outpost* (1951) involved former Confederate and Yankee soldiers achieving a level of reunification and reconciliation with each other on the battlefield. They put aside their past sectional differences for the good of a new, stronger American nation and to provide the military muscle necessary to defeat a vile and savage enemy. Such monumental stories of historical progress and American nationalism were very popular during a post-World War II period marked by an upsurge in American nationalism, the Korean War, and rising world economic hegemony.

*Shenandoah* (1965) was one of the most commercially successful of these Civil War westerns. It starred Jimmy Stewart, one of Hollywood’s biggest stars at the time, and the film claimed to be the first truly historically “accurate” portrayal of the Civil War on celluloid. Historian James Robertson Jr., the commissioner of the Civil War Centennial, immediately hailed the film as the “best Civil War drama ever put to film” (quoted in Chadwick 2001, 233).<sup>49</sup> Promoters of the film went so far as to mail classroom “study guides” to historians across the country with suggestions on how history teachers could utilize the film to teach the Civil War to their students (Chadwick 2001, 233). The film,

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<sup>47</sup> Examples of “Civil War Westerns” include the ABC television show *The Rebel* (1959) and film such as *Santa Fe Trail* (1940), *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941), *Dallas* (1950), and *The Last Outpost* (1951). Later films including *Major Dundee* (1965), *The Undeclared* (1969), and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1979) illustrate the lasting legacy of this genre of film (Chadwick 2001).

<sup>48</sup> The film *Undeclared* (1969) deviated somewhat from this formula, as the main characters in this film band together to fight against the armies of Mexico in the 1870’s.

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that Robertson makes the very same claim more than forty years later about *Gods and Generals*, a film in which he served as the historical advisor.

however, received little critical acclaim and is remembered in posterity as being perhaps the worst film Jimmy Stewart ever starred in (Davis 1996, 196).<sup>50</sup>

*Shenandoah* follows many of the standard formulas present in the majority of Civil War westerns, beginning with the title and film credits featured in burning “Western script,” a text type reminiscent of the opening credits of the television westerns *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza*. The main male characters wear typical Western garb, replete with cowboy hats, chaps and other Old West attire. The landscapes of the film have a grainy quality to them reminiscent of American Western landscapes and the pine trees and dry grasslands imaged throughout the film suggests a Western locale.<sup>51</sup> Like the typical story of the American prairie family, the film's main characters—the Anderson family—are common farmers that must fight against all odds to save their family farm from the destruction around them. They appear to be completely isolated off from other farms in the area as many Western farms were during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century period of American expansionism and Westward migration.

Unlike the majority of Civil War westerns, however, *Shenandoah* is not set in the Western states during the Reconstruction era.<sup>52</sup> It is set instead in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia during the Civil War itself, as the war rages around the Anderson family.<sup>53</sup> The Great Valley of Virginia stands in for the Wild West, a landscape of violence, lawlessness and brutality where families must fight to preserve their way of life. The Andersons are caught up in the chaos of a war in which they refuse to choose sides, a Civil War oriented take on the common “war is hell” theme present in many Hollywood war films. Like peaceful Korean and Vietnamese villagers mired in the chaos of war during the 1950's and 1960's, the common life of the neutral Anderson family is under constant threat from the two warring powers that ravage the countryside. Throughout the film, various Bushwhackers, Union soldiers, and Confederate war profiteers constantly attempt to steal family assets such as their prized horses and mules. Confederate officers in the film also turn up at the farm

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<sup>50</sup> The film seems, however, to have achieved some sort of cult status, as it plays quite regularly on the cable movie channel American Movie Classics (AMC).

<sup>51</sup> Principal photography for the film took place in the mountains and valleys of Eastern Oregon in 1964. There was a great deal of criticism from historians in Virginia that the film was ultimately shot there rather than in Virginia. According to a publicity writer for the film, Oregon was chosen because it looked more like Virginia than Virginia did (Chadwick 2001, 233).

<sup>52</sup> Other exceptions to the Western setting of the typical Civil War western include *The Horse Soldiers* (1956), *The Raid* (1954), and *Friendly Persuasion*.

<sup>53</sup> The actual year the film takes place is not altogether clear, though based on the fact that the war seems to have been waging for quite some time I estimate it to 1864, roughly around the time of Sheridan's Valley campaign and “invasion”.

periodically seeking to enlist these young men that somehow had managed to evade conscription into the Confederate army.<sup>54</sup>

The film's depiction of the Valley as a Western frontier region is certainly not without historical basis, as the region did serve as a 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway for Scotch-Irish and German settlers moving westward from eastern settlements. While in transit, many of these settlers remained in the Valley in small, isolated backwater communities of often no more than five or six families (Hofstra 2004). In settling in the Shenandoah Valley, the pioneers became engaged in a protracted struggle for land with various Native American peoples not unlike what occurred in the American West during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup> The majority European settlers ultimately made their living primarily from small family farms, very different from the large scale plantation style of agriculture practiced by slave-owning Virginians in the Eastern and Central portions of the state.

By the time the Civil War began, however, the Shenandoah Valley was no longer the Western frontier region that it is imagined to be in *Shenandoah*. By 1860, the Shenandoah Valley was one of the most important and fertile agricultural regions in the United States, full of large scale farms producing massive amounts of corn, oats, rye, wool, butter, potatoes, molasses, and wheat for national consumption. According to Shenandoah Valley historian John Heatwole, the Shenandoah Valley counties of Augusta and Rockingham ranked in the top ten counties in the United States in 1860 for overall agricultural production. Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the first mechanical wheat reaper in 1831, was himself from Rockbridge County in the Valley. His invention helped turned the area into a true wheat belt for the entire United States, as new strains of winter wheat grown in the Midwest which would later dominate the market were not yet widely in production. The farms of Augusta County alone were valued at over eleven million dollars, the highest of any county in the state at that time (Ayers 2003, 18).

By 1860, the population of the Valley was well over 107, 000 and towns such as Staunton, Front Royal, Lexington and Winchester emerged as economic centers integrated

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<sup>54</sup> How these young men were not drafted into the army is never discussed in the film. There were three separate Confederate Conscription Acts, the first of which in 1862 mandated all men between 18 and 35 serve in the army for three years service unless they owned 20 or more slaves. Later conscription acts lowered the minimum age to 17 and raised the maximum age to 50.

<sup>55</sup> These land struggles with Native American included those already present in the region when European settlers arrived and other Eastern groups of indigenous peoples that moved into the region fleeing European hegemony on the coastline.

via rail and the Valley turnpike with cities throughout the region and the entire east coast (United States Department of the Interior 1992). African slaves now encompassed a large percentage of the population of the Valley, particularly in the southern and northern counties where they comprised approximately 50% of the population in Frederick, Clarke, and Jefferson counties and just over 30% of the population of Augusta and Rockbridge.<sup>56</sup> In noting the importance of slavery in Augusta County, Edward Ayers (2003, 18) comments:

None of this [agricultural development] would have been possible without the skill and the sweat of slaves. Slavery lay at the heart of Augusta County's economy. More than sixteen hundred white households, about a fifth of the white families, owned fifty five hundred enslaved people...every district of Augusta County depended on slaves for the fundamental work of their households, farms, and industries.

The presence of slaves in the Valley becomes an important element of the narrative of *Shenandoah*, which is certainly not a glowing advertisement for the virtues and landscapes of the Old South as many earlier Civil War films had been. The Andersons are not slave-owners, as many other Valley families were at the time. Instead, they position themselves as stridently anti-slavery throughout the course of the film. The Anderson family is not, however, imagined in the film as members of the sizable anti-slavery Mennonite or Brethren communities of the Valley, which might have explained their anti-slavery stance.<sup>57</sup> Instead, they are offered as proof to the audience that not all Southerners supported the slave system and are examples of Southern yeomen farmers that did not benefit from slavery.<sup>58</sup>

There are plenty of examples from the film where the Anderson's make their anti-slavery stance apparent to the audience. At the family dinner where the Anderson family discusses the war raging around their homestead, Charlie Anderson makes a point of arguing against the Southern slave system present in his home state of Virginia. One of his sons supports him stating that, "I never thought of owning any slaves. If I can't do the work

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<sup>56</sup> This is information gathered at the John Heatwole lecture given on 10-23-04 as part of the CWES "Burning of the Valley" Tour. The number of slaves in the other Valley counties was much lower, due in part to the large presence of anti-slavery Mennonites and German Brethren throughout the Central Valley.

<sup>57</sup> There was actually cinematic precedence for the characterization of Civil War families as members of religious minorities, as the Gary Cooper film *Friendly Persuasion* depicted the trials of an anti-war, anti-slavery Quaker family from Pennsylvania during the Civil War.

<sup>58</sup> The Anderson family would certainly be in the minority of Southerners in their condemnation of the slave system, as Gallagher (1997) suggests that the majority of "common folk" in the Confederate South were committed to the maintenance of the slave system.

myself, how would I know that it gets done? I don't think I should fight a war for something that I don't believe is right." Charlie later informs a Confederate General intent on signing up his sons to the army that:

I've got 500 rich acres here...and we done it ourselves without the sweat of one slave. Can you give me one good reason why I should do someone else's fightin'. When they were babies, I did not see the state coming by with a spare teat.

The critique of slavery present in *Shenandoah* is very much a product of the early 1960's and the centennial anniversary of the waging of the Civil War. Interest in the Civil War during the centennial led to thousands of commemorative activities across the country, weekly articles in newspapers discussing the history of the war, and a general resurgence in interest in opening a discussion regarding the legacy and meaning of the conflict. It also sparked new alternative readings of the Civil War that emerged as a counter to the once-dominant Lost Cause mythology. Against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement in the American South, it is perhaps not surprising reexaminations of the African-American slave system in the South were of particular importance. Following the trend within American society towards a more critical stance, Hollywood filmmakers began to examine Civil War themed stories that differed from the now-standard moonlights and magnolias formula and, perhaps more crucially, examined controversial historical issues such as slavery from a more critical perspective than earlier films (Campbell 1981).

By portraying the Andersons as anti-slavery, the film participates in a mild critique of the Southern plantation system and the racism present in the region. By this I contend that, though it certainly offers a rebuke of slavery and the Confederacy through the dialogue and language of the Anderson family, it never actually pictures any of the horrible realities of slavery in the South for African-Americans in bondage. The character Gabriel, the best friend of the youngest Anderson male "The Boy," is an African-American slave that later runs away from his master at the urging of Jenny, the only Anderson daughter.<sup>59</sup> During this scene, Gabriel runs down the road to freedom as the Battle Hymn of the Republic plays stirringly in the background. Gabriel later returns in the film as a Union soldier in an all black regiment that fights against Confederate soldiers in the Southern Valley.

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<sup>59</sup> "Boy" is the actual name used in the film for the youngest son. The Anderson family appears to have run out of ideas for names by the time the sixth son was born.

Gabriel is, however, never shown to be mistreated by his owners and appears to have a great deal of freedom to move around the area. When he runs away, slave catchers do not attempt to recapture him and what must have been a harrowing journey northward through slave-owning territory is never pictured on screen. Later in the film, after the death of the eldest Anderson son and his wife at the hands of marauding bushwhackers, Charlie Anderson relies upon an African-American mammy to take care of their now orphaned daughter. This mammy never actually speaks in the film and it is never discussed if she is a free woman, a slave, or if she actually gets paid to take care of this child. Her service to the family is naturalized as part of the typical Southern way of life, where mammies took care of white children in ways similar to the Mammy character of *Gone With the Wind* well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, *Shenandoah*'s treatment of slavery and African-Americans in the Civil War lacks any critical thrust that might have forced Americans into opening dialogues on the legacy of these issues and often slips back into racist stereotypes typically found in Hollywood portrayals of the Civil War and the American South. Indeed, Hollywood would not offer a forceful and honest critique of slavery until the 1977 release of ABC mini-series *Roots*, a groundbreaking story that "shatter[ed] all of the myths about slavery that had been delivered to the American public since 1865" (Chadwick 2001, 270).<sup>60</sup>

Though it does offer at least a muted critique of slavery and race in the South, *Shenandoah* relies upon many conservative cultural and gendered stereotypes of Southern life typical of its moonlight and magnolia predecessors. Indeed, the film presents a validation of sorts for crucial elements of the enduring, pro-South Lost Cause monumental mythology. The Confederate cause, for example, is portrayed as hopelessly doomed from the beginning. Confederate soldiers in the film face long odds that cannot be overcome, despite the Herculean efforts of its soldiers and commanders. This concept of the doomed Confederacy is quite literally the founding principal of the myth of the Lost Cause and emerged immediately after the war in the writings of ex-Confederates as a way of explaining why the glorious and virtuous Southern army had not emerged victorious from the conflict. Many contemporary historians, while accepting the industrial and population advantages of the

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<sup>60</sup> Like any visual text, *Roots* is not without its only critical faults. It created its own Judeo-Christian myth, a spiritual and emotional journey many African-Americans did not make (Sleeper 1997). Author Alex Haley also faced charges that he fictionalized versions of his own family history in order to make it a more compelling story. Despite these critiques, I read the miniseries as an important cultural counter to the Lost Cause mythology which had long propagated the images of the benevolent slave-owner and the subservient, happy African-American slave.

Northern states, contend that defeat of the South was not the “foregone conclusion” that Lost Cause proponents suggest it was (Nolan 2000, 23).

Jenny’s fiancé is a young man named Sam, a colonel in the Confederate Army, who ultimately emerges in the film as a de facto spokesman for the Lost Cause and the doomed hopes of the Southern states. He tells Charlie after he is freed from Union captivity that “I told my [captured] men to go home because the war is lost...we knew before the last fight that we could not win...we fight because it was easier than running.” Despite the long odds, Sam and other Southern soldiers in the Valley fight on and do their duty for God and country. Later in the film, “The Boy” joins up with a ragtag band of Confederate soldiers that escaped from Union prison camp. These men meet up with a woefully supplied Confederate regiment in the Southern Valley whose men live off of captured rodent meat. The regiment ultimately engages in battle against a much larger Union force which routs them in battle. Just before the battle, one of the men tells The Boy that, “We ain’t got a chance in hell!” just before charging into the heavily-fortified Union line where he is summarily shot and killed. This Confederate soldier recognized the futility of his action and of the Southern cause but still chose to give his life for his friends and his country. Such stories provide a crucial cultural underpinning for the Lost Cause mythology and perpetuate the notion of a gallant, yet ultimately doomed, heroic Southern army.

The representation of religion in *Shenandoah* similarly supports elements of the Lost Cause mythology and an evangelical idealization of the redemptive quality of the Christian faith. As part of the post-war Lost Cause tradition, Southern Civil War heroes traditionally have been venerated in quasi-religious terms, as saint-figures such as Lee and Jackson that fought for God and country.<sup>61</sup> Southerners also used religion during the war to rally soldiers to the cause, as the pulpit provided the Christian theocratic foundation for Confederate war aims (Phillips 2006). The Confederacy was to be “baptized in blood,” a nation redeemed from its past sins through the epic struggle on the battlefield (Wilson 1980). In *Shenandoah*, the Anderson’s Anglican preacher delivers a sermon at the beginning of the film concerning sacrifice and duty to Virginia, a state that “gives us sustenance and that provides for us...without whom we could not live.” Though Charlie Anderson clearly does not share the preacher’s view of service to Virginia and the Confederate Army, he is clearly in the minority

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<sup>61</sup> There is a more detailed discussion of the religious idolization of Lee and Jackson in my reading of *Gods and Generals* in the following section of the chapter.

within a congregation that understands the meaning of evangelical Christian sacrifice, duty, and redemption.

Charlie Anderson's character initially rejects Southern Christian teaching and seems to be relatively ambivalent towards religion. His family, for example, is notorious for arriving to church late and is scolded by the preacher for their chronic tardiness. Like Job in the Bible, Charlie Anderson's Christian faith is tested throughout the film as a result of the multiple tragedies that befall his family. At the time of the film, he is already a widower which we later learn occurred when his beloved wife died while giving birth to "The Boy" sixteen years earlier. His wife appears to have been the religious one in the family, as Charlie makes mention while visiting her gravesite of promising her to raise her children as good mannered Southern Christians. Charlie's minimal Christian faith faces further challenges during the course of the film, as tragedy after tragedy befalls the family. "The Boy" goes missing and is eventually presumed to be in prison camp after the family fails to recapture him. His eldest son and daughter in law are raped and killed at the hand of marauding bushwhackers while the rest of the family was away looking for "The Boy." He suffers a final tragedy on the way back home to the farm as another one of his sons dies, shot by an anxious young Confederate soldier that mistakes him for a Union cavalry officer.

These trials both drag Charlie finally into the conflict he attempted to avoid and force him to engage his own lost Christian faith. He seeks answers again from his dead wife and speaks to her at her grave in the final moments of the film. He reports to her that there is:

Nothing much I can tell you about the war...the undertakers are winning, politicians will talk about glory, old men the need of it, soldiers' just want to go home. You'll like seeing Ann and James in heaven...if only I knew what you were thinking right now.

At that moment, a Christian miracle occurs. The church bell rings and reminds Charlie of his promise to his late wife that he would raise the children as good Southern Christians. Believing this to be a communication from his wife in Heaven, Charlie takes what is left of his family to church where they pray for the return of "The Boy" and the end of the war. Once there, "The Boy" miraculously reappears and is reunited with his family during a final singing of the Lord's Prayer. Charlie has been redeemed and his faith rekindled, just as the South will be redeemed and restored if it maintains its Christian faith.

As Goldfield (2002, 59-60) comments, “Like the South, the white southerner could rise from poverty and sin-if only he would accept Jesus Christ as Lord...redemption is a major theme in the lives of southerners, just as it has infused southern history.”

The representation of gender in the film is quite traditional and conservative, not unlike many films and television shows of the 1950's and early 1960's. As is typical for Hollywood war films, the narrative of the film includes a love story as a way of humanizing the conflict and softening the harshness of war. In *Shenandoah*, it is primarily through the love story of Jenny and Sam that the film's overall representation of gender roles can be read. Jenny, the only Anderson daughter, receives advice from her sister in law before her wedding that a husband “sometimes needs to be left alone... I can always tell when James wants to be alone. It seems that sometimes things get so thick around a man that he comes to think the world is closing in on him.” Women are also represented as mysterious, seemingly unable to articulate their needs and concerns logically to men because of their over-emotional nature. Sam, for example, receives the following speech from Charlie Anderson on the mystery of women:

It is no easy job to take care of a woman. They expect things they never ask for. Suppose Jenny starts to cry and she won't tell you why...and that's when you ask her what it was that you did that made her start to cry. And that is when you start to get angry...but don't get angry. She won't tell you because she doesn't know. Women are like that, it's exasperating. Just go and hug them, that's all they really want when they are like that. Just a little lovin'.

Women, according to Charlie Anderson, need to be “taken care of” and require “just a little loving” to calm them. Later in the film Jenny, who claims to be the best shot in the family, wishes to ride with the rest of the family to find their captured missing youngest brother “The Boy,” who had been mistaken by the Union Army as a Confederate soldier because he was wearing a Confederate kepi. In doing so, she goes against the wishes of her own father who orders her to stay at home. Once dressed in masculine clothes and her hair hidden under a cowboy hat, Charlie ultimately relents and lets her come along with the rest of the boys. Just as Scarlett O'Hara, the archetype of the traditional Southern Belle in *Gone With the Wind*, assumed normative masculine positions on the plantation due to the chaos of the Civil War, Jenny is allowed to dress up as a man, literally and figuratively and take on the masculine role of soldier-protector during a disorienting and violent time.

When Sam later returns from fighting for the Confederacy and joins the family in the search for “The Boy,” she begins to resume her subservient position in the normative gendered hierarchy of the American South. In a somewhat disturbing scene that takes place in an abandoned cottage where the Anderson’s seek shelter from a thunderstorm, Charlie prepares a romantic side room for Jenny and her husband to spend the night, his wedding “gift” as their honeymoon had been previously interrupted when Sam was called to do his masculine duty and serve the cause of the Confederacy. Sam shaves his war beard for this “romantic” encounter and opens a bottle of liquor in the room that Charlie leaves for their enjoyment. Charlie tells Jenny that “Your mother and I had it a little better than this...comfort is not what counts.” The gift of the father is allowing Sam to penetrate his daughter, proving that sex sells for Hollywood films even in the conservative cinematic climate of 1960’s. Sam then carries Jenny across the threshold where she can finally fulfill her sexual feminine duties to her husband, even as her father and brothers sleep on the floor in the adjacent room.

*Sommersby: A Kinder and Gentler Tara*

Drawing both upon the amazing ratings successes of both *Roots* and Ken Burns' *The Civil War*, the Civil War era once again became a popular setting and subject for Hollywood filmmakers of the late twentieth century. A few of these films contained much of the same critical spirit present in *Roots*, offering examinations into the difficult lives of African-Americans during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>62</sup> One such film, Edward Zwick's *Glory* (1989), starred Matthew Broderick and Denzel Washington. The film is the first to focus exclusively on the bravery and heroic service of African-American soldiers in the Union Army. It was released to coincide with the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War and ultimately provides an alternative to the portrayal of African-American soldiers within earlier films. As Chadwick (2001, 284) notes:

*Glory's* accurate presentation of the courageous blacks fighting for freedom in the Union army was a far cry from the scandalous portrayal of black soldiers in *The Birth of a Nation* seventy five years before. After three quarters of a century, it helped correct Hollywood's view of history...the enemy [of the film] is racism. The movie shows that there was racism within the Union Army almost equal to the racism of the South.

Indeed, the entire visual portrayal of the Southern cultural and society changed substantially during the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to the moonlight and magnolias version of the Old South, a new genre of Southern visual representation emerged: the "hick flick."<sup>63</sup> These films emerged just as American elected the Southern Democrat Jimmy Carter, a common peanut farmer from Plains, Ga., to the White House in 1976. In fact, Carter's own brother Billy Carter became the "hick du jour" of America, as legendary stories of Billy's gambling, drinking, and carousing were media fodder throughout his brother's presidency. In these visual texts, including *Deliverance* (1972), *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977), *Gator* (1976), *Stroker Ace* (1983), *Six Pack* (1982), *Southern Comfort* (1981), and *The Dukes of Hazzard* (1979), the post-Civil War South is imagined as an exotic and poor rural white region full of independent unreconstructed spirits and bizarre country folk (Campbell 1980, 194). Issues of racism rarely appear in these films and the "down home"

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<sup>62</sup> Examples of fictional films include *Sankofa* (1993), *Beloved* (1998), *The Journey of August King* (1995) and *Amistad* (1997), as well as the PBS documentary series' *Africans In America: America's Journey Through Slavery* (1998) and *Roots of Resistance: The Story of the Underground Railroad* (1990).

<sup>63</sup> For a recent examination of these films, see von Doviak, C. and Gore, C. (2004) *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema*. McFarland and Co Publishing, New York.

working class characters of these texts both appealed to audiences and, in the case of *Deliverance*, summarily repulsed them. The masculine heroes of the film carry on stereotypically white Southern traits of independence and individuality, rebelling against those societal and cultural forces that would dare to shackle their wild ways and change their independent way of life. This Hollywood version of the South follows the tumult and dislocation of the Civil Rights Era, a period in which the Lost Cause myth mutated back into a more aggressive and oppositional anti-Civil Rights rallying myth. The Confederate battle flag became the preferred symbol of white rebellion in the South to be flown by mavericks fighting for traditional white Southern values against powerful outside forces. The white male heroes of the television hit show *Dukes of Hazzard*, for example, are forever fleeing the law and fighting authority. They drive a car around the dirt roads of Northern Georgia named the General Lee, which prominently features a Rebel Flag on the body.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the rise to prominence of the post-Civil Rights rebellion hick flicks, the 1920's and 30's romantic and epic moonlight and magnolias version of the Lost Cause did not completely disappear from contemporary American culture. In explaining the popularity of this vision of the South throughout the United States, Goldfield (2002, 7) contends that:

Northerners have looked upon the South as an idyllic land of grace and gentility, where personal character and charm counted more than bank accounts and business savvy; a region of unspoiled beauty, of small towns and large farms where the ills of urban civilization scarcely penetrated; of loyalty to family, God, and place as a counterpoise to a mobile, disjointed, secular society.

As previously mentioned, the ABC mini-series *North and South* (1985) offered viewers an updated and modernized visual return to the sweeping and glorious plantation epic made so famous by *Gone With the Wind* nearly fifty years earlier. The mini-series, based on the book by John Jakes, proved so popular that it spawned two sequels: *North and South Book II* (1986) and *Heaven and Hell: North and South Book III* (1994). In these three films, Patrick Swayze takes on the Ashley Wilkes role as a handsome and dashing slave-owner/Confederate soldier with a "heart of gold." Swayze's character Orry Main is the

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<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, when a new version of *The Dukes of Hazzard* was released in 2005 as a Hollywood film, the filmmakers chose to keep the rebel flag on the General Lee, despite contemporary criticism by many Civil Rights groups of the flag as a symbol of racism and hatred. In order to deflect this criticism, the film features dialogue where the two white heroes drive the car at a university and are surprised when African-American students greet them with boos and jeers. The students teach the boys their point of view, to which the Duke Boys respond that they "don't want to oppress anyone" (Lippman 2004).

ultimate benevolent slave owner, horrified by the brutality of his fellow plantation owners yet ultimately not willing to release his own slaves from captivity. He ultimately faces financial destruction during and after the war, as the family cotton fortune gained from his cotton disappears as a result of the ruined Lost Cause of the Confederacy.

The 1993 film *Sommersby* marks a similar cinematic “return to Tara” for Hollywood. The film is actually a remake of the French film *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1984), a medieval mystery about a similar strange man that returns from war to reunite with his wife and family. *Sommersby* moves the setting of *Martin Guerre* to the hills and farms of West Tennessee during the months just following the surrender of Confederate forces. Conceived of as a Hollywood vehicle for the romantic “star powered” pairing of Richard Gere and Jodie Foster, the film proved to be relatively popular with American audiences and grossed over \$140 million dollars upon initial release (Chadwick 2001, 291). Indeed, the film promoted itself as an epic love story for the ages. The promotional posters for the film, for example, included images of Gere and Foster in the midst of a steamy and passionate love making session. Though it was not set in the Shenandoah Valley, *Sommersby* was the first contemporary major motion picture to be filmed almost entirely in the region and is credited by the Virginia Film Bureau for generating millions of dollars into the local economy. The film was shot primarily in and around the rural landscapes of Lexington, Virginia, including a number of scenes set in a restored former plantation home in the area that served as the film’s central great house. In many ways, this film led the Virginia Film Bureau to be much more aggressive in marketing the Shenandoah Valley as a site for motion picture development, culminating in the recruitment and subsequent filming of *Gods and Generals* in the area during 2002.

*Sommersby* is a classic plantation epic, a sweeping Hollywood romantic love-story set in the period of Reconstruction about a plantation owner turned Confederate soldier calling himself Jack Sommersby, played by Richard Gere, who returns from the Civil War a changed and mysterious man. *Sommersby* attempts to rescue the moonlight and magnolia formula from the racism inherent in earlier films by portraying the plantation owner as a man that becomes racially enlightened after experiencing the horrors of war as a soldier. As Chadwick (2001, 291) comments, “The aim of the film, of course, was to redefine the Southern soldier for a 1993 audience, giving him all new and politically correct views on race, class, and women.” After rekindling a love affair with his long suffering wife Laurel, played by Jodie Foster, Jack

sets about trying to rebuild his shattered fortune and reputation in the midst of the chaos and violence of the post-War South. In the course of rescuing his family from economic ruin, he manages to save the entire population of the fictional small town of Vine Hill, Tennessee from a similar collapse. Jack is later revealed throughout the course of the film to be an imposter, a con-man that is merely masquerading as Jack Sommersby. As a result of this deception, he ultimately suffers the fate of the real Jack Sommersby and is executed for a crime the actual Jack committed during the war.<sup>65</sup>

*Sommersby* can be read as fantasy-driven, populist re-imagining of the Reconstruction Era South, a bitter period marked by horrific acts of violence and racism throughout the region. Upon his return from the Civil War, Jack is immediately kind to his former slaves and refuses to engage in the racist activities of his fellow white townspeople. In order to restore the economic base of Vine Hill, Jack suggests a radical vision for the town's economic future. He urges the townspeople to reorganize the community into a farm collective, one where all of the town's citizens- black and white, male and female-band together to buy their own portion of his former plantation land. In order to participate in Jack's scheme, each family contributes items of monetary value in order to raise enough money to buy a new strain of tobacco seed available only in Virginia. He tells the gathered townspeople that, "We're all sitting on a little something. Put in money together, we can get the cash to get started." Despite some initial reluctance on the part of many whites to share the land with former slaves, the citizens of Vine Hill ultimately support Jack's plan as their only alternative during a period of poverty and starvation.

This collective farming plan faces long odds for success in the film, as both Jack and the town suffer a series of calamities that threaten to ruin Jack's utopian vision. The tobacco crop nearly fails as a result of an insect infestation, only to be saved by the homespun wisdom of Orrin, played by Bill Pullman, Jack's enemy in the film and rival for Jodie Foster's affection. Orrin, a pastor that fell in love with Laurel during the war, notices the inconsistencies in Jack's behavior and later reveals him, quite correctly, as a fraud and confidence man to Laurel and the authorities. This news fractures the town, as Jack's racist enemies use it to attack his character and credibility. Jack finally is forced to defend himself

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<sup>65</sup> For the sake of clarity, I will refer to Gere's character as Jack in this analysis, despite the fact that he is revealed to not actually be Jack Sommersby but instead is a con man named Horace Townsend. The "real" Jack Sommersby died after the war, allowing Townsend to take his place and become Jack Sommersby.

and his former slave Joseph against an attack perpetrated by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Despite these hardships, Jack's plan succeeds and the town is saved from the economic and social ruin facing the rest of the South. It is through Jack's naïve love, for family, soil, and fellow man that Vine Hill becomes redeemed once again.

Jack's enlightened cooperative farm is as a revisionist rejection of the racist tenant farming system that emerged throughout the South after the war, a Hollywood fantasy of "what might have been" if only others had practiced similar tactics. The film is a vision of a populist, utopian South where black and white Southerners came together to reconstruct the South and each gain their own deserved piece of the American Dream. Jack is the embodiment of the quintessential American entrepreneur, a man with a vision of collective capitalism and racial and gendered harmony that could save the fractured South. Scenes from the film feature African-Americans and whites working together in a spirit of harmony and progress, an idealized vision of reconstruction that could have been. African-American boys smoke pipes with white girls as all work together under the shadow of the mountain for the good of all in the community. As Rita Kempley's (1993) review from the *Washington Post* states, "As if hatched from a Capra movie, Master Jack has become populist Jack, bringing hope and speeches to the dispirited villagers of Yankee-ravaged Vine Hill, Tennessee."

Though *Sommersby* attempts to reinvent and sanitize the plantation epic, it is not a particularly successful work of critical filmmaking. Through its implausible utopian plantation myth, the film offers the viewer only a tepid, fantasy-driven (re)appraisal of racism and post-Civil War Southern society and culture. As the un-credited review of the film published in *Rolling Stone* (1993) states:

Shoehorning this peculiarly French story into the American South during Reconstruction does some violence to the [original] text. Writer Nicholas Meyer, whose work is less factual than fanciful, never really plumbs the issues he raises about race, politics, religion and the roots of the New South. Though the tarnished glory of the Confederacy is superlatively evoked by cinematographer Philippe Rousselot and composer Danny Elfman, *Sommersby* is selective social history.

*Sommersby* ultimately relies upon many of the same racial, cultural, and gender stereotypes present in earlier Lost Cause inspired celluloid representations of the Old South. Jack's transformation in the film is a typical Southern redemption story, as he emerges from the war a pious and changed man. In rejecting his violent and wild past, Jack comes back from the war as the embodiment of the Southern gentleman, the fantasy model of Old

South white masculinity made famous by Ashley Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind* and Confederates heroes such as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. He transforms himself into an idyllic family man and member of the Southern patrician class. In doing so, he sheds both the former persona of Horace Townsend- an admitted swindler and Confederate deserter- and the history of the real Jack Townsend, a violent and racist good old boy. This new Jack is well-mannered, classically educated, church going, and God fearing. He treats his former slaves with patriarchal kindness, loves his family and his native soil, and honorably served his country militarily when called upon by the Confederacy. He remains in his former plantation home where he continues to have an African-American house-servant and mammy for his young son. His former slaves treat him with respect and recognize “Mr. Jack’s” inherent superiority throughout the film.

The character of Laurel, a strong-willed and beautiful woman, also fits neatly into the Old South stereotypes for the Scarlett O’Hara version of the idealized Southern belle. Laurel remains loyal to her husband and her family throughout the long years of the Civil War and never gives in to the temptations of the flesh offered to her by the evil Orrin. She is independent and strong willed, but clearly yearns for the love of a good man that can take care of the family properly. As any good Southern woman would do, she hides her Grandmother’s brooch from Yankee marauders that threatened the plantation during a wartime raid. Following the typical Hollywood script, Laurel stands by her man and heroically sacrifices this precious brooch for Jack by offering it as part of the town’s collection of goods to be sold for tobacco seed. As expected from a romantic epic, she ultimately falls in love with this new and improved version of Jack and allows him to perform his masculine duties in the bedroom during several of the film’s extended love scenes. Laurel continues to love him even after finding out about his deception and later gives birth to their illegitimate daughter Rachel, who is quickly baptized by Laurel’s preacher father in the local Christian church. She ends the film tending to Jack’s picturesque gravesite, a vision of the archetypically loyal and brave Confederate widow suffering alone after the war.

Jack ultimately dies at the end of the film, a fate he now heroically shares with thousands of other “honorable” white Southerners that served their country during the war. In a typically brave and masculine act of Hollywood melodrama, he refuses to save his own life by revealing his true identity to a court in Nashville that tries him for a murder

committed by the “real” Jack Sommersby during the war. Like Christ, he sacrifices himself for the good of others, as the good name of Jack Sommersby had to be maintained in order for his daughter to be raised as a legitimate Sommersby heir and for his land transfers to the citizens of Vine Hill to remain legal. His action is also the final act of Christian redemption for a man that had started his life as a dishonorable swindler that had earned the dubious nickname “Yellow Horace” during the war for running away from battle at Sharpsburg. As will happen to the South if it keeps its faith after the loss of the war, Jack Sommersby’s pre-war sins are redeemed by his Christian faith and duty to his family and country. As his father in law reads from the Bible, Jack honorably walks to the gallows knowing he achieved personal salvation on Earth for his earlier misdeeds. He goes to his grave buried as a truly honorable Southern Christian gentleman, loved by both his family and the grateful residents of Vine Hill whose lives he saved.

*Gods and Generals: An Epic Crusader Love Poem to the Lost Cause*

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a marked increase in the popularity of Civil War reenacting throughout the American South. Civil War reenacting has its roots in the reunions and gatherings of Civil War veterans who would meet at battlefields on the anniversary of the battle to reenact the war. These commemorative activities continued well after the last Civil War veterans died and became a particularly popular weekend hobby for Civil War obsessed Americans beginning in the 1980's and continuing to the present day. According to Horowitz (1998, 126), over 40,000 Americans now regularly participate in some form of Civil War reenactment or living history display. In general, there are far more Southerners interested in Civil War simulation and there tends to be a chronic shortage of willing Union soldiers at every reenactment.<sup>66</sup> There are dozens of journals and magazines dedicated to the hobby of reenacting and re-enactors spend thousands of dollars within a thriving cottage industry dedicated to the production of Civil War uniforms, rifles, and apparel equipping themselves for simulated battle. Organized regiments of re-enactors meet periodically to discuss Civil War history, literature, tactics, and serve as go-to living history organizations within their local regions, often volunteering their time and presupposed expertise at local schools and scouting clubs. Re-enactors might best be understood as populist historians, average American citizens who translate professional history to a mass audience in an entertaining and engaging fashion (Alvis-Banks 2006).

Given the exhaustive training and attention to authenticity undertaken by the majority of Civil War re-enactors, it is not surprising that modern Hollywood filmmakers utilize these massive numbers of Civil War re-enactors as extras within nearly every contemporary Civil War film. In fact, it is my contention that the hobby and subculture of reenacting influenced the production of contemporary Civil War epic films that might otherwise not have been made. Historical filmmakers no longer had to worry about the time and expense involved in training, equipping, and drilling a huge number of extras to serve as Civil War soldiers in a film. Instead, they need only place casting ads in Civil War themed magazines and journals calling for re-enactors to serve in an upcoming Civil War film or television event. Once on set, re-enactors provide the set with amateur, on-the-set historical

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<sup>66</sup> In order to deal with this discrepancy, many Southern reenacting regiments encourage their men to buy Union gear in order to "change sides" if numbers dictate.

advisors, instructing directors on a whole range of military matters such as the proper way to fire simulated cannons and to align themselves in battle formation (Chadwick 2001, 277-278).

Due to the presence of highly trained re-enactors, the sweeping and “authentic” battlefield scenes of a massive scope and scale- previously nearly impossible for filmmakers to stage- soon became standard undertakings for nearly every contemporary war film.<sup>67</sup> Documentary films followed suit, as many contemporary educational films focused on military issues included simulated conflict waged by period re-enactors. Beginning in the 1990’s, the proliferation of cable television and the emergence of new television channels such as The History Channel, Discovery Channel and A&E provided telespace for the airing of historical documentaries. A&E, for example, continues to air episodes from a long running Civil War documentary series entitled “Civil War Journal.” The military-oriented programming of the History Channel proved to be so popular that they created a new spin-off network called “The Military Channel” that shows war documentaries twenty-four hours a day.

The 1993 Hollywood film *Gettysburg* is a nearly six hour epic military film-and later TNT television miniseries replayed on Super Bowl Sundays and on the Fourth of July. The film is replete with sweeping battle scenes featuring thousands of re-enactors simulating combat on parts of the actual Gettysburg battlefield.<sup>68</sup> Based on the Michael Shaara novel *The Killer Angels*, the film takes place on the three days of battle in and around Gettysburg, Pa. in 1863, the series of engagements often claimed by Civil War historians to be the central turning point of the war. Unlike earlier Civil War films, *Gettysburg* featured no plantation-set Old South love story. Instead, it mimics History Channel style documentaries and is focused almost entirely on military matters and the actual waging of the battle itself. Dialogue in the film tends to be “soldier speak,” centered both on the events of the battlefield and the various motivating forces that led men on both sides to give their lives for their respective causes.

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<sup>67</sup> Examples of contemporary films and mini-series apart from *Gettysburg* and *Gods and Generals* that feature large-scale military engagements with reenactors include *The Blue and The Gray* (1983), *Glory* (1989), *Andersonville* (1996), *Ride With the Devil* (1999), *Gettysburg: Three Days of Destiny* (2003), *Wicked Spring* (2003), *Blue Versus Gray: Killing Fields* (2002), and *Cold Mountain* (2003).

<sup>68</sup> According to Chadwick (2001, 284), Ted Turner Entertainment, the film’s producers, paid each reenacting group one thousand dollars for their participation in the film as well as ten dollars a day for each “soldier” that served in the film.

The main characters of the film are commanders from both armies, portrayed in the most glowing and heroic manner imaginable. *Gettysburg* is a classic reconciliation text, a cinematic and nationalist fusing of the Lost Cause and the Cause Victorious where soldiers on both sides fight heroically in defense of American honor and values. In commenting on what attracted him to the project, Director Ronald Maxwell stated that, “Every character [on both sides] is quite exemplary, quite likable. At the same time, every one of them is ready to kill for what he believes in” (quoted in Chadwick 2001, 286). This is particularly true of the film’s portrayal of the pious and heroic soldier Robert E. Lee, played in this film by Martin Sheen, a figure that emerges as the tragic hero of the film. Despite his genius and daring, he and the Confederate Lost Cause are ultimately doomed to failure after the bloody disaster of Pickett’s Charge on the battle’s climatic third day. It was Lee’s biggest blunder during the war, an ill-fated charge on the well-fortified center of the Union line born out of Lee’s belief in the invincibility of the Confederate soldier. After the war, Lee received little blame for the loss at Gettysburg, a blunder which would have tainted his post-war heroic and godlike stature. Instead, culpability for the loss was apportioned to General Longstreet, played in the film by Tom Berenger, the general who replaced Stonewall Jackson as Lee’s main lieutenant. Longstreet was never a popular figure in Confederate memory during or after the war and became a convenient scapegoat within Lost Cause mythology, especially following his post-war decision to become a public supporter of the hated Republican Party.

This relatively new primary focus on Civil War military heroes in *Gettysburg* did not translate into a large box office take for the film. The film’s primary financial backer was Turner Entertainment mogul Ted Turner, the primary media architect of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural and economic renaissance of Atlanta, Ga. Turner’s media empire, including the television stations CNN, TBS, TNT, and Cartoon Network, is based in downtown Atlanta. The growth of this media empire positioned Atlanta as the cultural and economic capital of the New South, a city with global reach that had fully rebuilt and reinvented itself after the tumult of both the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. When combined with the awarding of the 1996 Summer Olympics, Atlanta could promote itself as a major league city of national and international importance. As a key part of this city-wide economic boosterism, Turner and his TNT network studios began to produce dozens of original films throughout the 1990’s, proclaiming itself the “best movie studio on television” and a legitimate rival to the Hollywood television industry. Many of these “TNT Originals”

are epics based on notable events from American history and contained outwardly nationalist themes.<sup>69</sup> The Spanish-American war, for example, is the setting for 2001's *Rough Riders*. In the film, Theodore Roosevelt's rag-tag collection of soldier from the North and South, including men of all races, put aside old regional hatreds to fight the Spanish enemy in a spirit of national reconciliation.

Following *Gettysburg*, TNT produced three other Civil War oriented films with overtly nationalist themes—*Andersonville* (1996), *The Day Lincoln Was Shot* (1998), and *The Hunley* (1999). Turner's particular interest in Civil War oriented programming can also be explained by his own personal interest in Civil War studies. He claims to be an unabashed "Civil War buff" with relatives who heroically served in the Confederate army during the Civil War. Turner actually appears in both *Gettysburg* and later in *Gods and Generals* with a speaking line as a Confederate colonel modeled after his relative. None of these Civil War themed films proved to be financial or ratings successes. In the case of *Gettysburg*, both Turner and Maxwell failed to recoup their investments until the film became available in VHS and DVD formats (Moore 2003). Given the financial risks involved, it was somewhat surprising that both men chose to follow up *Gettysburg* with the production of an even more sweeping and monumental Civil War epic: *Gods and Generals*.

*Gods and Generals*, based on the work of historical fiction by Jeff Shaara and released to theatres in 2002, is a prequel of sorts to *Gettysburg*.<sup>70</sup> The film takes place chronologically earlier than *Gettysburg*, focused on the conflicts and the heroes of the early years of the Civil war from 1861-1863. Like *Gettysburg*, it features sweeping and massive battles simulations involving thousands of Civil War re-enactors. Indeed, the film depicts the battles of First Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, with battle scenes comprising nearly half of its overall content.<sup>71</sup> Apart from battle scenes, the rest of the film includes a number of scenes dedicated to the various reasons why the state of Virginia and many of its heroic generals chose to leave the Union and join with the Confederate States of America. The

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<sup>69</sup> Examples of TNT American history epics include standard westerns *Last Stand at Saber River* (2001) and *The Virginian* (2000), Civil Rights Era oriented films *George Wallace* (1998), *Freedom Song* (2000) and *Passing Glory* (1999), and military epics *Rough Riders* (2001), *Two for Texas* (1998), *Nuremberg* (2000), *Buffalo Soldiers* (1997), and *Into the West* (2005)

<sup>70</sup> Jeff Shaara is the son of the Michael Shaara, the author of the book *The Killing Fields* which was the novel adapted to the screen as *Gettysburg*. He also authored the book *The Last Full Measure*, the last of the Shaara Civil War literary trilogy.

<sup>71</sup> The filmmakers also shot extensive scenes depicting the 1862 Battle of Antietam but it was cut out of the film. Maxwell has promised these scenes will be restored to the six hour extended edition of the film projected to be released in 2005.

myth of the Lost Cause, in much of its original post-war antagonistic form, emerges as the essential thematic frame of *Gods and Generals*. Indeed, the mythical virtues of the Lost Cause are embodied in the film by the heroic life and death of its central character, the mythic Confederate general Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson.

As in *Gettysburg*, the filmmakers stressed that *Gods and Generals* should be as historically authentic to the Civil War period as possible. This meant that the producers of *Gods and Generals* often went to extraordinary lengths in an effort to ensure that “the real” Civil War is portrayed on film. The 3,000 re-enactors approved for the project, for example, were carefully screened over a two month period from an original pool of 7,500 applicants. As the majority of re-enactors are middle age, much older and heavier set than the actual Civil War soldiers they portray, the film primarily accepted younger and thinner applicants for “duty” in the film (Frye 2002). Similarly, the lack of proper military training and adequate Civil War era knowledge excluded other re-enactors from the project. Maxwell also called upon expert historians from across the country to review the original script and provided the filmmakers with specific details on how the film could more accurately portray the battle scenes and the military activities of the soldiers. In a Foucauldian sense, the presence of these so-called experts provided the crucial scholastic knowledge underpinning the film’s representation of a supposedly authentic Civil War past.

A great deal of the early action of the film takes place in the Shenandoah Valley, particularly in and around the Virginia Military Institute and other locations in Jackson’s hometown of Lexington. Unlike *Shenandoah*, the filmmakers chose to film *Gods and Generals* almost entirely on locations within the Great Valley itself, including multiple sites in Virginia (Lexington, Winchester, Millbrook, Middletown, and Staunton), Maryland (Frederick, Hagerstown, Boonesboro, and Keedysville), and West Virginia (Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, Williamsport, and Charlestown). The filming of *Gods and Generals* proved to be disruptive at times for the localities involved, often requiring extensive alterations to local landscapes in order for the filmmakers to adequately transform the area back to days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conversion of Lexington, for example, involved extensive landscaping and camouflaging of the grounds of Virginia Military Institute to remove all traces of modernity from the central campus and required the closing of several downtown streets for two days of filming in August 2001 (DuBose 2001). Similarly, the simulated, faux-19<sup>th</sup> century downtown at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park stood in for 19<sup>th</sup> century Fredericksburg during the

film. This required the National Park Service to shut down the entire park during filming, as well as allowing filmmakers to blow up newly constructed buildings in order to simulate town warfare during the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg.<sup>72</sup>

Such disruptions, however, were considered to be minor annoyances by the film's supporters when weighed against its expected overall economic impact. Believing the film would prove to be both a short and long term economic boost to the region, the Virginia Highlands Film Bureau, The Virginia Film Office, and various civic leaders from the localities involved enthusiastically supported the project. Indeed, the state of Virginia actively recruited the film to the area. According to an official release from Virginia Governor Mark Warner and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (2003):

The Virginia Tourism Corporation's Virginia Film Office worked with the 2000 General Assembly to create the Virginia Civil War Incentive Fund, which was used to attract the epic feature film. The filming of *Gods and Generals* generated more than \$5 million in revenue for local businesses in the Shenandoah Valley, where portions of the movie were filmed. As part of the agreement with Ted Turner Pictures, which produced the movie, Virginia will be featured on promotional material for the movie and in a one-minute promotional trailer featuring "Virginia is for Lovers" in the video and DVD release of the movie.

It is important to note that, by making such an extensive deal with its filmmakers, the state government of Virginia officially endorsed the depiction of history and culture present within *Gods and Generals*. Similarly, two Virginia state universities, Virginia Tech and the Virginia Military Institute, provide at least a de facto endorsement of the film's highly controversial content. VMI, as noted previously, allowed portions of the film to be shot on campus. VMI's motivations for participating in the project no doubt had a great deal to do with the film's heroic and glorifying depiction of one of its famed ex-professors, Stonewall Jackson. As discussed in the next chapter, Jackson remains an omnipresent figure on post at the Institute. His visage and his name appear nearly everywhere at the school which serves as an institutional site for Jacksonian memorialization. It is in this institutional role that the director of VMI's on-campus museum, Lieutenant Colonel Keith E. Gibson, served as both an expert consultant for the film and a contributor to the DVD commentary on the historical accuracy of the project.

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<sup>72</sup> Information gathered from *Gods and Generals* DVD- Extras.

As for Virginia Tech, its tie to the film is due mainly to the presence of Dr. James Robertson Jr., the director of Virginia Tech's Center for Civil War Studies, who served as the main historical advisor to the film. The film's portrayal of Stonewall Jackson ultimately reflects Robertson's glowing assessment of the man from his 1997 biography *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend*. Actor Stephan Lang, who played Jackson in the film, noted in an interview with *Southern Partisan* that Robertson's book was like "holy writ to me. It really opened up Jackson's character" (Southern Partisan 2003a). Nolan (2000, 18) critiques Robertson's biography as a neo-Confederate glorification of Jackson, where descriptions of Jackson claim him as a "spiritual prince" who, in the spirit of reconciliation discourse, is an inspiration to all Americans as a result of his dutiful service to God and country. As a promotion and endorsement for the book, the neo-Confederate journal *Southern Partisan* ran an extended interview with Robertson conducted by its editor-and-chief Christopher Sullivan on Jackson and his historical legacy. In this interview, Robertson claims that "When all is said and done, Stonewall Jackson epitomizes the Christian soldier better than any American who has ever lived" (Sullivan 1997, 31).

Robertson did not, however, merely serve as historical advisor the film. He also actively supported its depiction of history publicly, stating on the film's official website that *Gods and Generals* is "the greatest Civil War movie I have ever seen, and I have seen them all."<sup>73</sup> This glowing endorsement is in sharp contrast to Robertson's public criticism of Ken Burns' *The Civil War*, a series accused by many neo-Confederate groups as having a distinct pro-Northern bias. In his keynote speech at the CWPT Teachers Institute, which I attended at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, Virginia, Robertson claimed the series to be full of "embarrassing factual errors" and oversimplified storylines that fail to grasp the complexity of the war itself.<sup>74</sup> In his *Southern Partisan* with Christopher Sullivan (1997, 35), he further contends that:

Ken Burns' statement that Lee was a mass-murderer and his calling Jackson a "blue eyed killer" is appalling and very bad history. It is disastrous for many people that this is their main, if not only, source of knowledge about the war.

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<sup>73</sup> As I noted earlier, this marks the second time that Robertson made this claim publicly, as he also stated this regarding *Shenandoah* in 1965 (Gods and Generals 2003).

<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that Robertson did not serve as a historical advisor for the documentary.

As a result perhaps of Robertson's involvement in the project, the portrayal of Lee and Jackson in *Gods and Generals* is idealized and heroic. Like its cinematic predecessors *Gone with the Wind* and *The Birth of a Nation*, *Gods and Generals* is a film replete with Lost Cause inspired images of happy slaves, pious Christian soldiers, and larger-than-life Confederate military heroes. Southern men in the film fight a defense war of independence against Yankee aggression and receive unbridled love and admiration from beautiful white Southern belles. According to *Gods and Generals*, the Civil War was not fought over slavery. The film script contends, as noted by Richard von Busack (2003) in his review of the film, that "The reason for the war was the defense of Virginia against the Northern invader... The Confederate bias of *Gods and Generals* is pronounced, with deferential slaves defending their Southern homeland."

My own reading of the film suggests it to be nothing less than a full-scale endorsement of the original monumental Southern Lost Cause mythology of the 1870's, part of a resurgence of such ideology among contemporary neo-Confederate organizations. As detailed later in this chapter, a good deal of the positive support from the film came from neo-Confederate organizations such as the League of the South and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. As noted in Chapter Three, these organizations represent a return to the antagonistic sectionalism present in the original Jubal Early Lost Cause myth. They espouse a radical paleo-conservative version of Southern history which imagines the South as a proto-Celtic, agrarian, and evangelical Christian paradise.<sup>75</sup> Groups such as the League of the South and the Southern Party actively support Southern (re)secession and recruit academics from Southern universities to publish scholarship supporting their viewpoint. The League of the South publishes *Southern Partisan*, a journal infamous for its pro-slavery and Lost Cause influenced readings of the past and present. Former United States Attorney General and Missouri Senator John Ashcroft received widespread criticism for his involvement with the journal, as did Senator Trent Lott and Representative Bob Barr. Ashcroft's interview with *Southern Partisan* included the statement that:

Your magazine helps to set the record straight...of defending Southern patriots like Lee, Jackson, and Davis. Traditionalists must do more. I've got to do more. We've all got to stand up and speak in this respect, or else we'll be taught that these people were giving their lives, subscribing their personal fortunes and their honor to some perverted agenda (quoted in Vowell 2005, 58).

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<sup>75</sup> For studies on the neo-Confederate movement, see Horowitz (1999); Goldfield (2002); Hague (2002); Hague and Sebesta (2002); Roberts (1997); and Applebome (1996).

As noted by the watchdog group, *Fairness and Accuracy In Media* (FAIR), past issues of *Southern Partisan* have included right wing articles defending the Southern slave system, diatribes against Lincoln, and published attacks against feminists, non-Christians, minority leaders, the United Nations, homosexuals, and Latin American immigrants (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting 2001). The journal includes ads by vendors selling a whole range of neo-Confederate items, including t-shirts celebrating Lincoln's assassination. One such shirt purchased from the catalog, featuring the motto "Sic Semper Tyrannis" uttered by John Wilkes Booth after shooting Lincoln printed under Lincoln's visage, was actually worn by Timothy McVeigh on the day he bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people (Vowell 2005, 57).<sup>76</sup>

As well as participating as a modern neo-Confederate cinematic update of the original Lost Cause myth, *Gods and Generals* can also be more broadly read as a post-Cold War script. It is a vision of evangelical American military nationalism where honorable Christian men, like Stonewall Jackson, give their lives for a noble, higher cause of freedom. Contemporary viewers draw parallels between the dislocation of the Civil War past and the chaos of the Bush-Osama fueled terror war present. *Gods and Generals* operates as crusader cinema, a vision of the past where noble Christian warriors rode off to do battle against enemies that invade and defile their homeland. The tireless Civil War era soldier, in particular the heroic Stonewall Jackson, emerges as a masculine, Christian ideal for the modern American man to emulate in the post-9/11 "long war" against radical Islam. Just as the nation survived the cataclysm of the Civil War, Christian America will ultimately emerge victorious against Osama and his freedom hating Islamic hoard. The links between the past and present in the film were well noted by both Christian web sites and by Maxwell himself. As noted by the Christian website *Praise.com*, "It is the story of ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary time. It is about the price of freedom...in a post 9/11 World, Ron Maxwell gives us an important and timely film" (Praise.com 2003). In a number of interviews following the opening of the film, Maxwell openly linked his film to the broader global battle

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<sup>76</sup> Vowell notes that sales of the shirt actually increased when news that McVeigh was wearing the shirt became public knowledge. They ran an ad in the December 1995 issue noting that, though they had sold out of the original Lincoln shirt, "We will be glad to...immediately ship you an equally militant shirt from our catalog" (quoted in Vowell 2005, 58).

against terrorism. As part of an interview he gave to Dick Staub (2003) of *Christianity Today.com*, Maxwell commented that:

We actually saw a startling parallel between our two generations as we were filming. On September 11, 2001, we were filming the Battle of Antietam, which is the bloodiest single day in American history. We had thousands of Confederates and Yankees all bloodied up and filming the battle. Then, we heard about the second tower....what we talked about in those moments was whatever we were feeling...We were perhaps fortunate because we were working on a film about another generation of Americans that was sorely and severely tested over a period of years. Like us, they could not know what would happen the next day, and yet they endured.

The film opens with a scene featuring Robert E. Lee, played in this film by Robert Duvall, being offered command of the Union Army after the bombing of Fort Sumter. Lee turns it down, blaming Lincoln for calling up troops that would dare to invade the “sacred soil” of Virginia. Lee’s choice is naturalized here and made to seem obvious to the viewer; Lee is simply doing what any honorable Christian Southern gentleman would do. He is not fighting to defend the slave-owning aristocracy of which Lee was a member. He is instead defending “his beloved country,” a mythical and beautiful land that is about to be invaded by Northern aggressors. In a later scene, Lee explains the Southern Cause to be a defense of his homeland, stating:

To us, [these lands] are our birthplaces and burial grounds, they’re battlefields where our ancestors fought. They’re places where we made friendships and fell in love. They’re the incarnation of our memories and all that we love. This is something those folks in Washington do not understand.

Stonewall Jackson, played by Stephen Lang, emerges in the first hour of the film as its central character, a heroic general with few peers in either army. The Jackson of the film is without military fault and never loses a battle.<sup>77</sup> In the first hour of the film, Jackson drills green Shenandoah Valley boys into “Stonewall’s Brigade,” a fearsome unit that wins victory after victory for the Confederate cause. In one scene, Jackson tells his cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart that, “We shall show the enemy no quarter. If the Union wins, it is the triumph of commerce and industry. Only the black flag will bring the north to its senses.” The Southern cause is depicted here by Maxwell as a clarion battle between the Christian Jeffersonian vision of agrarian freedom in the Southern states and the ruinous anarchy

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<sup>77</sup> Gallagher (1998) contends that Jackson’s actual military record is rather mixed and that his reputation as a flawless commander owes more to his “heroic” death in battle than actual events on the battlefield.

represented by godless, Northern industrial urbanism. Southern men from all walks of life are shown to rally to Lee, Jackson, and the Confederate cause, doing their duty by enthusiastically volunteering to defend their homeland from the oncoming hoard of Yankee invaders. Their observance of the call to arms of the South is imagined by Maxwell in the film through an early montage set to stirring patriotic music, as men from all walks of life depart their homes and jobs to volunteer for the noble Southern cause.

In Ronald Maxwell's cinematic neo-Confederate vision of the Old South, African-American slaves dutifully obey their white masters and even volunteer to fight alongside whites to defend the Southern rural heimat. The film gives speaking roles to only two African-Americans, both of whom lovingly serve their masters despite their own recognition of the ills of the slave system. The slave character of Martha, played by Donzaleigh Abernathy, for example, dutifully serves as a house slave and mammy for a wealthy Fredericksburg family and is treated as a beloved family member by her benevolent white owners. When Fredericksburg is attacked by the Union Army, Martha stays behind to protect the house and its property from the Yankee devils. Unlike the majority of slaves during the Civil War in Union occupied areas, she and her family do not flee to freedom with the protection of the Union army. She chooses instead to remain in bondage with her owners in Fredericksburg, ever faithful to her masters.

The other prominent African-American character in the film is Jackson's personal chef, the slave Jim Lewis. Lewis, played by Frankie Faison, is a slave who comes to Jackson after actually volunteering to serve the same Confederacy that keeps him in bondage. He tells Jackson that, "Virginia is my home, if I can defend my home and do my share, I will." Lewis' character underpins the long standing Lost Cause assertion that many African-Americans throughout the South rallied to serve the Confederate cause, a ridiculously racist claim with little historical merit. Lewis continues to serve Stonewall lovingly throughout the film, praying with him and tending to him after receiving his wound at Chancellorsville. In one of the most repulsive scenes of the film, the slave-owning Jackson tells Jim that:

There are some of us in this army that we should be enlisting Negroes for condition of freedom Lee is one of them. Your people will be free. The only question is whether the southern government will be the first to do it and to ensure a bond of friendship between our peoples. Gods plan will be revealed to us.

This imagined conversation between Lewis and Jackson features one of the most prominent and lasting elements of the Lost Cause myth: that idea that the Confederate superheroes, Lee and Jackson, were both actually anti-slavery crusaders at heart. The figures of Lee and Jackson present a noble and paternalistic version of white, normative masculinity which continues to resonate today for some Southern men.<sup>78</sup> These were both men who served their homeland militarily, solid family men who were dutiful and obedient Christian soldiers. Though they were both slave-owners, they emerge in popular Southern memory as the opposites of Simon Legree, the ultra-cruel slave-owner portrayed in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Instead, they are memorialized in the context of the racism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as true believers in Southern slave paternalism, men who brought Christian virtues, Protestant labor values, and the promise of capitalist progress to their Southern African-American brothers in bondage. This heroic anti-slavery portrayal of Lee and Jackson also allowed Lost Causers after the war to better make the reconciliationist claim that both men were true American heroes.

The work of Connelly (1977) calls such neo-Confederate mythologizing into question, suggesting such glorified ways of remembering Lee to be nothing more than a myth designed to elevate his post-war standing throughout the United States. As noted by Gallagher (1998, 257), the idea that Lee actually opposed slavery is, “A correct statement only if one applies the most expansive definition of antislavery.” Similarly, the portrayal of Jackson in the film as anti-slavery glosses over his own historical record as a slave-master. Jackson owned six slaves throughout his life, believing it to be an institution ultimately supported and justified by the teachings of the Old Testament. Despite its overall whitewashing of the Southern slave system, Maxwell's film does actually include a few moments where the evils of the slave system are actually discussed. Jim and Martha both state their supposed hatred of the slave system in the film, even as they dutifully and loyally serve their beloved masters. The only Union character with any development in the film is the abolitionist Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, played by Jeff Daniels, a central figure in Maxwell's earlier film *Gettysburg*. Chamberlain is allowed a few moments of dialogue explaining his anti-slavery beliefs to his brother Thomas, played by C. Thomas Howell. He states that:

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<sup>78</sup> This imagining of Lee and Jackson is discussed at some length in the next chapter of this dissertation.

The Confederates claim they are fighting for their freedom, they are wrong but I do not question their integrity. Slavery is a scourge, it has been around since the book of Genesis but that is no excuse to tolerate it here before our very eyes in our own country. If our lives are part of the price to end slavery, then let God's will be done.

Such moments of balance and critique are, however, rare within a neo-Confederate scripted version of the Lost Cause that downplays the importance of slavery as a cause for the Civil War. It is little wonder that many contemporary neo-Confederate groups chose to praise the film publicly for its pro-Southern perspective. The film actually runs well over fifty minutes before any significant Northern character is introduced to the audience and allowed to speak any type of counter to the pro-South rhetoric already raised. In an interview to the *Baltimore Sun*, Maxwell admitted the film takes a “pro-Southern” point of view, though he claims his unfinished, and as of yet unfunded, third film in the Civil War trilogy will provide appropriate historical balance (Kaltenbach 2003). Just as Southern conservatives and neo-Confederate groups continue to rally support for heritage issues, such as continuing the use of the Confederate battle flag on official state symbols, many of these same organizations provided a virulent defense of the film's pro-Confederate representation of history. *Southern Partisan* dedicated almost an entire issue to a discussion of the film, hailing it to be “the best movie treatment of the War you'll ever see...it has a decidedly Christian and pro-Southern bent. Better see it quick” (Sullivan 2003, 2). The review of the film from the neo-Confederate website Lew Rockwell.com further notes that, “To say *Gods and Generals* is slanted toward the South, is to say that *Gods and Generals* was slanted towards the truth. Our cause was just and this film offers a close look at the people who embraced that lost cause” (Pierce 2003).

In perhaps the most extreme example of neo-Confederate support for the film, a coalition led by the Mobile, Alabama chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) pressured the city council to remove George Ewert from his post as director of the Museum of Mobile. Ewert published a scathing online review of *Gods and Generals* for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), noting that it is, “part of a growing [neo-Confederate] movement that seeks to rewrite the history of the American South, downplaying slavery, and the economic system that it sustained” (Ewert 2003). Following the publication of this review, the SCV organized an email and letter writing campaign to the mayor's office

demanding his removal on the grounds of “cultural bigotry”. The SCV also parked a trailer outside of the museum, its cargo bed full of Confederate battle flags, with the words “Diversity: Fire Ewert” written across it (Ewert 2004). Ewert eventually received a censure from the city council and was asked to write a letter of apology by the mayor in order to maintain his position. After receiving support from fellow museum curators throughout the South, the mayor backed down and Ewert ultimately kept his job.

The Ewert incident illustrates the divisive and polarizing nature of *Gods and Generals*, a film that was both hailed and reviled by the public upon its initial release. Both the SPLC and the NAACP criticized the film’s portrayal of African-Americans and slavery. It was also not well received by mainstream movie critics, many of whom rated it among the worst films of the year.<sup>79</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it a “plodding, episodic film...its pro-Southern viewpoint makes *Gone With the Wind* look like a Northern polemic” (quoted in Ewert 2004). Similarly, noted film critic Roger Ebert (2003) of the *Chicago Sun Times* describes *Gods and Generals* on his website as:

A Civil War film that Trent Lott might enjoy. Less enlightened than “Gone with the Wind,” [and] obsessed with military strategy...religiously devout, it waits 70 minutes before introducing the first of its two speaking roles for African Americans; Stonewall Jackson assures his black cook that the South will free him, and the cook looks cautiously optimistic. If World War II were handled this way, there’d be hell to pay.

The negative comments of Ebert and other film critics concerning the film, however, failed to deter Christian and conservative organizations from supporting the film. In addition as a Lost Cause text, I also read the film as one battleground within a broader contemporary culture war within American society. In making this claim, I am following Luke’s (2003, 227) definition of culture war as a continuing contestation within contemporary society concerning the nature of American liberalism. Mitchell (2000, 11) similarly understands culture war to involve “battles over cultural identities-and the power to shape, determine, and literally emplace those identities.” Thus, examples of contemporary culture wars all over the world involve a myriad of complex issues and struggles including:

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<sup>79</sup> The Yahoo Movie Site includes 13 published reviews from newspapers and magazines across the country for the film. The combined “grade” for the film was a C- based upon these 13 reviews. Online at <http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hv&id=1807858511&cf=critic&intl=us>. [Visited January 3, 2004.]

debates over the role of religion within government, clashes over identity issues involving meanings of race, sexuality, and gender within society, the claims of science and technology versus religious traditionalism, and the teaching of history and evolution in public schools. Since the last presidential election, the culture war in the United States is often framed by the mass media as a “Red State-Blue State” debate, a reoccurring clash between the cultural forces of traditional Judeo-Christian America- the Southern states and interior heartland- against the spread of liberal Northeastern and West Coast values.<sup>80</sup>

*Gods and Generals* participates in the contemporary cultural debate over the role of Christianity within American society through the film’s evangelical, pro-Christian message. It represents an attempt to tap into the rising “Southernization” of the United States, particularly the rising power and influence of the Southern Baptist Convention and other evangelical Christian sects. In a country that elected a born-again Christian as president in 2000 and 2004, the film offers a theocratic vision of the American past consistent with the right-wing, Christian world view so prevalent within contemporary American society (Phillips 2006). It is primarily through the character of Stonewall Jackson, the Christian hero whose death at the conclusion we are meant to mourn, that Maxwell conveys his evangelical themes to the audience. He chooses to portray Jackson throughout the film as the ultimate evangelical warrior, a pious man dedicated to the noble cause of Southern freedom and Christian family values. He reads the Bible daily with his wife in Lexington and prays with her before leaving to take up his post as Confederate general. Another scene features Jackson praying with a preacher-friend from Pennsylvania whose son has chosen to stay with his VMI cadets and fight for the Confederacy.

Jackson is later shown praying alone before the Battle of First Manassas, raising his hand to the sky and states that “[Today] I will wield the sword of God and if I die I will come with all the joy in my heart.” After gaining victory in the battle primarily through his fearless and extraordinary prowess on the battlefield, Jackson is then asked by one of his advisors how he remains so calm in the face of the chaos of warfare. In a typically post-9/11 evangelical response, he states that, “My religious belief teaches me to feel safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of death for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to always be ready, no matter when it may overtake me.” Such language uses the

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<sup>80</sup>See Frank (2004) for an excellent discussion of these issues of American culture war and the red state/blue state binary in the contemporary United States.

past as a lesson of scripture within the terror war present, seizing upon the idea of the need for fundamentalist sacrifice in a dislocating and dangerous time. As noted by Phillips (2006, 205), moments of crisis provide fundamentalists with powerful cultural ammunition to play up societal fears of extinction and of their perceived way of life. In such times, it becomes necessary for true Christians, like Jackson, to give their lives and their honor for God and country. His death scene at the end of the movie is set to angelic music, as the white-clad Jackson prepares for his presumed entry into God's kingdom after heroically giving his life for his country and his God.

As a result of its evangelical Christian message, *Gods and Generals* received a great deal of positive press from right-wing Christian organizations. Unlike a majority of godless Hollywood films, evangelical Christian groups understood *Gods and Generals* to be a shining example of the rare major motion picture that portrays Christian values in a positive fashion. The film's portrayal of Stonewall Jackson, for example, is described by one Christian movie web site as a "wonderful example of Christian manhood" that illustrated an "amazing portrayal of trust in and reliance upon God" (C. Anderson 2003). The Christian online film review site *Hollywood Jesus* gives the film its highest endorsement, stating it to be "The most spiritual movie I have seen in a long time...Stephen Lang introduces us to a side of General Jackson that has long been overlooked: his spiritual side (Bruce 2002)." *Plugged-In Online*, the movie review website operated by Focus on the Family, admires the film's "Christian viewpoints" and exhaustively details all of the positive "spiritual content" present in the film (Waliszewski 2003). Such endorsements for the film indict the values present in liberal Hollywood films, the majority of which fail to provide spiritual content for a Christian audience. A review of the film from the online right-wing news site *World Net Daily* praises the film as "historically accurate in every scene, whether or not the facts are politically correct for today's culture" (Hagelin 2003). The review further contends that:

If you've ever fretted or complained about the vast array of immoral material and movies Hollywood puts out these days, you must hit the theatre this weekend. If you've ever fretted or complained how revisionists continue to rewrite American history, how schools teach more fiction about America's glorious past than they teach fact, you must hit the theatre this weekend. [Gods and Generals] is an incredible film about courage, and belief in God, country, and freedom (Hagelin 2003).

Indeed, *Gods and Generals* offers a strong endorsement of these so-called traditional American values, both through its neo-Confederate interpretation of Southern history and

its naturalization of evangelical Christianity. I do not dispute the exhaustive historical research by Robertson and others regarding Jackson's intensive evangelical religious beliefs. Instead, I take issue with the choice of the filmmakers to center the film on the character of Jackson and to portray his radical Christianity as attributes to be admired and emulated by the audience. Jackson is represented as the ultimate example of Southern Christian masculinity, a heroic leader of men without flaw, free of material vice, and utterly devoted to God, country, and family. He is a Christian Crusader, a man that fought for freedom and his homeland during chaotic times eerily similar to the present. That he is also a slave-owner fighting a divisive Civil War to defend the slave system is immaterial to Maxwell and Robertson's idolization of Jackson. He is to be understood as the archetype Christian father figure, a timeless "man's man" worthy of admiration by contemporary evangelical Christian groups such as the Promise Keepers and Focus on the Family.

Consistent with the film's evangelical theme, Maxwell actively marketed the film to a Christian audience, including commissioning right-wing Christian authors John Dwyer and Ted Baehr to edit a companion book for the film entitled *Faith in Gods and Generals* (2003). The book, published by the Christian book group Broadman and Holman, is a series of essays submitted by Christian scholars across the country detailing the "Christian lessons" that can be extracted from watching the film. Included among the essays in this collection are chapters such as: "A Man of Prayers: Stonewall Jackson," "Faith, Hope, and Love: Letters between Stonewall and Mary Jackson," and "No Saint: Ulysses S. Grant." In addition to the Christian companion book, Maxwell also appealed to evangelical Christians to see the film through on-line interviews on Christian websites such as *ChristianityToday.com* and *WorldNetDaily.com*. His interview on *ChristianityToday.com*, for example, included sections discussing both his "spiritual upbringing" and how "his sense of calling" impacts his filmmaking style (Staub 2003). Finally, the ultra-conservative Baptist Reverend Doug Phillips claims on his Christian website *Visionforum.com* to have openly prayed with Maxwell while visiting the set of the film. According to Reverend Phillips (2003), they prayed that:

The final product would be pleasing to God, that God would use the film to bring honor to Jesus Christ, and that millions would better understand manhood as a result of watching this film. What a blessing to think that the testimony of a warrior who died more than one hundred and thirty years ago could lead people to Christ today.

To many conservative Christians, *Gods and Generals* was lauded not only because of its evangelical script. It also represented a cultural reversal away from politically correct portrayals of the Civil War past. Supporters of the film claim it to be a more authentic version of American history rather than the depressingly negative “PC” history present in contemporary education (Baker and Roberts 2003). In emphasizing its supposed authenticity, Patrick Stoner (2003) of *PBS Television* praised the film, noting that “It’s important to remember that you are not viewing the world of the Deep South with its large plantations of slaves, but Virginia, where there were areas like the Shenandoah Valley where I grew up, that saw almost no slavery and none on the scale or misery of the Deep South”<sup>81</sup> The infamous conservative columnist Phyllis Schlafly (2003) commented on the film that:

At last we have a movie that presents truthful history rather than fiction or politically-correct revisionism...Ron Maxwell presents a balanced picture of a time long ago...but will schools teach history as it happened or as the politically correct revisionists wish it had happened?...*Gods and Generals* can remedy a glaring gap in the [contemporary] teaching of American history. It’s a must see.

The loaded “PC” claim was also used by Maxwell and his expert historians to explain both the limited box-office success of the film and to deflect criticism levied at the film by reviewers and special interest groups across the country. The film cost nearly \$56 million to make and only recouped back less than \$15 million of that initial cost in box office sales. Not surprisingly, Maxwell and his supporters blamed his “PC critics” for blacklisting the film. Maxwell even went so as to claim that a massive liberal conspiracy foiled the film, commenting to the right-wing Christian website *WorldNetDaily* that, “I’m not a conspiracy person. I don’t see conspiracies behind everything that happens in life. But I suspect it was collusion, if not a conspiracy – that people got on the e-mail or the phone and they said, ‘Let’s shut down this film’” (Moore 2003).

This ludicrous suggestion of a Hollywood conspiracy against *Gods and Generals* by Maxwell should not come as a surprise given his right-wing, pro-Christian worldview. He clearly embraced and marketed the film as a right-wing, theocratic polemic through his various appeals to evangelical churches and conservative Christian websites (Moore 2003). His own conservative worldview is consistent with racist neo-Confederate ideology, one that

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<sup>81</sup> Though Stoner’s claims that the Valley had little or no slavery in comparison to areas of the Deep South is not in dispute, his notion that slaves in the Valley were not as miserable as other slaves is a rather ludicrous and borderline racist claim.

views Anglo-Celtic culture as the only true culture of the South and which posits racist views on the rise of illegal immigrant labor in the townscapes of the American South. In an interview published by the neo-Confederate journal *Chronicles*, Maxwell made disturbing comments regarding the problem of Hispanic immigration into the American Southwest. Maxwell positions himself as an expert on the American Civil War, claiming that a “new Civil War” could erupt in the United States as a result of Hispanic immigration into the United States (Sebesta 2002). Sounding eerily like Samuel Huntington, Maxwell (quoted in Sebesta 2002) makes a startling racist claim that:

We should be casting a discerning eye around the globe the globe in an effort to anticipate future Kosovo's. Sadly for America, the southwestern United States could become a Tex-Mex-style Balkan powder keg in the not-too-distant future. Those who believe that “it can't happen here” should remember that a cataclysmic civil war tore this country apart once already, only 135 years ago, when our population was much more ethnically and culturally homogeneous than it is today.

Maxwell (2003) also published an article online entitled “In Defense of My Film” in which he accused his detractors of “cultural intimidation” and chided them for their failure to understand how he “challenged assumptions” concerning Southern and African-American history. He further claimed in his interview with *Southern Partisan* that his characters are all based on “real people...this is the true story and it must be told out of respect to the blacks and whites that lived through the caldron of the War” (Southern Partisan 2003b). The DVD extras for the film include a commentary from Maxwell and the film's two historical advisors, James Robertson, Jr. and Keith Gibson, in which they claim that previous films have not adequately discussed the conflict concerning loyalty to their masters facing African-American slaves. As Gibson states in the commentary, “Some would say where are the blacks being flogged in the film? That is not [historically] what Jackson was about.”<sup>82</sup> In hiding behind the protective wall of historical authenticity, these supposed experts such as Gibson attempt to further avoid criticism for the film's decision not to depict scenes featuring the egregious acts of violence perpetrated against African-Americans in the Old South.

In their defense of the film based on its historical authenticity, the makers of *Gods and Generals* fail to appreciate exactly how much of the film's version of the past actually

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<sup>82</sup> Transcribed by author from DVD extras, 21 February, 2005.

supports the original 1870's version of Lost Cause mythology, a set of discourses not rooted in historical fact. Instead of debunking Old South myths, as Maxwell claims as one of his goals as a historical filmmaker, he relies them in his epic storytelling.<sup>83</sup> The film also relies largely upon the interpretations of historians with a vested economic interest in preserving the heroic legacy of men like Lee and Jackson-Robertson as the official biographer of Stonewall and Gibson as the curator of two museums, VMI and New Market, largely dedicated to the celebration of the noble deeds of Confederate heroes. Indeed, the original Jeff Shaara book *Gods and Generals* has been taken to task by historian Gary Gallagher (1998) for relying heavily upon the false and mythical traditions of past Lost Cause literature well before the film version was ever made. The portrayal of Lee in the book, for example, "virtually never departs from the Lost Cause orthodoxy...as he literally sheds tears when he decides to go against the Union" and he and Jackson achieve countless acts of heroic and "strategic brilliance" throughout Virginia (Gallagher 1998, 220).

Similarly, Maxwell and the film's supporters cannot escape critique for their horrific portrayal of the Southern slave system by simply claiming, as they do in the DVD commentary, that the horrors of slavery are dealt with in "other films." He instead focuses his film on the story of two loyal slaves, Jim and Martha, two actual historical figures he discovered while researching for the film. For every historical "Martha" and "Jim" found in historical archives, however, there are countless other stories of African-Americans who were persecuted horribly by the slave system and hated their masters. His decision to tell faithful slave stories from Civil War history, both of which are somewhat peripheral to the overall narrative plot of the film, speaks volumes regarding Maxwell's overall intentions and politics as a filmmaker. It is the cinematic equivalent of the UDC erecting a faithful slave monument on the grounds of a Civil War battlefield.

As films are powerful sites of power/knowledge, filmmakers like Maxwell have a certain responsibility to consider regarding the particular stories they choose to film and the overall cinematic choices they make concerning the historical past. By focusing an entire four hour film on the glories of the Old South, Maxwell missed an important opportunity to actual engage in an honest and open discussion regarding the African-American experience within American society. He chose instead to align himself with neo-Confederate and

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<sup>83</sup> In his *Southern Partisan* (2003b, 17) interview, Maxwell states that, "A filmmaker who makes historical films has a duty to cut through mythology...I have to cut through it to the truth of events and the people."

Christian conservative groups that would rather pretend as if the Old South really was the mythical “moonlight and magnolias,” Christian utopia imagined from the scenes of earlier films such as *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*. In *Gods and Generals*, Ron Maxwell has truly made a film that would make Edward Pollard, Jubal Early, and the earliest of the Virginia Lost Cause advocates proud.

## Chapter Five: Look Away, Look Away, Look Away to Lexington

### *A Confederate Mecca*

This chapter is a critical study of contemporary Lexington, Virginia, examining issues of collective memory and heritage within what is a traditional mecca of Old South remembrance. Located at the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley, Lexington is the most important center of Civil War memory in the entire region. To borrow a term from Till (2002, 290), Lexington operates as a “theatre of memory,” a collection of memorial spaces, landscapes, and “stages” where politically-charged meanings of the Civil War past are spatially enacted, produced, and negotiated by and for contemporary audiences. Though the meanings of the past are constantly in flux and open to significant alterations in the present, I suggest that contemporary visitors to Lexington’s heritage sites learn a version of the Civil War past heavily influenced by many of the same Lost Cause myths first introduced into Southern culture and society in the decades after the end of the Civil War.



Figure 5.1

#### Downtown Lexington Signs

Downtown, Lexington VA. Note the Confederate place-names for businesses in the town, illustrating the omnipresence of Lee and Jackson in Lexington (Bohland).

As a center of Old South memorialization, the academic and heritage sites of the town disseminate not only Lost Cause mythology. They also promote conservative,

evangelical Christian, and militaristic views of white Southern masculinity to the public. Indeed, the two universities of the town, located literally right next to each other on Letcher Street, embody the two dominant archetypes of the ideal Southern male: the Jacksonian soldier who performs his honorable duty to God and country when called- prevalent at the Virginia Military Institute- as well as the learned and chivalrous aristocrat who lives a noble, honorable, and well-mannered life dedicated to God and family until he is also called to service to defend his homeland of Virginia- ubiquitous within the culture of Washington and Lee University (Mead 2002). These two men represent normative ideals for the contemporary white Southern male, visions of traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century manliness and Jeffersonian federalism still attractive to modern men living in a region dislocated by post-New South globalization. Students at both universities, however, often fail to live up to the standards of honorable Southern masculinity promoted by their respective institutions and Southern heritage discourse. This chapter highlights examples of somewhat embarrassing public scandals at both universities which call into question just how honorable students act at these institutions. I further engage in an extended critical reading of Southern masculinity at both universities in an attempt to link archotypically Southern masculinity to Confederate heroes of the past and to emphasize the masculine disciplinary power present at both VMI and Washington and Lee.

In researching this chapter, I visited a number of Civil War heritage and academic sites in Lexington during the summer and fall of 2004. Though this chapter focuses primarily on the veneration of Lee and Jackson, I also analyze additional Civil War heroes and events which feature prominently in the local spaces and rituals of Confederate remembering. The heritage spaces I critique include a number of sites located at or associated with the town's two institutions of higher education: Washington and Lee and VMI. These sites include the Lee Chapel and Museum, the VMI Museum, Jackson Hall at VMI, the national headquarters of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity, and Civil War statues and monuments located on both campuses and at local cemeteries. I am particularly interested in examining how these institutions play a direct role in the mass circulation of the reconciliatory version of Lost Cause mythology, one which promotes Confederate generals as national heroes, to the public.

Additionally, the chapter includes readings of two heritage sites located in the quaint and hyper-real downtown of Lexington: The Stonewall Jackson House and Museum and the

Stonewall Jackson Cemetery. Beginning in the 1960s, the downtown of Lexington passed a series of regulations requiring businesses to conform to certain historical standards. As occurred in other American heritage towns such as Gettysburg, the entire downtown was reinvented and restored in an attempt to look much as it did during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when the Civil War took place. A large section of the downtown now operates as a “theatre of memory,” a collection of historical spaces where tourists walk through an entire downtown designed to simulate life during the “good old days” of the Civil War era. Though it had always attracted curious Civil War heritage tourists, the town government began to more aggressively pursue visitors to Lexington as part of its restoration plan. Many of the local businesses in the town attempt to connect to the Civil War past by featuring the names “Stonewall” or “Lee” in their title, further marking the town as a Confederate heritage space.

My visits to Lexington as part of this study were not my first to the town. I grew up just over an hour’s drive from Lexington and my elementary school visited parts of the town as part of an all-day field trip. I applied to attend university at Washington and Lee in 1989 and, after visiting the campus on a typically ideal fall day, was captivated by its connection to the past, its rigid honor code, and insistence upon a classical, liberal-arts education. It was a school where the ghosts of the Confederate past seemed omnipresent and, unlike many schools I visited, where students seemed to take their education seriously. Indeed, I would likely have attended W&L if their soccer coach had shown interest in me earlier in the admissions process and if the cost of tuition had been much lower. My readings of heritage Lexington are therefore a highly personal and reflective project for me. I see much of my critique in this chapter as a reappraisal of my childhood understanding of the Civil War and the regional disciplinary power of Civil War heritage that influenced me to identify with the Civil War in ways that I now challenge. As a son and citizen of the region, I ultimately approach my (re)examination of heritage Lexington with Henry Boley’s final quote in mind: Has Lexington, as Boley hoped, retained the spirit and memory of the Old South?

*Lee Chapel and Museum*

*“But even this Chapel is not Lee’s sanctuary. The real shrine is in the hearts and the minds of the people. To them Lee is the hero defending his homeland with the last ounce of his strength”* (Fishwick 1959, 140).

Chartered in 1777, the town of Lexington, Virginia became the county seat for the newly formed Rockbridge County at the southern tip of the Shenandoah Valley. In a strange foreshadowing of its later association with militarism, revolution, and rebellion, the town took its name from Lexington, Massachusetts, the site of the opening battle of the American Revolution. The early Lexington was a non-descript country village at the western edge of what was considered to be developed and civilized Virginia. As in the rest of the Valley, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians comprised the majority of the population of Lexington (Boley 1936). This white immigrant population included slave-holders and the history of slavery in the region traces back to well before the town received its official charter. By 1810, there were 1,724 slaves in Rockbridge County, making up 16.7% of its total population (University of Virginia Library 2004a) This number rose to 3,985 in 1860, accounting for just over 20% of its entire population and ranking it second to Augusta County in terms of total slave populations within the Shenandoah Valley (University of Virginia Library 2004b).

First released in 1936, Henry Boley’s book *Lexington in Old Virginia* is one of the few published histories of the town. A California native born in Lexington, Boley describes Lexington in only the most glowing terms, including bestowing upon it the title “Athens of the Old South.” His admiration and idyllic love for the town of his youth are certainly reflected in the following passage describing the landscapes of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lexington:

Though changes have come to Lexington since ante bellum days, it still has that intangible something that people love...be it literature, art, music, science, religion, or politics in which they are interested, here they are to find kindred spirits...the old town is rich in places and things of historic interest. The tombs of Lee and Jackson, the most vivid military figures of the War Between the States, are meccas for countless thousands; the matchless Washington and Lee campus of ninety acres still reflects the calm dignity of Lee, whose spirit seems to hover over all; and at the [Virginia Military] Institute, the military exactness and preciseness of Jackson is equally felt (Boley 1936, 220).

Boley's depiction of Lexington notes the town's connection to the United States Civil War and to the two greatest Confederate heroes of that conflict: Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Jackson's association with the town began in 1851 when he moved to Lexington following the end of the Mexican-American War to teach natural and experimental philosophy (physics) and artillery tactics at the Virginia Military Institute. He left the Institute in 1861 and gained mythical status as a Confederate military icon before dying at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863. Lee became a resident of the town in 1865, spending the remainder of his post-war life serving as president of Washington College. Both men were ultimately buried in the town and statues designed by the famed artist Edward Valentine adorn their entombment sites.

Lexington operates, in Boley's terms, as a mecca of Confederate memory, a holy site where pilgrims by the thousands come to pay homage to the great men of the Confederacy. Boley clearly admires both Lee and Jackson and the Confederate cause for which they fought. He dedicated his book to "the gallant men who followed Lee" and its original cover featured Confederate flags draped over the title. The text of the book included a collection of local anecdotes featuring Lee and Jackson and their various contributions to the town's history. Three full chapters of the book are devoted to the dedication ceremonies of memorial statues in town to both men during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The book ends with the statement, "May Lexington retain for all time much of that spirit of the Old South of song and story" (Boley 1936, 228).

Before achieving status as a center of Old South memorialization, Lexington gained its early reputation as a regional center for higher education in the Western hinterlands of Virginia. It became a college town in 1776 after the all-male Augusta Academy of Staunton relocated to Rockbridge County and reopened as Liberty Hall Academy in 1782. Following a substantial financial endowment from George Washington and in an attempt to capitalize on the famous name of an American president, the school changed its name to Washington College in 1798. From its inception, students at Washington College practiced a strict and traditional liberal-arts curriculum, emphasizing classical education, philosophy, and theology. The school was actually promoted to the Virginia General Assembly in 1817 by Lexington officials as an ideal site for the newly proposed University of Virginia. Charlottesville eventually beat out Lexington and several other Virginia towns as the chosen location for the new state university, leading to a difficult period for Washington College in which it

struggled to attract regional students away from the state-funded colleges. At the time of the Civil War, the privately funded school had only sixty-nine students and was nearly bankrupt (Boley 1936, 99). It actually closed its doors from 1861-1865, as a number of students joined the local Rockbridge Volunteers and served under former VMI professor Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson in the Confederate Army during the Civil War.



<p>Figure 5.2 Washington and Lee Campus Academic and administrative buildings in the old section of campus, Washington and Lee University (Bohland).</p>	<p>Figure 5.3 Washington and Lee Campus Front shot of the old section of campus at Washington and Lee University (Llewellyn Lodge).</p>
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In an attempt to raise its profile in the South after the Civil War, the trustees of Washington College turned to Robert E. Lee to rescue the school from economic ruin. The school actually elected Lee president without initially consulting him, a position he ultimately accepted as a way of illustrating his commitment to rebuilding the educational and economic foundation of the South. Washington College, along with the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, soon became one of two post-war academic and educational centers for Confederate memorialization (Wilson 1980). This was primarily as a result of both institutions hiring prominent former Confederate military and government leaders to serve as administrators and faculty members. He immediately attracted donors to the financially strapped college, including the inventor of the reaper and Valley resident Cyrus McCormick, Washington banker William Corcoran, and Massachusetts philanthropist George Peabody (Beimiller 2006). In addition to attracting increased funding, Lee’s hiring also brought a

number of ex-Confederates to Washington College and the school began to serve as a geographic center for some of the most famous speeches and orations of the two 19<sup>th</sup> century versions of the Lost Cause: the original Jubal Early separatism and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century reconciliation script. The famed Lost Cause orator Benjamin Morgan Palmer, for example, remarked that his 1872 invitation to teach at Washington and Lee “touched me with the solemnity of a call from the grave. I felt as I turned my steps hither, that I was making a pilgrimage to my country’s shrine” (quoted in Wilson 1980, 158). Similarly, the writer Thomas Nelson Page, credited as one of the originators of the plantation epic, told his students at Washington and Lee in 1867 that “it was Southern intellect and Southern patriotism which created the federal constitution” and that the white South had been “dismembered, disenfranchised, and denationalized” by the same ungrateful republic that created (quoted in Cobb 2005, 101).

The hiring of Lee and several other ex-Confederates resulted in national recognition for the small school and its enrollment increased from fifty students in 1865 to just over 400 three years later (White 1911, 21).<sup>84</sup> As Reverend William Nelson Pendleton commented, “No other centre of influence at the South could match Lexington by reason of the mighty effect of General Lee’s presence and example” (quoted in Wilson 1980, 153). Following Lee’s death in 1870, the school would be renamed Washington and Lee in honor of the former Confederate hero and to capitalize upon the “good name” of the general (Wilson 1980, 156). Lee was eventually buried on the campus of the college at the newly-constructed Lee Chapel and his tomb and an attached museum dedicated to his memory attracted thousands of visitors to Lexington each year. Even after his death in 1870, however, Lee’s legacy remained strong at the college. His name was added to the title of the university in 1872 and his son G.W. Custis Lee succeeded him as university president.

Like Lee’s military career, a mythology developed around his achievements as the president of Washington College from 1865-1870. He is credited by historians not only for saving the financially ruined college, but also for modernizing its campus and curriculum. Without completely revamping its traditional emphasis on classical education, he added departments in chemistry, physics, history, applied mathematics, and literature in an effort to

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<sup>84</sup> As Wilson (1980, 152) notes, Lee’s presidency was greeted with a great deal of skepticism by many Northern newspapers and magazines that considered it to be egregious that a avowed traitor to the United States should hold the position of university president.

update the university curriculum (Fishwick 1963, 136). His daily campus regimen became the stuff of legend at W&L. Following his daily morning prayers, Lee is said to have immersed himself in nearly all of the daily operations of the college. He supposedly knew all of his students by name and could recite their grades and the comments made by faculty members on their grade-sheets from memory (Fishwick 1963, 162). Anecdotes concerning student and faculty encounters with the “great man” himself circulated well after his death, many of which are collected in both Boley’s text and former Washington and Lee professor Marshall W. Fishwick’s book *Lee After the War* (1963).



Figure 5.4

Lee Chapel

Front of the Lee Chapel on the campus of Washington & Lee University

(Llewellyn Lodge).

The main chapel on campus that now bears Lee’s name was built during his time as president as a central meeting place for the rising number of students now on campus. As Simpson (2003, 86) notes, little is known regarding the actual planning and designing of the structure. The school chapel, which would eventually be the site of the Lee family mausoleum and the famed Edward Valentine recumbent statue of Lee resting at camp, was actually criticized following Lee’s death for being “unattractive” and having a design “not worthy” of Lee’s greatness (Simpson 2003, 90). Plans for a new structure to replace Lee Chapel were in place during the 1920’s and the trustees of Washington and Lee sponsored a

national campaign for funds for a new Lee memorial. In a classic example of Lee mythology, the original structure was ultimately saved when the local Lexington chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy worked to save the original structure. These women argued, despite no historical evidence to support their claim, that Lee himself had designed the chapel and was “practically its builder” (Simpson 2003, 92). Lee Chapel was eventually modernized, refurbished, and expanded on four separate occasions and now includes an extensive museum to Lee’s legacy in its basement.

Lee Chapel, once criticized for being ugly and unworthy of Lee’s mythologized greatness, is now one of the most visited tourist sites in all of Lexington and is the most celebrated structure on the W&L campus. It is both a pilgrimage site for contemporary Lee admirers and the site where particular memorial rituals honoring Lee are held annually. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) famously noted the importance of collective rituals and “invented traditions” in order to sustain particular memories of the past. Similarly, scholars such as Wilson (1980) and Blair (2004) contend that post-war rituals practiced by Confederate memorial organizations played a critical role in both the construction and public dissemination of the original divisive version of Lost Cause mythology. At the Lee Chapel, contemporary rituals continue to memorialize Robert E. Lee as both a faultless Confederate leader and the savior of the university. Lee’s birthday in January, for example, continues to be celebrated at the Lee Chapel with a series of readings and orations dedicated to his legacy and memory.<sup>85</sup> VMI students walking by the chapel are obliged to salute it in honor of the hero of the Old South. All incoming W&L freshman receive an extended address from the campus president in Lee Chapel regarding the history of the college and the expectations Lee placed upon students during his time as president. It is also a popular site for weddings, with a three year waiting list for couples seeking to get married in front of the statue of the “Christian warrior.”

Contemporary visitors to the Lee Chapel enter a space entirely dedicated to the preservation and idealization of Lee’s memory. In the spirit of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Lost Cause reconciliation discourse, a sign hanging at the entrance tells visitors that the Lee Chapel “seeks to honor for all Americans the ideals and noble purposes exemplified by the life of

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<sup>85</sup> The 2004 celebration, co-sponsored by the History and Theatre Departments, included a lecture by Alex Wise entitled “Lee’s Inner Quest” and a living history demonstration called “Christina Bond’s Memories of Robert E. Lee.”

Robert E. Lee.” Indeed, the portrayal of Lee at the Lee Chapel and throughout the campus of Washington and Lee as the quintessential honorable American reflects this reconciliation version of Lost Cause mythology. On the front wall of the building, the names of the Washington College students that served in Jackson’s “Stonewall Brigade” immediately mark the building as a Confederate military and masculine memorial space. The interior of the Chapel includes a series of plaques and markers denoting areas deemed to be of particular importance to visitors. The seat where Lee sat for Christian worship, for example, is marked by a plaque reading: “Here he attended daily worship services.”

As noted throughout this dissertation, such a connection between evangelical Christianity and the secular Lost Cause was a common strategy utilized by Confederate apologists following the end of the war. It began almost immediately after the Civil War, as ministers and church officials such as J. William Jones and Robert Lewis Dabney preached fiery sermons and published numerous books lauding the Christian nobility of the Confederate cause and granting saint-like status to its Christian heroes. These ministers urged Southerners to keep the faith and to spread their conservative version of Christianity throughout the United States. In doing so, the South could be vindicated and win the new war of ideas throughout the country. Thus, the dream of victory in the long culture war became the way the South could ultimately triumph over the godless, industrial North (Phillips 2006). As Hague and Sebesta (2002) further contend, this strategy of tying Confederate memory to Christianity is still utilized today by contemporary neo-Confederate organizations to support their claims that the South is and always has been a Christian, conservative nation.

The central focus of the Lee Chapel is Edward Valentine’s statue *Recumbent Lee*, a magnificent marble statue picturing Lee at rest located directly behind the Christian pulpit in a chamber added to the original edifice in order to house the new monument. On the day in October when my friends and I visited the campus, two memorial wreaths and a set of flowers adorned the statue, placed there by local chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to honor Lee’s birthday on October 12<sup>th</sup>. An attendant from the local chapter of the UDC greeted us and offered to answer any questions we had about the chapel and Robert E. Lee. The connection between the UDC and the maintenance of the Lee Chapel began in 1920 when the organization entered in a long-term agreement with the university to provide an attendant, paid for by an endowment to the university, in order to meet the rising

number of visitors to the monument (Simpson 2002, 90). The UDC publishes pamphlets available to Lee Chapel visitors which tell their version of the heroic story of Robert E. Lee, his famed horse Traveller, and the role that the UDC played in both preserving the original chapel and re-interring Traveller's remains to a place of honor directly outside of the Chapel. The back of the pamphlet entitled "Preserving Lee Chapel" includes the statement of the "UDC Mission," noting that:

The UDC's constitutional objectives are *historical, benevolent, educational, memorial, and patriotic*. Its aims are to *honor the memory* of those who served and those who fell in the services of the Confederate states; to *protect, preserve, and mark* places made historic by *Confederate valor*; to collect and preserve material for a *truthful and accurate* history of the *War Between the States* (my emphasis).

The above quotation illustrates the particular version of Confederate history supported by the UDC and disseminated to the public through its literature. The important role played by the organization in the construction of racist and inflammatory Lost Cause mythology is often disregarded by some scholars and cultural critics who view the UDC as little more than a harmless group of nostalgic, blue-haired elderly Southern women sitting around church halls sipping tea.<sup>86</sup> On the contrary, local and state chapters of the UDC have historically been some of the most active supporters and lobbyists for divisive Lost Cause mythology throughout the South (Cox 2003). Indeed, as noted in Chapter Two, the UDC continued to actively promote and disseminate pro-Confederate mythology well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as they believed that the new reconciliation of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century diluted the pro-South message of the original forms of Lost Cause discourse. In addition to celebrating this antiquated version of Confederate mythology, the UDC also supported a post-Civil War cultural and political agenda that maintained the hegemonic power of whiteness in the American South (Hale 1998; Cox 2003).

Though the UDC claims to be an American patriotic organization, the organization supports readings of the American past that valorize white supremacist power in the South (Hale 1998). The pamphlet also seems to frame the UDC as a heritage watchdog organization, providing "truthful" and "accurate" versions of the Civil War past that counter what they believe are the inaccuracies found within the contemporary liberal, politically-

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<sup>86</sup> I engage in a more thorough analysis of the history of the UDC and its continuing role as a protector and promoter of Confederate memory in my chapter on Civil War museums of the Shenandoah Valley.

correct accounts of the conflict. In allowing the UDC to pass out its literature and place an attendant in the chapel, Washington and Lee University continues to align itself with a memorial organization that has a racist and pro-Confederate past and present. The university is guilty in this case of at least passively participating in acts of Lost Cause memorialization and they also provide powerful institutional legitimacy to a long serving Confederate heritage organization.

The Lee Chapel Museum, located in lower level of the building, further ties the university to the active production of Lost Cause mythology. The museum, which opened in 1928 and was renovated in 1999, lies across from the Lee family crypt which houses the remains of the majority of Lee's direct relations. It is operated primarily by the university funding and serves as a repository for Lee-related documents and paraphernalia. In particular, the museum's exhibits focus on Lee's five years as president of Washington College and his legacy at the institution. As noted by Luke (2002), museums are powerful sites where Americans go to learn about art, culture, science, technology, and its national history. They are, in Foucault's language, "disciplinary institutions" that utilize techniques of classification and display as a way of disseminating normative truths to the public (Foucault 1979).<sup>87</sup> I read the Lee Chapel Museum, as well as the VMI and Stonewall Jackson House museums discussed later in this chapter, as powerful knowledge sites where the public gains critical information concerning the meaning and memory of the Civil War and its historical legacy within the United States.

Though I am following Crang's method of an ideal reader (2003, 262) in reading the exhibits within this museum, I do not dispute the likelihood that a percentage of visitors to the Lee Chapel leave the space with interpretations of the material far different than what is hoped for by museum designers. Instead, I am concerned with what particular historical interpretations the directors of these museums choose to propagate to the public. It should be noted that a large percentage of visitors to these museums are elementary school children on history field trips, young men boys and girls experiencing and learning about Civil War history for the first time. Such a group of children tend to be ill-equipped intellectually to process historical information critically and to understand the political complexities involved with reading history. This renders them quite susceptible to blind acceptance to the

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<sup>87</sup> I discuss museums and museum displays in more detail in both the literature review chapter and my extended reading of Valley museums in Chapter Six.

normative truths expressed in the museum exhibits as a result of what may be their first encounter with Civil War era scholarship.

As has been the trend for most American museums, the Lee Chapel Museum now has an on-line presence designed to enhance visitor experiences to the site and to extend its version of Lee family history to a much-wider audience. The website features an extensive education section for teachers taking children to the museum to view before their fieldtrip (Lee Chapel and Museum 2001a). This section includes a twelve-page teacher's guide designed by Amanda Adams, a Robert E. Lee Scholar in 2001, and a series of lesson plans designed for elementary school teachers organized around themes of history, archeology, and character education. Teachers are encouraged on the website to use these lesson plans in their classroom instruction to prepare students for their visit to the Lee Chapel. One of the included lesson plans in the history section entitled "North and South" includes a reading comprehension worksheet that attempts to explain Lee's role in the Civil War. Excerpts from the worksheet (Lee Chapel and Museum 2001a) include:

Robert E. Lee was born on a *beautiful plantation* in Virginia in 1807...when Robert E. Lee was a child, everyone was very excited about the United States *because it was brand new*. But when Lee grew up, things started to change....some people wanted a national government that could *boss the states around*. Others wanted a national government that would *let the states do whatever they wanted*...Lee did not want to fight against his *friends and family*. So he became head of the Confederate army, which was fighting for the South. Robert E. Lee fought very hard and became very famous. *Even the people in the North liked him*. But the Confederate Army lost the Civil War to the Union Army in 1865. The South could not leave the United States, and they could no longer own slaves. The people of the South were upset. But *Robert E. Lee refused to be upset*. He wanted the North and South to be friends and the United States to be a *happy place* again and a united country (my emphasis).

In this particular Lee Chapel Museum history worksheet, young students learn little about slave system, as lessons regarding values such as freedom, human rights, equality, and dignity remain un-discussed. Instead, students receive a reconciliationist-tinged version of the Lost Cause that both glorifies a Confederate and presupposed national hero and glosses over the causes of the war itself. By claiming, for example, that "some people wanted a national government that bossed around" the states, as opposed to a states rights government that "let the states do whatever they wanted," the worksheet sets up a binary where most children would clearly identify with the more lenient, and "less bossy/parent-

like” Southern states. Robert E. Lee is portrayed in the worksheet as a hero to people in both the North and South, despite the fact that Lee’s construction as a reconciliatory national hero came about in the decades following his death as a result of Lost Cause mythology (Connolly 1977). Lee’s image as the ideal post-war reconciler, an important element of Lee’s Lost Cause legend, is also supported by this text. Lee, it is suggested, just wanted everyone to “be happy” and to “unite” once the war ended. This version of Lee as the great national unifier ignores contemporary scholarship regarding his continued insistence after the war that the blame for the conflict rested solely with Lincoln and the Republican Party. It also ignores the support he gave to ex-Confederates such as Jubal Early in their attempts to publish “the truth” about the noble Southern cause (Connolly 1977; Nolan 1991)

Once arriving at the museum, students and visitors learn from a variety of displays focused on the enduring legacy of Lee at both W&L and within the broader national story. The first display room of the museum features a gallery of paintings featuring six generations of family members from both the Lee and George Washington clans. The room appears to be an attempt to link the families of the men for whom the university is named. In actuality, the link between the two families is a tenuous one, through Washington’s wife Martha’s first husband Daniel Curtis. The explanation of this limited familial link can be found only in a small box on the family tree graph located on the far end of the gallery wall. As well as connecting the two heroes of the university, the gallery space also suggests in a typical reconciliation script that Robert E. Lee, like former President George Washington, is a national hero worthy of adoration and respect from all Americans.

The reconciliatory theme of Lee as a national hero is further illustrated by two other objects displayed as part of the museum collection. The first is a painting of another legendary American president Thomas Jefferson. Underneath the painting the accompanying text notes that Lee had two relatives sign the Declaration of Independence, marking him as being from American patriot lineage. The fact that both Jefferson and Lee were products of a Virginia planter class aristocracy that acquired their wealth primarily through African slavery is conveniently excluded from the museum text and from this glorified reading of Lee normativity. The second object is the original copy of the 1975 Act of Congress restoring Lee’s citizenship which had been stripped by the United States government after the war. The document suggests to the museum goer that, as the nation

continues to heal from the division of the Civil War past, we as Americans need to put aside our old sectional differences and recognize Lee as the true national patriot he was. It also proposes that it is never too late to reconcile with rebels from our divisive past, even almost one-hundred years after the end of the Civil War.

A small museum shop, located at the center of the main exhibit hall, operates as a consumer shrine to Lee, the Confederacy, and the Lost Cause. On my research visit to the museum, I overheard a man in the museum shop telling the cashier that, “This place is so politically incorrect, it is wonderful.” The shop pedals all things Confederate, including miniature Rebel flags, pens and pencils with Rebel flags, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson T-shirts, and children’s dress up books, where young kids can outfit male and female paper dolls in traditional Old South garb. A number of Civil War themed DVD’s and VHS documentaries are also on sale, including the neo-Confederate film *Gods and Generals* and the documentary *Warriors of Honor: Christian Faith and the Legacy of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.*, a film marketed to Christian evangelicals which frames Lee and Jackson as crusaders and Christian warriors worthy of respect and emulation. The store includes a small rack of Civil War books, a number of which frame Lee as a role model for contemporary young men to emulate. Among the titles on sale include: *Leadership Lessons of Robert E. Lee*, *Wit and Wisdom of Robert E. Lee*, *Maxims of Robert E. Lee for Young Gentlemen*, and *The Genius of Robert E. Lee*. The only work of Lee revisionism on sale in the shop was Connolly’s *Marble Man*, a sole copy of which I found buried behind a copy of Emory Thomas’ far more conciliatory biography *Robert E. Lee*. Not surprisingly, it is Thomas’ book which is recommended by the Lee Chapel Museum Shop webpage for readings seeking an excellent, “probing and personal biography” on the great man himself (Lee Chapel and Museum 2001b).

*The Most Honorable of Southern Gentlemen*

*“Honor has caused more deaths than the plague.”*

*-Julian Pitt Rhodes (quoted in Wyatt-Brown 2001, 295)*

Returning back to the main exhibit hall, visitors to the museum encounter only a small number of museum displays dedicated to Lee’s legendary military career. Instead, the majority of the permanent exhibits at Lee Chapel spotlight his contributions to Washington College while president from 1865-70. A large exhibit case across the back wall entitled “Changes during the Lee Presidency,” for example, notes a number of the curriculum alterations made during his time as head of the college including the additions of the Schools of Law and Journalism. Part of the display text claims that the “entire framework of education at W&L fits the educational vision of Robert E. Lee.” He is also noted for having greatly increased both the size of the faculty and the overall student body, again illustrating the broad “Lee as college savior” theme prevalent on campus. According to Lawrence Beimmiller (2006), in his recent article on Lee’s legacy at W&L in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “[Lee] took a personal interest in the progress of every student, at the same time sweeping aside a maze of old rules and regulations and replacing them with a single admonition: Students should behave like gentlemen.”

It is the introduction of Southern civility, discipline, and gentlemanly honor to the student experience that is the most celebrated aspect of Lee’s legacy within the exhibit halls of the Lee Chapel. Lee’s legendary normative status as the archetype of white, Southern genteel masculinity developed primarily after the war, as Southern historians and Lost Cause advocates promoted Lee as the ideal Southern gentlemen for all men to emulate (Wyatt-Brown 1982). By the end of the century, Lee’s image as the great reconciliator was firmly entrenched. He was no longer a traitor who turned his back on his United States military command in favor of serving a rebellion. As a result of this reconciliationist fusion of the Lost Cause and the Cause Victorious, Lee became- to borrow Connolly’s famous term- a “marble man,” an American hero above criticism who people of the entire nation could adore and appreciate. Like other national heroes, anecdotes and quotations from Lee continue to be used to teach social and political lesson even today. At the Lee Chapel, particularly inspirational and instructive quotes and maxims from Lee emphasizing his Southern honor and gentility adorn the walls and display cases. Additionally, a collection of

his wit and wisdom is on sale in the Lee Chapel Shop in book form. As mentioned previously, the Lee Chapel website includes a series of lessons plans teaching “Character Education and Citizenship” in which elementary school students learn civility from Lee himself. According to campus legend and noted in the text of one display case, Lee is said to have told an undergraduate that, “We have only one rule here and it is that every student is a gentleman.” The display notes, for example, how Lee instituted the “speaking tradition” whereby all members of the university community must engage each other in civil conversation should they meet on campus.

In attempting to discipline young southern men into proper gentlemen, Lee also installed a strict honor code that regulated nearly all aspects of student and faculty life on campus. It enforced a no-tolerance policy for incidents of lying, cheating, stealing, and other breaches of trust on campus. Lee’s honor code remains in effect today and a display at the Lee Chapel Museum entitled “Modern Washington & Lee University” includes an exam book with the caption: “The honor code governs every part of a student’s life at W&L. Due to W&L’s honor code, all exams are un-proctored and students sign a pledge on the front of their exams before turning them in.” The official campus website (Washington and Lee University 2006) includes a section describing the history and relevance of the campus honor system, noting that:

Honor is the moral cornerstone of Washington and Lee. Since Robert E. Lee’s presidency, the concept of honor has been the guiding principle of life at Washington and Lee. The commitment to honor is recognized by every student, faculty member, administrator, and staff member of the university. Providing the common thread woven through the many aspects of this institution, honor creates a community of trust and respect affecting fundamentally the relationship of all its members.

As a prospective undergraduate student visiting W&L in 1990, I recall vividly the emphasis placed by the tour-guide on the honor code and its special and hallowed status at the institution. As part of the campus tour, we went to the campus library and shown a number of unattended book bags on desks in the building as proof of just how seriously the students took the honor code. The importance of the honor code continues to be an important part of campus tours today, as I overheard a student tour-guide in the main room of the chapel discussing how all new students to the university receive a talk from the university president on the hallowed history of the campus honor code. The tour-guide,

referring to Lee as the “big guy,” further noted that students are told by the president during orientation, “If you cannot abide to the code of the gentleman, please leave this university now.”

The honor system at Washington and Lee is part of a greater historical tradition in the American South that emphasized honor as a crucial element of white Southern masculinity. The honor code and the emphasis on Lee’s moral character promote an upper-class version of Southern gentility for young wealthy white men, and now women, to emulate at Washington and Lee. The archetype of the honorable, white, Southern genteel male, in Virginia, the planter “Cavalier” ideal, is courteous to women, understands the complex rules of social engagement within elite society, dresses with elegant class, and is devoted to family, God, and country above else (Stowe 1987). He is hospitable to guests and strangers, is classically educated, impeccably mannered, and a pious Christian church goer. Above all else, he refuses to lie, to cheat, or to steal. He must always strive to act and behave as an honorable Christian soldier.

As an esteemed member of the Virginia planter class, Lee himself believed wholeheartedly in the Southern honor code and constantly referred to it during his lifetime. To Lee, fighting against his heimat and homeland of Virginia would have been a violation of this archaic honor code. Contemporary neo-Confederates and admirers of Lee have little problem with Lee’s decision to resign his command in the United States army and take up arms against his former colleagues. Indeed, to them doing so only reaffirms his honorable status to neo-Confederates as a man of principle loyal to the sacred soil of Virginia above all else. This refusal to take up arms against “his country” of Virginia is but one example of Lee’s adherence to this strict set of mores present in the Southern honor code. Though his status as the ideal Virginia cavalier emerged primarily after the war, Lee was somewhat obsessive in his personal quest to live his life according to the code of Southern masculine honor (Wyatt-Brown 1982). He was a true believer in the moral code of the South, believing it to be a cause worth fighting and dying.

Though a university honor system that discourages cheating and plagiarism is certainly not without its merits, the unquestioning reverence afforded to a code of gentlemanly honor at Washington and Lee silences the destructive and violent aspects of the masculine code of honor within the history of the American South. Wyatt-Brown (2001, 303) contends that, “The conventions governing the [honor] code were essentially the

stratified ascriptions of human inheritance: male over female, white over black (in the white's world), age over youth-and the powerful over the helpless." The culture of a white, masculine code of honor in the South served to legitimize slavery by creating a series of unassailable social hierarchies that placed African-Americans at the bottom of the social strata (Wyatt-Brown 1982, 2001). At the top of the social order were the same genteel Southern aristocrats idealized at W&L and other Lost Cause monuments. As men of honor, the "honest" plantation masters received the respect of greater Southern society. African-American slaves, however, were uncivilized, dishonorable liars that could not be trusted and must therefore be tightly controlled by white society (Greenberg 2001, 83). Slaveholders, including Lexington idols Lee and Stonewall Jackson, ultimately used the code of honor to justify the slave system, claiming it to part of the "natural Christian order" in which white men provided "honorable stewardship" over their inferior African-American chattel.

Following the end of the Civil War, some white Southerners used the Southern code of honor to support and justify committing heinous acts of violence and intimidation against the newly-freed African-American community. Following the dishonor and shame of surrender to Union forces in 1865, and connected to an emerging Lost Cause mythology that refused to admit the oppressive nature of the slave system, white Southern aristocrats and their working class allies engaged in numerous incidents of brutality against African-Americans in an effort to restore the Old South racial hierarchy. The Shenandoah Valley region, as a result of having a relatively small African-American population compared with other sections of the state, had far fewer black tenant farmers than in most areas of the Deep South. Due largely to this lack of a black tenant farmer presence, the region was not the site of a particularly large number of racist hate crimes committed during the Jim Crow Era (Brundage 1993, 156-57). There were a few violent exceptions, however, including 1905 attacks in Page County against a black man named Henry Henderson and a large scale 1893 lynching riot in nearby Roanoke, suggesting the region was far from immune to the racist violence prevalent throughout the South at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Brundage 1993, 157; 166).<sup>88</sup> Committing such horrible acts of violence and intimidation-including lynching, cross burning, and, in some cases, wide-spread pogroms against entire African-American neighborhoods, became justified within a masculine Southern honor code that supported

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<sup>88</sup> The incident in Roanoke is also discussed in chapter seven of the dissertation.

using acts of violence as a preferred method for redressing incidents of social humiliation, shame, and dishonor.<sup>89</sup> Wyatt-Brown (2001, 285) notes that:

Southern vigilantes assured themselves that they were upholding traditional values of honor, the sacredness of white womanhood, and community ethics. They acted with a religious energy analogous to the rush that many of them, as former soldiers, had experienced on the battlefield. Their actions were sanctioned were supported by nearly all the [white] inhabitants.

Additionally, the honor code relegated women to inferior status in Southern homes, creating and sustaining a gendered division of power beyond even the strict Victorian codes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to the hierarchy of gender and honor in the region, the ideal Southern white woman was chaste, dutiful, and wholly committed to her husband's happiness. Southern white women, confined chiefly to duties within the home, often found themselves powerless within a Southern society that made it difficult for women to gain financial security outside of marriage. Within marriages of the elite planter class, a profound social chasm between men and women that, "derived from the planters' double vision of marriage as both a unique opportunity for personal intimacy (whether desired or feared) and a reflection of a larger social hierarchy" (Stowe 1987, 124). The upper-class white husband, as master of the home and the plantation, was the undisputed lord and patriarch of both his family and his property. Planter-class women, for example, faced laws that made it nearly impossible to divorce their husbands, even if they were known to have raped their slaves or had children as a result of illicit affairs. Laws on the books of most Southern states gave the husband priority in child custody cases further discouraged abused women from filing for divorce against their husbands (Wyatt-Brown 1982, 243).

Despite all of the historical negatives associated with the Southern honor code, the stereotype of the genteel and honorable white Southern male remains a powerful and pervasive myth within contemporary American culture. Throughout a series of courting rituals, the Southern gentleman, so idealized at Washington and Lee, charms and impresses his beloved female with his manners, civility, charm, grace, and his future financial and familial prospects. Wealthy young men at Washington and Lee, an expensive private school which remained all-male until 1985, are still expected to live up to the high standards set by

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<sup>89</sup> Central to the connection between masculine violence and the code of honor was the pistol duel, a ritual that fell out of favor in the Northern states but continued to be practiced by elites in Southern society throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Greenberg 1996; Stowe 1987).

Lee regarding gentlemanly behavior while on campus. The school's honor system delineates "dishonorable acts" to include examples of "breaches of trust" beyond cases of lying, stealing, and cheating. Loosely defined, these breaches of trust are not limited to simply academic life, as noted on the university's honor system webpage (Washington and Lee University 2006):

It is expected that student's will respect each other's word and intellectual and private property in the residence halls and Greek houses, on the playing field, in the city of Lexington, wherever Washington and Lee students take themselves. This principled expectation provides the community of trust which students seek to create not only in the academic sphere but also in life but also in life outside it as well. The Honor System has been Washington and Lee University's uniquely defining feature for well over a century. Thousands of students have lived under it in residence, have been morally shaped by it, and as alumni and alumnae continue to be guided by it in their professional lives. Current students are as committed to it as were those who lived and studied here before them, and they maintain with firm conviction this distinctive ideal of the university.

Despite such official rhetoric regarding the importance placed upon masculine honor and gentlemanly civility at Washington and Lee, the university now faces a serious problem with sexual assault, drunkenness, and date rape on campus. Though sexual assault is a certainly a problem on almost every American university campus, the problem seems to be quite severe at W&L. This problem of violence against women is despite the presence of its hallowed honor code that is counted on to both prevent and punish such aggressive acts. The university reported only five incidents of sexual assault against its students from 2001-2003, a percentage that places it in line with other small colleges throughout the state. In a March 2004 survey focused on incidents of sexual assault at 73 colleges, however, almost 23% of Washington and Lee female students surveyed claimed to have been victims of sexual touching against their will (Chittum 2004).<sup>90</sup> This figure was over twice the average from the entire survey and placed W&L as having one of the highest incidents of unreported sexual assaults of any colleges or universities included in the survey.

Additionally, affirmative responses to the survey topics "attempted sexual penetration against your will" and "sexual penetration against your will" were two of three categories where Washington and Lee females scored significantly higher than the survey

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<sup>90</sup> The study included a whole range of colleges and universities, 49 of which were public and 25 private. The article appeared on the front page of the Sunday paper, illustrating the importance placed upon this study by the media of greater Southwest Virginia.

average. In a *Roanoke Times* article on the problem of sexual assault on campus, reporter Matt Chittum (2004) notes that, “Unwanted touching has become almost common. It’s coupled with a tradition of civility at W&L that should foster respect, yet does not always prevent a drunken grope. Paradoxically, the [honor] culture might prevent a woman from speaking up about it.” In this respect, female students at W&L find themselves silenced by the version of the Southern honor code promoted on campus, just as many Southern white women were rendered near powerless by the societal honor code throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The link between alcohol abuse and incidents of sexual assault on university campuses is well-documented. A 2002 survey conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse, for example, suggests that over half of the reported incidents of sexual assault on campus involved alcohol at some level (Chittum 2004). Not surprisingly, Washington and Lee undergraduates regularly abuse alcohol as part of their student culture. In the 2004 version of their annual rankings of 357 American colleges on a whole range of academic and social issues, *The Princeton Review* (2005) ranked W&L as the #2 “party school” in America, #14 in the “major frat scene” category, and the school received the coveted top ranking in both the “lots of beer” and “lots of hard liquor” categories. Though these rankings are based primarily on anecdotal evidence and have limited empirical value, they do suggest at the very least that the university now has a national reputation divergent from its preferred image as a center for the training of young Southern gentlemen. Instead of a bastion of Old South civility, the thousands of prospective students and their parents reading *The Princeton Review* and *The Roanoke Times* discover a school that might equally be framed as a center for undergraduate fraternity debauchery and the sexual assault of young women.

Despite a campus rhetoric claiming a link between the campus gentlemen of past and present, the idealized, sentimental, and overly-romantic courting rituals of an earlier era seem extinct at W&L. They have been replaced instead by a university social culture dominated by drunken parties held at one of W&L’s thirteen fraternity houses. Ironically, it was Lee himself who first allowed men on campus to join fraternal organizations during his time as president. The school is now nearly 75% Greek and the road surrounding the campus is littered with giant fraternity mansions with architectural designs reminiscent of Southern plantation big houses. These fraternity houses hold the majority of social events on campus, including massive theme parties evoking images from the Hollywood film *Animal House*.

The five university sorority houses, relatively new on campus compared to the fraternity tradition, are not permitted to buy and serve alcohol by their national chapters. The social scene at W&L continues to be a male-dominated environment where the rules of engagement with the opposite sex are controlled by the various fraternity houses.

The power of Southern fraternity culture in Lexington extends far beyond the drunken mansions on Washington and Lee's fraternity row. The town serves as the national headquarters for the Kappa Alpha Order (KA), a national Greek fraternal organization initially founded by five young Southern men as a secret society on the campus of Washington College in 1865 during the time of Robert E. Lee's presidency. Located in the restored old Rockbridge County Jail in downtown Lexington, the national headquarters of KA monitor and regulate the activities of 134 university chapter houses. According to the official KA website, the "Order" dedicates itself to uphold the chivalric tradition of European medieval knights by disciplining young men into Christian gentlemanly ideals. The KA official webpage "Chivalry and Gentility" includes the following excerpt (Shelton 2003):

KA is an order because its members are bound by the same ideal and philosophy of life—the epitome of the chivalric knight of the Middle Ages...Kappa Alpha Order is a contemporary order of knights. It is composed of men who have been deemed worthy of the designation of knighthood and are pledged to the ideals of modern chivalry.

In addition to linking its organization to a fantasy version of European knighthood, KA circulates elements of Lost Cause mythology through both its formal rituals and its celebration of Robert E. Lee's glorious legacy. Kappa Alpha Order's reputation as the most Southern of the national Greek organizations is a well-deserved one. The vast majority of its chapters, for example, are located at Southern colleges and universities. Though the national headquarters celebrates Kappa Alpha's diverse membership, the organization's over 125,000 current members and tens of thousands of alumni are almost entirely white and Protestant.<sup>91</sup> Though it is now outlawed by its national charter rules, KA chapters routinely displayed the Confederate battle flags in their mansions and in their fraternity gear until 2001. The approved usage of the "Stars and Bars" as an official symbol of KA was actually amended

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<sup>91</sup> The information about each chapter's membership is difficult to come by and the national KA website includes no empirical data on the diversity of its individual chapters. I base this claim primarily on my own experiences as a student with KA chapters and my research of various web blogs and message boards dedicated to fraternity issues that include discussions of the lack of diversity at KA.

three times by votes at their national conventions in 1972, 1978, and in April of 2001, before the fear of a national backlash led the organization to outlaw its display later that year. Some chapters even have mock Confederate cannons as decorations placed outside of their mansions, though a 1988 amendment to their constitution makes it illegal for the cannon to be “operable.”

The KA Order claims Robert E. Lee as its “spiritual founder,” following a 1923 toast by former “Knight Commander” John Temple Graves celebrating him as the “Last American Knight” and the “finest example of manliness” in American history. Almost every KA chapterhouse includes a portrait of Lee at the front of their mansion and nearly all of the various KA chapter websites I researched for this study include descriptions of Lee’s legacy and gentlemanly virtues as part of their online presence. Additionally, an annual KA ritual called Convivium celebrates the founding of KA and the birthday of its spiritual head every February 12<sup>th</sup>. The celebration includes a reading of John Graves’ original 1923 toast to Lee and culminates in a formal dinner and dance. It is considered to be the most important of the many formalized rituals held by KA and each chapter invites its most distinguished local alumni to observe and participate in the celebration.

In addition to the Convivium ritual, the majority of KA chapters hold annual “Old South Balls” as the major gala event of their school year. The celebration of Old South heritage at KA is often stretched out by individual chapters into a weeklong series of events. The KA chapter at Mississippi State University, for example, lists four parties held by the “gentlemen knights” of KA in the preceding days leading up to the ball including a “champagne party,” a “theme party,” and a “scream and raise hell” night (MSU Kappa Alpha 2005). The week culminates in a formal ball featuring the young men of KA and their dates decked out in Old South costumes while drinking and dancing the night away in a remembrance and celebration of the “good old days” of slavery and human bondage. These balls are often staged off campus in rented facilities, including former plantation houses for maximum irony and affect.

Originally known as the “Dixie Ball,” the event supposedly began in 1920 at to the Mercer (Ga.) University Kappa Chapter of Kappa Alpha. Few other KA chapters held the event until, in a classic example of the relevance of Baudrillard’s theories on hyper-reality and simulation, its popularity accelerated in the late 1930’s after the 1936 release of Margaret Mitchell’s Lost Cause blockbuster film *Gone With the Wind*. Early versions of the KA ball

included African-Americans hired to serve their young masters at the ball and to deliver formal invites to young women on horseback. Unlike the Convivium ceremony, the KA national headquarters in Lexington does not require each chapter to hold an Old South Ball. They do, however, include a list of rules and guidelines for the events in the 2003 version of their national rules and regulations. The section on Old South balls includes the following excerpt (Shelton 2004):

The Old South Ball has evolved since 1920 as a traditional social function of the Active Chapters of the Order with the purpose to celebrate and to perpetuate the social attributes of courtesy, graciousness, and open hospitality, which are values of the Old South and were prominent in Virginia when our Order was established in 1865...the event must be conducted with restraint and dignity and without displays and trappings and symbols which might be misinterpreted and objectionable to the general public.

Despite this call for “restraint” from the national headquarters, a survey of KA chapter websites reveals a number of images of the young gentlemen of KA boozing it up at Old South while dressed as Confederate army officers. The website for the Gamma chapter at the University of Georgia includes a letter from KA alumnus Hal Morris (2005) fondly remembering his KA days and the “party shack” at the back of the mansion reputed to be an “old slave house.” He fondly recalls his Old South ball, where “KA’s wore Confederate uniforms...and where a brother gave a Secede from the Union speech, a copy of which was attached to a homing pigeon’s leg and then released to carry the message to the President in Washington D.C.” Such blatant and offensive ritualized displays of neo-Confederate memory, proudly exhibited online for all to see, seem to be a common occurrence for almost every KA chapter. From its national headquarters in Lexington, the Kappa Alpha Order continues to celebrate and venerate Lost Cause mythology on university campuses throughout the United States. Far from simply operating as another campus fraternity for drunken young men, Kappa Alpha chapters function as neo-Confederate heritage organizations within a powerful national collegiate network that unites them and guides their actions. The young gentlemen of KA, disciplined by official fraternity discourse into an acceptance of Lost Cause mythology, leave their university with fond memories of their Old South balls and as potential members and allies of contemporary racist neo-Confederate organizations.

*Jacksonian Masculinity at the Virginia Military Institute*

*Virginia Military Institute holds a special place in the state's affection. Every cadet is taught, by words emblazoned on the wall, that his task is to be attached to his native state, proud of her fame, and ready in every time of deepest peril to vindicate her honor or defend her rights"*

(Fishwick 1959, 206).

In 1839, the first cadets of a new state college in Rockbridge County, the Virginia Military Institute, arrived in Lexington. Originally planned as a military adjunct to Washington College, VMI eventually was re-configured by the General Assembly in the 1830's to be an independent military and engineering school with a curriculum modeled after the French L'Ecole Polytechnique (Wise 1973, 9). Its curriculum also shared much in common with the one offered at West Point, the military institution that VMI historically compares itself to and whose legacy it aspires to emulate. VMI also acquired many of its early faculty members from a pool of West Point graduates, including Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, further cementing the traditional links between the two schools.



Figure 5.5

VMI Parade Grounds

The parade grounds at the Virginia Military Institute on a Fall football Sunday, 2004. Note the militaristic, fort-like architecture (Bohland).

In contrast, VMI- located literally across Letcher Street from Washington College- initially shared little in common with its neighboring institution in Lexington. Unlike the

liberal-arts curriculum practiced by students at Washington College, cadets at the Virginia Military Institute received a practical education emphasizing mathematics, science, physics, and civil engineering (Miller 2004, 21). Rather than educating the affluent young gentlemen of the planter class, VMI directed its program primarily at the young white men of the new industrial working class. Once at VMI, these young men, presupposed to wilder and more in need of discipline than upper-class gentlemen, were to be molded into “citizen-soldiers” in the French Revolutionary tradition and trained to be productive citizens in the industrial and mechanical arts.

From its inception, the young men that choose to attend VMI undertake a vigorous series of militaristic indoctrination rituals, including the widespread hazing of new freshman cadets known as “rats.” This ritualized hazing unites rat past and present, as the university continues to emphasize that very little has changed in the basic program of rat indoctrination for first-year cadets from its original 19<sup>th</sup> century design. During their rat year and throughout their entire four years at VMI, cadets march incessantly, train military maneuvers, and exercised constantly as part of a program designed to discipline their young male bodies. As in a boot camp, these military exercises draw out the “real man” and teach the young cadets how to tame and subvert their presumed feminine emotions of fear, empathy, and compassion (Steans 1998). The professors at VMI demand similar mental discipline in the classroom, as many of the faculty members-including the legendary Stonewall Jackson himself-come to the school after having served in the military. A section of the official VMI website entitled “The VMI Experience” claims that (Virginia Military Institute 2004):

The VMI Experience is a unique and demanding blend of challenges designed to fully test and expand the capabilities of every cadet. VMI combines the studies of a comprehensive college curriculum within a framework of military discipline and physical development that emphasizes honor, integrity, and responsibility.

The “VMI Experience” described above suggests that the institution operates as a center for the production and dissemination of disciplinary forms of power directed at the cadet’s body and mind. As noted by Foucault (1977, 170) in his studies of the institutionalization of disciplinary power, “The chief function of discipline is to ‘train, rather than to select and to levy...discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.” Like the

French soldiers analyzed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* and army cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, the previously rowdy and wild young rat from the working classes is remade and rebuilt at VMI by the power of coercive disciplinary exercises into a new, more productive warrior male. As Henry Wise, a proud graduate of VMI and former historian for their alumni association, puts it in the introduction of his history of the institution *Drawing Out the Man* (1978, 3), VMI is “an experiment in higher education...it seeks to develop the whole individual, not just his mind, but his body, his spirit, psyche, and character, all of which directly affect the mind.”

The military rituals at VMI designed to “draw out the man” are supposed to produce a new “VMI man,” an archetypically honorable, patriotic, and obedient young Southern male. VMI represented a new Jacksonian ideal of Southern masculinity that differed from the aristocratic model that would later come to be so idealized at Washington and Lee (Miller 2004, 31). My use of the term “Jacksonian” is not directly in reference to Stonewall Jackson, the most idealized figure on post at VMI. Following Mead (2002), it refers to President Andrew Jackson, the heroic Southern general who rose from poverty to lead a successful electoral revolt that invigorated white men from all classes to join in a political process that previously excluded them. Similar to their presidential hero, the ideal Jacksonian man comes from humble beginnings and is inherently suspicious of elites and the high-browed trappings of the planter aristocracy (Mead 2002). Jacksonian masculinity emphasized disciplined docility and a belief that only wealth achieved through diligent work, not from inheritance or family wealth, should be afforded respect by society. This Jacksonian suspicion of elites continues to operate within contemporary discourse at VMI, as the official campus website notes that, “The [rat] system is designed to remove wealth and former station in life as factors in one’s standing as a cadet, ensuring equal opportunity for all to advance by personal effort, and to enjoy those rewards that are earned” (Virginia Military Institute 2006).

Despite their scorn of elitism, the archetypal Jacksonian male shares much in common with the stereotypical Southern gentleman from the elite classes. Both subscribe to the masculine code of honor, are highly-nationalistic, honest, and loyal to family, treat women with kindness, believe in evangelical Christianity, and will fight for their Southern homes. VMI cadets memorize a masculine “Code of Gentlemen” that is supposed to guide their behavior towards women and, just like students at W&L, cadets cherish and revere

their university honor code. Students convicted by the Honor Court at VMI face immediate expulsion from the university and face an elaborate military style “shaming” ritual publicly emphasizing their failure to achieve the Jacksonian ideal. Convicted cadets are ritualistically “drummed out” of the institute and the entire student body turns their back on the shamed individual as he (or now she) walks off post. At the end of the ritual, the president of the Honor Cotes instructs his colleagues that the offender’s name “will never be used in the four walls of the barracks again” (Norman and Edgeworth 1997, 74).

VMI is, of course, a military school and the traditional Jacksonian emphasis on violence and masculine military power provides the guiding principle for the entire institution. Like their brethren in the Southern planter class, young Jacksonian men at VMI participated in violent fights and duels as a way of redressing disputes between honorable men (Wise 1977, 24). Though restrained unless otherwise provoked, the ideal Jacksonian man is willing to die in battle and believes in military solutions to complex problems. He is the ideal man for the Bush terror war present, a Christian man who knows how to both give and obey orders and believes unflinchingly in the sanctity of the chain of command. To solve problems with nuance and reason is considered weak by the Jacksonian male. It is only through shows of force and military power that enemies of God and the nation learn their lesson about the power of the Southern nation.

Many of these disciplined young men of VMI do choose to enter the military after graduation.<sup>92</sup> They do so partly because they are encouraged to do so by VMI administrators, who along with the Board of Visitors recently set a goal of a 70% commission rate by 2015. Those VMI graduates who refuse commissions after graduation enter the real world having been disciplined by a traditional and hyper-masculine military education. As a center of disciplinary power, a Southern military school such as VMI disciplines young bodies into more than just archetypical citizen-soldiers; it also produces ideal workers and business leaders for the capitalist workplace, ready to lead and obey orders within the contemporary wars of culture and the business world.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> From 1998-2003, the five year average of VMI graduates accepting a commission was 37.9%, well under the proposed 70% set as a goal by the Board of Visitors (SCHEV Report 2003).

<sup>93</sup> Illustrating this connection to corporate business, Strum (2002, 25) notes that the, “New York Times considered VMI to be heavily linked to future business success in Virginia and the nation.” Strum notes that *Virginia Business* magazine also suggested that VMI produces more CEO’s for publicly-traded companies based in the state than any other state public university.

VMI cadets are not always easily molded, however, into the Jacksonian male prototypes that the Southern military-school system is designed to produce. The wild young men of the working classes often proved difficult to tame, even in the most disciplinary of settings. As noted by Miller (2004, 35), “The young men at VMI were, in some ways, unpredictable to those in power. Even if the men did occupy a position of dominant masculinity, they still, or as a result, possessed the capacity to challenge power.” Beginning as early as the 1850’s, VMI students participated in strikes, mutinies, and protests against the brutalities of institutional discipline and the coercive system of power present on post (Wise 1977, 23). As well as being expelled for academic Honor Code offenses, upper-class students face expulsion if they are found to have been too brutal and forceful in their hazing of rats. Such dismissals occur nearly every year at VMI, as some cadets seem to find it difficult to separate the correct forms of violent, disciplinary power officially approved at the Institute from more dishonorable forms of cadet abuse.



Figure 5.6

VMI Halloween Pictures

Images posted on the Richmond Independent Media Center website in 2005 of VMI students dressed up for Halloween (Richmond Indy Media Center 2005a).<sup>94</sup>

A pair of very public recent controversies on post provides a case study into the complex and unstable workings of a dominant, Jacksonian military masculinity at the Institute. In January 2005, a website operated by the Richmond Independent Media Center (Richmond Indy Media Center 2005a) displayed several pictures of VMI students dressed in highly offensive costumes for Halloween. The pictures included various cadets clad as Nazis,

<sup>94</sup> Used by permission of Richmond Indy Media Center, 2005.

effeminate wand-wielding “fairy” homosexuals with “I love a Man in a Uniform” t-shirts, a black-faced (and entire body) depiction of a starving Ethiopian boy, and gay sailors with a bulls-eye target painted on their behinds. The story received regional attention and Roanoke-based media sources such as the *Roanoke Times* and the two local television networks WDBJ-7 and WSLS-10 ran feature stories on the photographs and the official reaction to them by officials at VMI. Two months later, new photographs featuring VMI students engaged in a mock torture of a fellow cadet surfaced on the same website (Richmond Indy Media Center 2005b). In scenes reminiscent of the tortures at Abu Graib, these new photographs featured a young man, bound and gagged by his mock captors, being tortured by young men, including one wearing a Confederate flag around his neck as a cape.



Figure 5.7

VMI Halloween and Hazing Pictures

Three additional pictures posted on the RIMC website of VMI cadets “blowing off steam,” including two mock torture photos

(Richmond Indy Media Center 2005b).

The official reaction to these incidents from the administration at VMI was in some ways quite predictable. Though they official rebuked the students involved in the Halloween incident, claiming them to be inappropriate and unbecoming of the honorable VMI masculine tradition, they chose to mete out any punishment behind the closed doors of the Institute and away from public scrutiny (Chittum 2005). Following the second incident, VMI officials again noted that a closed-door student investigation of the matter was underway and further claimed that the acts photographed were not hazing related (WSLS 2005). For the most part, VMI officials, cadets, and alumni, however, defended the actions

of the young men. Official VMI spokesman Steward MacInnis, for example, stated that the cadets ultimately “have rights as public citizens to express themselves” (Chittum 2005).

Rather than chastising the young men for participating in racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic expressions of hate speech, VMI defenders claimed the young men were simply “blowing off steam” built up from living in their hyper-disciplined and violent institution. Former VMI cadet Mark Hall told local television station WSLR (2005) that, “We just did some crazy stuff too, it just does not get on the internet...when they get the opportunity to let their hair down a bit, they do some off the wall things.” Similarly, the message board on the Richmond website displaying the original pictures features forty pages of responses to both sets of pictures, including a large number of replies defending the actions of the cadets involved from posters claiming to either a present cadet of VMI or alum of the school. In a typical response of these cadet supporters, one poster using the nickname “VMI Alumnus” stated that: “These cadets were having fun. It was not their intention to have their pictures posted to your site or any other site. These are rats who get one night off of the everyday stress. People joke, people have fun. You should try it” (Richmond Indy Media Center 2005a).

The recent controversy regarding cadet behavior is far from the only contemporary public relations nightmare faced by VMI in recent times. During the 1990’s, the university, with support from the Virginia General Assembly, engaged in a highly-charged public attempt to continue their all-male admissions policy. Claiming that it would damage the disciplinary mission of the Institute, VMI officials and alumni ignored the successful integration of women into the United States Military Academies decades before and refused any compromise on the issue. Josiah Bunting, superintendent of VMI during the gender controversy, told the *Richmond-Times Dispatch* that, “The very culture of VMI would be changed radically, irretrievably, by the admission of women. I am a convinced partisan of VMI as an all-male place. I think that is our history, our future, and we’re good at it” (quoted in Strum 2002, 48). Private VMI alumni foundations spent tens of millions of dollars to fund their legal defense and the case eventually went all the way to the United States Supreme Court in 1996. The case received national publicity, much of which presented VMI as a backwards Southern institution obsessed with antiquated masculine and Confederate past traditions. Following a 6-2 vote against VMI in 1996, the university

ultimately failed to keep women out of a publicly funded state university and began to admit women the following year.<sup>95</sup>

### *Reading Confederate Memorialization at VMI*

Not surprisingly, official discourse at VMI ignores such incidents where cadets “step out of line” or where the stated goals of the Institute have been publicly criticized and humiliated. VMI discourse instead emphasizes its heroes from the past in an attempt to “prove” the success of a Southern, masculine military education. VMI graduate General George Marshall, the famed American WW2 general, Secretary of State and architect of the post-war Marshall Plan, is held up on campus as the ultimate example of the heights at VMI graduate can obtain in his military career. His name adorns the main library campus and, next to Stonewall Jackson, he is the most celebrated and famous individual military figure associated with the Institute. He is proof that a proto-Jacksonian VMI man can achieve as much in the military as a graduate from one of the more prestigious national service academies. Like Marshall, contemporary VMI graduates that distinguish themselves in the military become models for the VMI cadets of the future to emulate. The same website RIMC message board featuring the offensive cadet photographs also includes various message board postings heralding the heroic actions of former cadets currently serving in the military in Afghanistan and Iraq. One such posting, for example, claims that a former VMI cadet was responsible for the capture of American uber-villain Saddam Hussein in the Second Iraq War (Richmond Indy Media Center 2005a).

The public image of VMI receives support from mass media texts that portray the “VMI experience” in a positive light. In 1936, a play entitled *Brother Rat* opened to large crowds on Broadway. The play, later to be released in 1937 as a major motion picture starring former president Ronald Reagan, is a farcical romp that glorifies and sanitizes cadet life at the Virginia Military Institute. The young men of *Brother Rat* love their school, their country, and their Southern sweethearts at nearby all-female Sweetbriar College. Though the young men of the film break rules, act up, and often leave post to visit their girlfriends without authorization, they ultimately learn to love their school and appreciate their disciplinary experiences at the Institute. The film version of the play proved so successful

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<sup>95</sup> For extended studies on women at VMI and the history of the controversy, see Brodie (2000) and Strum (2002).

that a sequel entitled *Brother Rat and a Baby*, also starring Reagan, was released in 1940 detailing the graduation of the same rats from the first film. The two “*Brother Rats*” are not the only Hollywood films to be set at VMI. As noted in the previous chapter, a number of early scenes from the 2003 Civil War film *Gods and Generals* were set at VMI and the school actually shut down for a few days to allow principal photography to take place in 2002.

The association with VMI and the Civil War in *Gods and Generals* is but one of many examples of Confederate memorialization at the school. More than any other single past event in American history, VMI celebrates and glorifies the heroic service of its faculty and cadets in the Confederate army during the American Civil War. The onset of the Civil War presented the students and faculty of VMI with an ideal opportunity to test their Jacksonian male virtues. Beginning in 1860, there were 300 cadets at VMI, nearly triple the amount of students on campus ten years earlier. Once the war began, however, a number of faculty members resigned their positions to join the Confederate Army as officers, including Stonewall Jackson. The school remained open during the Civil War and attempted to train students for the Confederate Army at an accelerated rate (Wise 1973, 36). As well as from Stonewall Jackson’s legendary exploits, VMI gained additional wartime recognition throughout the South as a result of the participation of its alumni in the Confederate army—including 3 major generals, 15 brigadier generals, 95 colonels, 65 lieutenant colonels, 110 majors, and 310 captains (Strum 2002, 20).

Additionally, the young cadets still at the institute supported the Confederate army in various ways, including fighting in the 1864 Battle of New Market, Virginia. The Confederate Army at New Market, a small town located fifteen miles north of Harrisonburg in the Northern Shenandoah Valley, featured two-hundred and forty one VMI cadets who marched up the Valley to join the in battle against a Union force commanded by General Franz Sigel. The cadets featured prominently in a Confederate victory and gained recognition for their glorious service in the battle. VMI did, however, suffer as a result of their involvement in the victory. A Union force led by General David Hunter, as part of a raid which took them to the previously untouched communities of Lynchburg and Liberty, shelled and burned the campus later that year.

After the war, the Battle of New Market became the most celebrated, ritualized, and mythologized event in the young history of the school. As noted in *The Institute*, a picture-laden “coffee-table” book that glorifies the cadet experience at VMI, “The crux of all VMI

history, of course, is New Market-the battle, the legend, the town, the ritual” (Norman and Edgeworth 1997, 164). Six of the ten of the VMI boys killed at New Market were later disinterred and re-buried in 1906 “on post” next to the newly-dedicated Sir Moses Ezekial statue “Virginia Mourning Her Dead.”<sup>96</sup> In 1967, portions of the original battlefield became part of the New Market State Historical Park, a Civil War heritage site which includes a large museum called the “Hall of Valor” that is owned and operated by the Virginia Military Institute.



Figure 5.8

New Market Painting at Jackson Hall

The giant mural of the celebrated Battle of New Market in Jackson Hall on the grounds of the Virginia Military Institute. This hall is the site of important speeches and ceremonies on campus, as well as Sunday religious services (Bohland).

Since the rebuilding of the institute after the war, all first-year VMI students on the rat line visit the battlefield during orientation and later take part in a springtime reenactment of the original three-day cadet march from Lexington to New Market. Once there, they participate in an annual parade in the town celebrating the Confederate victory. Those cadets remaining on post, dressed in their gray uniforms reminiscent of both the Confederate army and the cadets at West Point, participate in some of the most important rituals at VMI as part of an annual celebration that marks each anniversary of the battle. Held on May 15<sup>th</sup>, the most celebrated day in the VMI calendar, these annual rituals include a

<sup>96</sup> Ezekial himself is a celebrated figure at VMI, a rare Jewish cadet and veteran of the New Market battle who, following his graduation from the Institute, became an internationally known artist and sculptor.

wreath laying ceremony at Ezekial's statue, a three volley salute to the fallen cadets, and the playing of both "Amazing Grace" and "Taps" by the VMI band (Norman and Edgeworth 1997, 168). As well as celebrating the achievements of VMI cadets during the Civil War, these and other memorial rituals on post serve to bind present-day students to those cadets that came before them (Brodie 2000, 8).

Stonewall Jackson Hall, rebuilt in 1915 as part of a campus-wide expansion project, features a giant Civil War battle mural located behind the main speaking lectern. Painted by Benjamin West Clinedust, an 1880 graduate of VMI, the mural portrays the heroic charge of the green young cadets at the celebrated Battle of New Market and is the first thing visitors to the building see upon entering. Smaller portraits of both Lee and Jackson flank the mural on either side, further illustrating the omnipresence of Confederate memory within the edifice. Following a renovation in 1969, Jackson Hall now serves as both the main assembly hall for the Institute and the permanent home for the VMI Museum.<sup>97</sup> The hall holds important school ceremonies, such as convocation and commencement addresses, as well as weekend worship services. Indeed, the wooden pews of the hall include multiple copies of the Bible and a book of worship for use by United States military forces located in every row. Just as at nearby Lee Chapel, there is an obvious and apparent visible connection between Christianity and the sacred Confederate past is on display within the memorial space of Stonewall Jackson Hall.

Jackson Hall is far from the only permanent reference to the memory of Stonewall Jackson on the VMI campus. Jackson is literally omnipresent at VMI, as his name and visage appear throughout the Institute. As noted on the official VMI website in the "Stonewall Jackson and VMI" section, "The Virginia Military Institute prizes the distinct kinship that it has with the life of Lieutenant General Jackson...At VMI, one cannot escape the memory of Stonewall Jackson nor forget the things for which he stood" (Virginia Military Institute 2003a). A striking bronze statue of Jackson, located just outside of the main student barracks at the student battery, features Stonewall gazing upon the main parade grounds of his beloved Institute. He is flanked by four six-pound Civil War era cannon donated by *Gods and Generals* writer Jeff Shaara in 2000 symbolizing his skill as an artillery instructor and commander.

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<sup>97</sup> The VMI Museum, located in the basement of Jackson Hall, is currently being remodeled. As a result, the VMI Museum has a temporary home in the Marshall Library.

The remains of Jackson’s warhorse Little Sorrel lie buried on the ground directly below the monument, a fact noted by a small bronze plaque in the ground dedicated by the Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1997. The famed statue, which was designed by Sir Moses Ezekial and dedicated on post in 1912, is actually a replica of the same sculpture erected at the West Virginia state capital by the United Daughters of the Confederacy.<sup>98</sup> The VMI statue features the phrase “The Institute Will Be Heard From Today” carved into its marble base, a comment that Jackson supposedly uttered to his men before joining in the Battle of Chancellorsville. It was at this battle that Jackson won his most celebrated victory of the entire war and received the mortal wound to his left arm that ultimately killed him. A ritual ceremony featuring lectures and salutes given by VMI cadets and officials takes place at the statue each year to mark Jackson’s birthday each January 21<sup>st</sup>.



Figure 5.9  
Little Sorrel Plaque  
The burial site and plaque of Little Sorrel, Stonewall Jackson’s warhorse located in front of the Ezekial statue (Bohland).

Figure 5.10  
Statue of Stonewall at VMI  
The Moses Ezekial statue of Stonewall Jackson on the grounds of V.M.I. (Bohland).

More examples of publicly displayed Jackson maxims abound at VMI, including a quote attributed to Jackson from his days as a student at West Point that reads “You May Be Whatever You Resolve To Be.” The quote is carved into the arched stone entrance to the

<sup>98</sup> There is certainly some irony in a Confederate statue on display at the state capital of West Virginia, a state that separated from the rest of Virginia in 1863 and joined the Union that same year. Jackson was born in what later became West Virginia, though his bronzed presence at the capital was in no doubt a highly political move designed to challenge the legitimacy of West Virginia’s “withdrawal” from the Commonwealth.

Spartan-like VMI cadet barrack complex and new cadets leaving the barracks must salute the statue of Jackson lying directly before them. Stonewall Jackson's name also adorns a whole series of medals, funds, and scholarships at VMI. The outstanding graduating physics major at the Institute, for example, receives the annual Stonewall Jackson Award from a member of the United Daughters of Confederacy. The most coveted awards on campus are the Jackson-Hope Medals, presented annually to two students achieving the "highest attainment in scholarship" while undergraduates at the Institute (Virginia Military Institute 2003b). Following the dedication of a new Jackson-Hope Monument, located just outside of Jackson Memorial Hall, new recipients of the award now have their names on permanent display alongside all the past winners. The newly endowed Jackson-Hope Fund, created in 2001 to provide grant resources for future academic development, further celebrates the Jackson name and legacy at the Institute.



Figure 5.11

Jackson-Hope Medal Plaque

A new monument on the grounds of V.M.I. which will include the names of all Jackson-Hope Medal winners (Bohland).

*Remembering Stonewall at the Museum and the Cemetery*

The ultimate veneration of Stonewall Jackson on post takes place within the permanent displays of the school museum. Dedicated to the public glorification of the Institute, the VMI Museum features dozens of exhibits designed to highlight the notion that the “VMI Man” is ever ready to serve and sacrifice for his, and now her, country.<sup>99</sup> Consistent with his representation throughout the institution, Jackson is portrayed at the museum as the ideal citizen-soldier who sacrificed his life as a result of his love of Virginia and the new Confederate nation. One display also notes that Jackson himself was never a top-notch student when he attended the United States Military Academy at West Point. Like Andrew Jackson, another former general from humble origins, he rose to military prominence primarily through hard work and perseverance. Stonewall Jackson is again held-up by the Institute as a normative model for current cadets to emulate, many of whom come to the school from working class backgrounds, average high-school academic records, and with disciplinary problems that their parents hope the VMI experience can straighten them out.<sup>100</sup>

Such a venerated reading of Jackson ignores the fact that he resigned his position in the United States military to fight a rebellion that would have ultimately kept millions of African-Americans in bondage throughout the Southern States. Like the Lee Chapel Museum, the VMI Museum instead holds up an ex-Confederates slave-owner as a paragon of military masculine honor and virtue. As reasonably noted by Sebesta (2005):

If the Confederates had succeeded in their efforts, the United States would have been shattered into two parts and set the precedent for further successions....the legitimacy of a free democratic republic hung in the balance. By what reasoning are the Confederates seen as models of patriotism for [possible] future officers of the United States?

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<sup>99</sup> A small display at the museum describes the admission of women at VMI without mentioning the controversial stand taken by the university in order to try and keep the school all-male. Otherwise, there are no other mentions of the ten years of women at VMI within the museum.

<sup>100</sup> The university certainly has its fair share of quality students, though many of them come to the Institute primarily because their fathers and/or grandparents attended the school. 51% of the incoming students from the Class of 2008 ranked in the second to fourth quarter of their high school graduating classes (Virginia Military Institute 2005). Unlike the much more prestigious and selective US Military Academies, students applying to VMI do not need an endorsement from their local Congressman or woman.

The VMI museum features a number of Jackson’s personal and military items, such as his field raincoat and the Confederate officer uniform worn at the First Battle of Manassas, the famous battle where he received the nickname “Stonewall.” In another example of a Lexington university working closing with neo-Confederate heritage groups, funds raised by the Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans recently allowed the VMI Museum to restore the uniform after it had fallen into disrepair following years of display. Noting their involvement in the restoration, Virginia UDC President Mrs. David Whitacre stated that, “It falls to us as stewards of our heritage to assure the preservation of historic items such as these” (Gibson 2004, 8-9).<sup>101</sup> Once restored, VMI cadets presented the uniform at the October 2003 convention of the Virginia Division of the UDC as part of a historical reenactment simulating the original presentation of the uniform to the cadets of the Institute in 1926.



Figure 5.12

George Marshall Museum at VMI

The George Marshall Museum at VMI, the temporary home of the VMI Museum

(Llewellyn Lodge 2006).

The UDC is also involved in the restoration of another Jackson-related display at the VMI Museum: the stuffed hide of his war horse Little Sorrel. Though his bones were buried underneath the Ezekial statue of Jackson on the VMI parade grounds in 1997, his hide has been on public display at the Institute since his death in 1886 at age 35. The hide, one of only two Civil War horse hides on public display at an American museum, is fitted around a

<sup>101</sup> In the text of the *UDC Magazine*, the married women of the UDC use their husbands’ first names rather than their own. Gibson, the author of the article, serves as the current director for the VMI Museum and was a lead historical advisor for the neo-Confederate film *Gods and Generals*.

plaster model of a horse and is exhibited without glass to separate the hide from the public. Once on open display, VMI cadets began to pull hairs out of Little Sorrel's tail for souvenirs and to bring good luck (Weaver 1999, 28). As a result of such damaging actions and natural decaying over time, the hide now requires a series of restoration procedures and a climate-controlled display case costing between \$60,000 and \$65,000 if it is to remain on display in the future.

Just as with the restoration of Jackson's military coat, the Virginia Division of the UDC once again came to the financial rescue of the VMI Museum. The UDC recently began a fund drive to raise money for the climate controlled case and ultimately to "save Little Sorrel's hide." In a recent *UDC Magazine* article on the fund drive, Virginia Chapter member Mona M. Milam (2004, 10) writes that, "Little Sorrel and his master were quiet, intelligent, and blessed with a calm demeanor...they were leaders that became heroes." As part of the effort, the UDC is now selling an unframed Gary Casteel print entitled "Love Makes Memory Eternal" at the cost of \$125. The painting features an idyllic 19<sup>th</sup> century scene set at the Institute with a group of young VMI cadets tending to their horse outside of the Washington Arch on campus. The chapter is also selling miniature "Lil' Sorrel" stuffed animals, for \$16 each, at their various conventions and at the VMI Museum itself. In justifying these fundraising efforts and the need to preserve a Civil War horse hide, Virginia Chapter president Mrs. Dolores Smith (quoted in Milam 2004, 10) comments that:

We are making zero profits on these projects and will donate all profits to VMI for Little Sorrel. We just love that little horse. Little Sorrel is one of only two mounted horses from the *War Between the States*. The other is that of Sheridan at the Smithsonian Institute. *We can't be outdone. We need to have something just as fitting* (my emphasis).

The above quote suggests the UDC continues to deal with issues of Civil War memory in a binary and oppositional fashion. Within the binary logic of UDC discourse, "we" signifies an immediate and present Confederacy and suggests a "they" of the American government as represented by the Smithsonian Institution. By seeking to preserve a Confederate war horse, the UDC "refuses to be outdone" by the heritage displays at a "Union" museum in Washington, D.C. Such statements undermine UDC claims that they are a "patriotic organization" and illustrate the real goal of the UDC: to continue to preserve and promote Lost Cause memorialization over 140 years after the end of the "War Between the States."

Just a few blocks away from the VMI Museum in downtown Lexington, the veneration of Stonewall Jackson continues within the museum displays of the restored Stonewall Jackson House. Jackson lived at the home for a total of twenty seven months during his time as a VMI professor, making it the last home he was to own before dying in the war. The house, which at one time was owned by the UDC and used to serve as the area's only hospital, was bought by the Lexington Historic Society in 1976 and completely renovated in 1979. Restored to look like it did during Jackson's time, it was opened to the public as the central heritage tourist attraction of newly-restored downtown Lexington later that year. The house is located in a highly-advantageous location literally next door to the new Lexington Visitors Center, ensuring a steady stream of heritage visitors directed to the house by attendants at the center. On the October Weekend that I visited the house, a young woman dressed in Old South period clothing served warm apple cider to museum goers in the pristine museum gardens. Though the scene was likely a tactic to entice visitors to pay for a house tour, the staging included classic romanticized signifiers of the Old South: the gracious Southern belle, warm Southern hospitality, and the pristine beauty of the classic Southern home.

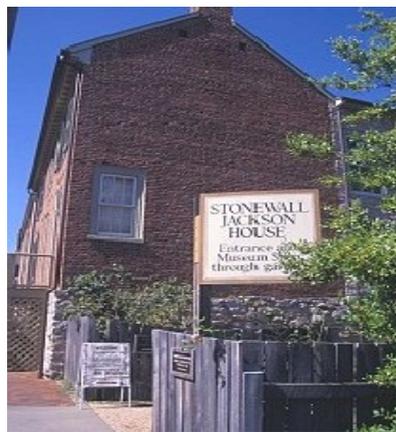


Figure 5.13

The Stonewall Jackson House Museum  
(Llewellyn Lodge 2006).

Once inside, the Jackson house operates as the ultimate shrine for Jackson memorialization in Lexington. Visitors begin and end their visits in a small museum gift shop which peddles all things Stonewall and Confederate: t-shirts, children's books, small

Confederate flags, and DVD/VHS documentaries focused on Stonewall's pious evangelical Christian beliefs. As is typical of many such tours of historical homes, tour guides highlighted the various authentic relics within the house as part of an effort to get the visitor to imagine he/she is stepping back in time as they walk the halls of the home. Instead of his military prowess, it is Jackson's evangelical beliefs that dominate the official script delivered by tour guides. Our tour guide, for example, described Jackson's piety in great detail and noted the various rooms in the house where the "holy warrior" spent hours praying for divine wisdom with his wife. As part of their well-rehearsed script, one based primarily on James I. Robertson's idealized biography of Jackson, the guide stressed Jackson's attendance at the local Presbyterian Church and Jackson's instruction of local slaves in a Sunday school class.<sup>102</sup>

Though Brundage (2005, 300-01) contends that the staff at the Jackson House were influenced by the more inclusive and revisionist trends of "new museumology," I saw little evidence of this on my visit to the museum. Jackson's history as a slave-owner, for example, was only briefly attended to by our guide as the group entered the restored kitchen space. The tour guide noted that, although Jackson owned nine slaves during his lifetime, he loaned one of them out to VMI as a servant in order to allow him to eventually work towards saving money to buy his freedom. As was emphasized in the play *Stonewall Country* discussed earlier in this dissertation, the tour guide also told the audience about how Stonewall made sure his slaves received a proper Christian education and that Stonewall himself organized a Sunday school service for local slaves to attend. In doing so, the official script of the house deviates little from normative Lost Cause orthodoxy which portrays Confederate heroes such as Jackson and Lee as reluctant and benevolent slave owners. To neo-Confederates, they represent and embody the majority of slave owners in the pre-war South, men and women "unfairly" labeled as evil and violent as a result of abolitionist and post-Civil Rights discourse.

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<sup>102</sup> Our tour guide noted to us that Robertson's book was like the "bible" of the house. Robertson also serves on the Stonewall Jackson House Foundation board that promotes the home and oversees all of its tourist activities.



Figure 5.14

Stonewall Jackson Cemetery Statue

The Edward Valentine Statue at the Stonewall Jackson gravesite (Bohland).



Figure 5.14

Confederate Iron Cross

A Confederate Iron Cross in the Lexington, VA Confederate cemetery (Bohland).

At the end of the tour, visitors receive instructions on how to locate the Jackson burial site and Confederate cemetery located a few blocks away from the downtown. Though Jackson was originally buried in a family crypt at the cemetery, he was later re-interred underneath a giant Edward Valentine statue of the Confederate hero on July 21, 1891. Contemporary visitors to the cemetery find a space almost completely dominated by Confederate memory. It is still considered an honor for contemporary Confederate sympathizers to be buried next to one of the South's greatest heroes, though very few plots remain in an already overcrowded cemetery. The cemetery features an unusually high number of graves with Confederate iron crosses, derived from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Maltese cross used by the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (United Daughters of the Confederacy 2005). This Confederate commemorative practice first began in Atlanta 1898, as a local UDC chapter marked the graves of former Confederate soldiers with a small cross tombstone at cemeteries throughout the South. In doing so, the UDC and later the SCV, which has since taken over this practice in many Southern cities, connect fallen Southern soldiers to an order of Christian knights involved in the Holy Wars of the Crusades against another type of infidel. In order to have a cross dedicated to a Confederate veteran, ancestors of the dead soldier must prove to the UDC or the SCV that the dead soldier

served the South with honor and never deserted his unit.<sup>103</sup> By placing the iron cross at these graves, the Confederate dead become “holy warriors,” knights who fought for a just, Christian cause. Additionally, other graves feature a plaque with a cross inside of a circle, denoting individuals who were “knights” of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternal organization (see Figure 5.16). By marking the graves at Stonewall Jackson cemetery, the fraternity is able to further mark itself as the most Southern of university fraternities and cement the ties between the organization and the heroes of the Old South.



Figure 5.16

Base of Stonewall Jackson Statue

The base of the Stonewall Jackson statue. Note the lemons placed there by contemporary admirers of Jackson (Bohland).

During a post-war period when Baptist and Pentecostal preachers throughout the South argued that the South must continue its holy cultural war against the North, memorial actions which sanctified the Confederate dead served to remind a new generation of Southerners of the sacrifice made by their beloved ancestors. The heroic Stonewall Jackson is the ultimate example of such sacrifice, a young man who lost his life leading the young men of the South in battle against the forces of Northern industry and godlessness. At the cemetery, Jackson’s monument lies in the middle of hundreds of graves, as he overlooks the remains of his fallen Confederate comrades and continues to lead them as their commander

<sup>103</sup> These ceremonies continue to take place throughout the South; I witnessed one such dedication at a Confederate cemetery in Staunton, Virginia, overseen by the local UDC and SCV chapters. The ritual also included the brass “Stonewall Brigade” band which has continued to perform throughout the region since the end of the Civil War.

in the afterlife. The Jackson monument is attended to weekly by a local member of the UDC and is the site of annual rituals held on the anniversary of his birth and death. According to the tour guide at the Jackson House, the main duty of the local UDC seems to be to pick up lemons left by contemporary admirers of Jackson at the site.<sup>104</sup> The fact that this ritual practice continues to take place in the present further illustrates the omnipresence of Civil War memory within the region and the fact that, for some, the memory of the “War Between the States” remains imminent and ongoing.

The cemetery was also the site of one of the most important and widely attended Confederate memorial rituals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: the 1891 official dedication of the statue, held twenty-eight years after Jackson’s death. The Valentine monument was but one of a whole series of memorials built to honor Confederate soldiers during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>105</sup> In this second wave of Lost Cause memorialization, Confederate memorial groups sought to rekindle interest in Civil War memory and to reclaim ownership of the official meaning of the conflict. Rather than simply mourning the fallen Confederate heroes, the dedication of new monuments to the Confederate dead were now public celebrations, highly nostalgic affairs often attended by large crowds of pro-Confederate onlookers (Shackel 2003, 80). As noted in Chapter Three, these ceremonies served as powerful political rituals whereby Southern political leaders and racist organizations used the Civil War past as a way of rallying voters to fight against Federal Civil Rights laws, asserting white Confederate hegemony on African-American spaces, and combat perceived Yankee interference during Reconstruction (Blair 2004).

The Jackson statue, located in the middle of a “city of the dead,” was actually an exception for the time period it was dedicated (Blair 2004). As Confederate memorialization became a much more public affair, the majority of Confederate monuments became centrally located within Southern downtowns or at county courthouses. The dedication ceremony itself was, however, a highly-public affair and brought over 30,000 people to Lexington to celebrate Jackson’s legacy. The ceremony, presided over by former Confederate general Wade Hampton, was an elaborate event and included the reading of a

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<sup>104</sup> Jackson supposedly had a love of lemons and one prevalent legend about the man, disputed by Robertson and other Jackson biographers, was that he sucked lemons while riding into battle.

<sup>105</sup> Shackel (2003) and Savage (1997) both note that the majority of Confederate memorials were dedicated from 1880-1920, as groups such as the UDC and SCV unveiled public Confederate statues throughout the United States.

whole series of poems written about Jackson and the glory of the Old South (Boley 1936, 109). Not surprisingly, the affair included a keynote oration delivered by one of the originators of Lost Cause mythology, former General Jubal Early. In a speech typical of his other Lost Cause addresses, Early connected the lives and legacies of Lexington's two greatest heroes. He concluded the speech with the following passage:

General Lee and Jackson fully appreciated the character of each other and there was the most perfect harmony between them...when anyone desires to find a defense of the justice of the cause for which they fought, let him point to the characters of Lee and Jackson. I conclude now, with declaration I have made before...If I ever disown, repudiate, or apologize for the cause for which Lee fought and Jackson died, let the lightning of heaven blast me and the scorn of all good men and women be my portion (quoted in Boley 1936, 109-110).

Jubal Early's 1891 speech at the dedication ceremony for the Stonewall Jackson monument took place only five years before the landmark Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* which effectively legalized racist segregation in the South. Early's speech was a clarion call for Southerners to not forget and repudiate the Southern cause and its legendary heroes, even as the myth itself began to fuse with the Northern cause victorious towards themes of national reconciliation. Using the symbolic and memorial power of Jackson to legitimize his oration, Early attempted to justify the Confederate past and the racist Confederate government that so many poor white Southerners, against their own economic interests, were convinced by the nationalist, Jacksonian discourse of the planter elite to fight and die for "the honorable Southern cause." To orthodox Lost Causers such as Early, the masculine and Christian character of the Confederate warrior-heroes Lee and Jackson are beyond reproach. Finally, the last part of Early's speech illustrated the "never surrender" attitude of some ex-Confederates who used the war as a political tool to resist new Civil Rights legislation and to reinstall a coercive and violent system of white hegemony throughout the South.

Though such publicly-delivered and highly attended Lost Cause speeches are relatively rare in the contemporary American South, remnants of both the divisive forms of the Lost Cause as well as the more reconciliationist versions, live on in the town of Lexington. Visitors to this place come across Civil War heritage museums and memorials located within the downtown region and at both Washington and Lee University and the Virginia Military Institute. These various heritage sites continue to celebrate the Confederate

past, to venerate the two archetypes of Old South masculinity, and to mark much of the entire town as a space where the Confederate past continues to live on in the present. Indeed, the entire town continues to serve the same role as it has for over one-hundred and forty years: a heritage center for Confederate memory for both the Shenandoah Valley and the entire American South.

My reading of Civil War memory and Old South masculinity in this chapter notes the important role that both VMI and Washington and Lee play as institutions in continuing to circulate and ultimately disciplining the public into acceptance of highly contentious notions of both the Civil War past and Southern masculinity. Visitors to both campuses encounter two schools still obsessed with the meaning and memory of the Civil War past, where various memorial shrines and monuments commemorate a simplistic and romanticized version of Old South memory while conveniently excluding regional counter-memories of violence, patriarchy, and racism. Annual rituals at W&L and VMI continue to honor Confederate heroes without ever challenging the racist and controversial cause which they fought, and in some cases, died supporting. Instead, Confederate heroes continue to be presented to the young cadets at VMI and the young “gentlemen” at Washington and Lee as masculine idols worthy of admiration and emulation. Similarly, the disciplinary practices and heritage rituals of the locally-based national headquarters of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity serve to spread Old South mythology and masculinity to university campuses throughout the United States.

Not everyone in Lexington, however, subscribes to the pro-Confederate hegemony present within the town and its two universities. My research on the area uncovered several message boards and blogs from students at Washington and Lee that challenged the Lost Cause orthodoxy present at the institution. There are also a few new campus organizations at W&L attempting to inform students of the dangers of sexual assault on campus and dedicated to challenging the prevailing atmosphere of patriarchy, violence, and drunken intimidation on campus. The new all-male organization One in Four, for example, makes presentations to young men at dormitories and fraternities regarding sexual assault on campus and recently organized a month-long awareness campaign on the issue (Chittum 2004). Though such acts of resistance and activism are harder to find and document at VMI, Brodie’s (2000) study of VMI notes that African-American cadets on the VMI campus

have occasionally refused to participate in campus heritage rituals, including saluting the Lee Chapel and the celebration of Stonewall Jackson's birthday.

In perhaps the most interesting and unique example of resistance to heritage hegemony in the area, a small plaque next to the Stonewall Jackson House suggests that not everyone in the town supports the local heritage industry. Looking conspicuously like the historic plaques adorning buildings throughout the city denoting the historical "value" of the structure, this plaque used humor as a way of rejecting and resisting the town's preoccupation with the past. The metal plaque, which could rather easily be missed by a tourist walking by the house, reads "N.O.N. Historical Marker: On This Spot February 19, 1776, Absolutely Nothing Happened." Though it is likely the persons involved in the hanging of this plaque did so primarily as a joke, the sign illustrates that individuals in heritage-obsessed communities can and do resist heritage orthodoxy in various ways often hidden to the public. This is the rare example of heritage irony and, in a town consumed by images and sites of memorialization, it is somewhat comforting to note that not everyone blindly accepts and celebrates the town's neo-Confederate fueled heritage industry.



Figure 5.17

Amusing Lexington Plaque

The plaque at Lexington mentioned in the above text, a small act of resistance in a town consumed by the heritage industry (Bohland).

## **Chapter Six: Museums in the Valleys: The Disciplinary Civil War**

### *Exhibiting Civil War Memory*

As a regional center of Civil War heritage and commemoration, the Shenandoah Valley is home to a large number of museums dedicated to Civil War oriented displays and collections. The two-hundred and twenty-five mile stretch of the Great Valley from Roanoke, Va. north to the terminus of the Shenandoah River at Harpers Ferry, W.Va. currently includes eight museums focused entirely on Civil War oriented themes, as well as dozens of other local museums and regional historical societies which house smaller Civil War collections. The presence of these various museums serves to legitimize the region as a crucial area for Civil War knowledge and learning, though the museums also inversely gain authority and legitimacy as a result of being located within a region so heavily mythologized by Civil War memory. Indeed, there are few other American heritage regions- with the exception perhaps of the greater Richmond/Tidewater area- with as many Civil War museums concentrated within a relatively small geographic area. When combined with preserved local battlefield sites and heritage spaces, these museums also provide the critical infrastructure necessary for the Valley to market itself as a heritage corridor and ultimately to attract more heritage tourists to the region.

Most importantly, these Valley museums operate as power/knowledge centers where particular versions of the regional and national past are transmitted to the public. As noted in Chapter Two, history museums play a crucial role in disciplining particular versions of nationalist memory to their visitors. History museums act as normalizing agents, discursive sites of power where Americans accept normalizing discourses of the Civil War (Luke 2002, 3). They are spaces designed to create a certain type of docile, discipline, and patriotic discourse, prime examples of where Foucauldian governmentality operates within our society (Bennett 1988). Rather than presenting history in a constructivist manner, a method which openly engages the multiple ways in which historical events can be interpreted, the majority of history museums choose to present American memory as an easy to understand, linear narrative. Typically, this method utilizes examples of “how far we have come” to emphasize a theme of American historical progress. As argued by Craith (2003, 256), “Museums are thus part of hegemonic strategies whereby a particular group in society sustains its powerful position by persuading others to consent to it, by making it appear natural, inevitable, or justifiable.” History and heritage museums often gloss over the

controversies and tragedies of the past or omit them entirely, replacing them with sanitized, “feel good” narrative scripts emphasizing carefully-chosen American heroes and heroic events that highlight our supposedly glorious past. It is at these same museums spaces where school children, on field trips to learn more about history, science and technology, have their disciplinary school lessons reinforced within an entertaining, hands-on setting.

These same local museums, however, face major contemporary issues with funding as financially strapped governments from low-tax states provide fewer financial resources to small-scale history, science, and art museums. The budget recommended by then Governor Mark Warner of the Commonwealth of Virginia, facing the massive state budget deficit in 2002, included a 15% reduction from the already sharply reduced funding provided by the state to local and state museums. This policy, which could be read as a relatively short-sided tourist policy, forced some local state-funded museums to close an additional day of the week in an effort to reduce their operational costs. The need to attract additional paying visitors to museums has become even more important, as museums seek to make up for the budget shortfalls in order to remain in operation. Indeed, as part of their an effort to attract visitors to their institutions, museums increasingly have moved to more “infotainment” as a way of remaining competitive within an increasingly techno-savvy and media driven cultural climate. Museums now frequently employ living history displays, IMAX museum theatres, hands-on learning centers, film and computer areas, and youth “action camps” in order to attract younger visitors and to develop additional revenue streams for cashed strapped foundations.<sup>106</sup>

When publicly-funded museums do attempt to openly and honestly confront more contentious cases from American history, they often face strong opposition from special interest groups and right-wing politicians. Conservative politicians, interest groups, and right-wing commentators continue to charge particular museums with practicing “political correctness,” a negatively-coded right-wing term for what is also referred to as revisionist history. So-called revisionist historians often challenge long-established interpretations of American history, demystifying, and contesting the purportedly heroic persons and events

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<sup>106</sup> These youth action camps are becoming quite popular as an additional revenue stream for Civil War battlefield sites and museums all across the American South. They typically involve one or two nights of camping in Civil War tents, drilling exercises, and eating Civil War meals in an attempt to simulate an authentic Civil War soldiering experience. See Spinner (2005) for a report on a popular Civil War action camp in Petersburg, Va.’s Pamplin Historical Park.

from the American nationalist past that serve to glorify the state. In doing so, revisionist interpretations of history may reignite or bring to bear new public debates over controversial past events or persons. In the case of museums, recent debates over revisionist history includes the controversies over the proposed Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian (Luke 2002) and the suggestion that issues of African-American slavery should be part of the general tours given to the public at the highly-popular colonial living history museum in Williamsburg, Va. (Handler and Gable 1997). Museums are thus prime institutional sites where the culture wars of the present are played out in highly-public settings.

In this chapter, I engage in an extended textual examination of Civil War museums located throughout the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. My analysis includes readings of five Valley museums- the NPS National Historical Park at Harpers Ferry, W.Va., the Old Court House Civil War Museum in Winchester, Va. and the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum in Front Royal, Va. The chapter is organized, according to local parlance, as a geographic trip “up the Valley,” moving southeast from Harpers Ferry to Winchester and eventually ending up at Front Royal.<sup>107</sup> My critical reading of these particular museums is three-fold. First, I examine each of these history museums as nationalist sites of governmentality, as critical sites where Americans learn about their glorious past and where American values become circulated to the citizenry (Foucault 1991). In the case of many Civil War museums, the script designed by museum curators employ nationalist, narrative themes typically present in most American Civil War era scholarship and pedagogy (Weeks 2003; Shackel 2003). One example of a theme commonly used to contextualize the Civil War by historians and curators is the “brother against brother” theme, a framework of the war that stresses how the war tore apart particular families just as it temporarily destroyed national unity (Cullen 1995). Once the war ends, however, the family and the country re-unites as stronger and more progressive nation, having learned its lessons from the harsh realities of war.

Despite Ewert’s (2004) comment that the Lost Cause myth “does not represent mainstream scholarly history or broad public opinion,” my findings in this chapter suggest some Valley Civil War museums actually rely upon elements of Lost Cause mythology in their approach to museum education. The UDC-sponsored Warren Rifles Museum, for

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<sup>107</sup> To travel “up the Valley” actually means moving south, as the local terminology is reversed what normally would be expected. This is because the Shenandoah River flows north across the Valley towards Harpers Ferry, where it flows into the Potomac.

example, is a virtual shrine to Old South memory and the glorification of the heroes of the Confederacy present in the original post-war version of the Lost Cause. Though this portrayal of the Civil War past might be expected in a local museum operated by a Confederate heritage museum, it is important to note that local museums are open to the public and do not provide a neo-Confederate warning to museum goers regarding the particular bias presented within its exhibits. The local elementary and middle school kids who do visit the museum on class field trips learn about the Civil War from the perspective of the UDC. Though certainly not as outward and intensive as at the Warren Rifles Museum, elements of Lost Cause orthodoxy can also be found within the exhibits at both Harpers Ferry and the Old Court House Museum in Winchester. In this chapter, I discuss the traces of reconciliationist Lost Cause mythology at these particular museums.

For some Civil War museums, attempting to engage highly-charged issues of race and African-American slavery invariably led to several public cultural clashes between particular museum operators and neo-Confederate heritage organizations. At the small Gettysburg, Pa. College Schmucker Art Gallery, for example, a proposed 2004 display entitled “The Proper Way to Hang a Confederate Flag” provoked a public controversy involving the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) heritage group (Ewert 2004). The exhibit featured the Confederate flag tied in a noose around a set of gallows in an attempt to connect the symbol to its later usage by hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan which were involved in the lynching of numerous African-Americans within the Jim Crow Era American South. As a result of what they considered to be an act of desecration against their sacred flag, the SCV began an email campaign to boycott the entire town for a year if the exhibit was not removed. Eventually, this campaign led to a barrage of racist emails to museum from various heritage and hate groups including some that actually threatened the life of university and museum officials.

Fearing for the safety of its officials, the college eventually elected not to stage the exhibit in the museum itself. Instead, it was adapted by the artist into an outdoor piece where, due to the public controversy, its opening attracted both the national press and thousands of curious citizens. Ironically, the vast majority of those who attended the opening supported the exhibit, as only twenty or so protestors bothered to show up. The Gettysburg case was not an isolated one, as a recent article in the Southern Poverty Law Center *Intelligence Report* documents other acts of intimidation by neo-Confederate groups

against local museum operators in Wilmington, N.C., Selma, Alabama., and Mobile, Alabama (Ewert 2004). As discussed in Chapter 3, the SCV attempted to get the curator of the Museum of Mobile dismissed from his position following his negative review of the neo-Confederate film *Gods and Generals*. Though he eventually retained his position after a protracted and highly public political battle, George Ewert cautioned other Southern history museum operators that:

Until public officials, educators, and others in authority realize that effort to hurt people for criticizing the myth of the Lost Cause are wrong, and that the myth does not represent mainstream scholarly history or broad public opinion, others will likely repeat the kind of episode I experienced.

Though the Civil War museums of the Shenandoah Valley have for the most part avoided publicly waged battles in the culture war, they have not entirely avoided the local battles of a greater American culture wars waged throughout the American South. The Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, the only museum I visited in this chapter not located in the state of Virginia, has been the site of a long-standing conflict over the placement of a faithful slave monument on the grounds by the national chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The monument was publicly dedicated in 1931 to Heyward Shepard, an African-American freeman from the area that was the first person shot and killed during John's Brown legendary raid on the federal arsenal at then Harpers Ferry, Va. in 1859. According to Lost Cause mythology propagated by the UDC, Heyward was killed after he refused to join John Brown in the attack, leading to his near martyr-like status in the Southern states in the period during and after the Civil War (Shackel 2003, 83). Shackel's (2003) work on the monument notes the conflicting reports regarding what actually happened to Shepard that evening. The idea that Shepard actually refused to join Brown's men on their anti-slavery raid, rather than simply being shot for being in the middle of an armed assault, came primarily from reports by the local, pro-secession *Virginia Free Press*. The paper ran reports both at the time of the raid and in a Jim Crow era article thirty-seven years after the fateful raid occurred. Instead of attempting to fight against John Brown's forces, more than likely Heywood had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time and found himself caught in the crossfire.

The newly-formed United Daughters of the Confederacy, however, picked up his story from the *Virginia Free Press* reports and made memorializing his death an organizational

cause during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Heyward became the prime figure in a national UDC plan to place a faithful slave monument erected in Washington D.C. Though they ultimately failed to erect a prominent national memorial at the nation’s capital, the UDC and SCV raised enough money in the campaign to get a monument to Heyward himself erected on the original site of the raid in Harpers Ferry. A portion of the text inscribed on the monument states that:

On the night of October 16, 1859, Heyward Shepard, an industrious and respected colored freeman, was mortally wounded by John Brown’s Raiders...he became the first victim of this insurrection. This boulder is erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans as a memorial to Heyward Shepard, exemplifying the character and faithfulness of thousands of Negroes who, under many temptations throughout subsequent years of the war, so conducted themselves that no stain was left upon a record which is a particular heritage of the American people, and an everlasting tribute to the best in both races.

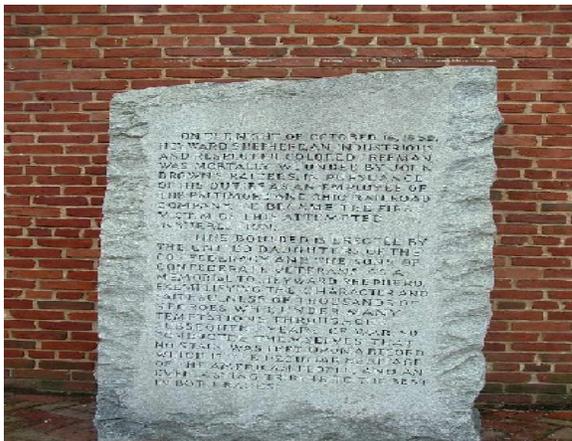


Figure 6.1  
The Heywood Monument  
Located at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (Bohland).

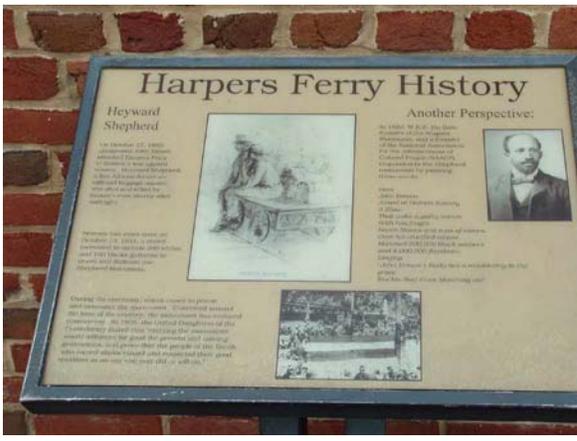


Figure 6.2  
Heywood Monument Info Board  
The information board that now accompanies the Heywood Monument (Bohland).

The United States government later inherited this faithful slave monument when the National Park service acquired all of the land along the lower portion of Harpers Ferry during the 1950’s. Seeking to find a way to quietly remove the racist marker, the NPS placed the Heyward monument into storage during park-wide renovations during the mid-Seventies. It was eventually replaced in its original site, only to be covered by a box in 1981

after NPS officials feared it would be defaced by graffiti (Shackel 2003, 104). It has since been uncovered, as a number of conservative Southern congressmen- including N.C. Senator Jesse Helms- pressured the NPS to remove the covering and have it be redisplayed. It is currently on display at Harpers Ferry Park, located in an innocuous and hidden area near the Potomac River behind the park's main street.

None of the park pamphlets distributed to tourists note the presence of the monument and the NPS placed an interpretive sign next to the monument. The marker both tells the story of the monument's dedication and mentions the controversy the monument raised at the time of its dedication. It includes a highly racist quote from the UDC stating that, "Erecting the monument would...prove that the people of the South who owned slaves valued and respected their good qualities as no one else did or will do." Next to a discussion of the Heywood Memorial, the NPS marker also includes a pro-John Brown poem, penned by W.E.B. Du Bois as a response to the dedication of the monument as an "another perspective" on the Heyward Shepard monument. The poem frames John Brown's Raid as in biblical terms and praises and martyrs those men that gave their lives in an attempt to destroy the slave system. The poem reads:

Here John Brown aimed at human slavery a blow that woke a guilty nation  
With him fought seven slaves and sons of slaves. Over his crucified corpse  
Marched 20,000 black soldiers and 4,000,000 freedmen singing  
"John Brown's Body Lies a Mouldering in the Grave  
But His Soul Goes Marching On!"

My reading of Valley museums for their interpretations of the Civil War past also includes an analysis of where each museum receives the majority of its funding. Museums present to the public a reading of history usually supported by the organization responsible for providing the monetary support necessary to keep the museum operating. The museums in this chapter are funded and operated by a variety of federal, state and private sources, ranging from the National Parks service at Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, local and private sources at the Old Court House Museum, and a small local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy at the tiny Warren Rifles Confederate Museum in Front Royal. Not surprisingly, the interpretation of John Brown and his raid presented at Harpers Ferry by the United States government is radically different from what visitors to the Warren Rifles find regarding the same person and event. It is also important to note that the

existence of some museums is entirely based on the desire of a particular heritage organization to glorify itself or its cause.

Finally, it is important to note that the three museums analyzed in this chapter differ in regards to the level of museum professionalism present within their exhibits. As a federally-funded museum and official historical arm of the United States government, the various museums operated at Harpers Ferry National Historic Park are clearly designed by museum curators with professional training in museum studies and exhibition. This results in the park exhibiting an overall more nuanced and professionally disciplined approach to historical display, as opposed to a more populist and amateur form of museum exhibition present at the Old Court House Museum and the Warren Rifles Museum. These local museums represent a more lay-person approach to history, one in which small heritage organizations utilize museums as a way of preserving and displaying their own artifactual treasures. The Old Court House Museum, for example, serves primarily as a public repository and display center for one local man's massive personal collection of Civil War memorabilia.

Local museums also serve as centers where local organizations affirm their own perspective on the past in a public setting, allowing the museum to serve as a center of public relations and outreach within their local communities. As Coffey (2003) contends, these local museums allow organizations and individuals that feel traditionally marginalized by hegemonic forms of national history to publicly express alternative views to the normative past. The small Warren Rifles Museum, operated by a local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, includes a number of displays designed to disseminate neo-Confederate mythology. The UDC claim their preferred Lost Cause version of Civil War memory is under attack from professional academia and purveyors of political correctness. Though my research in this study contends that the Lost Cause continues to live on and gain power within heritage sites and discourses throughout the Shenandoah Valley and the entire American South, my reading of the Warren Rifles Museum suggests that many local neo-Confederate heritage organizations believe they are fighting a pitched battle to save the glorious memory of the Old South and its heroes.

*Harpers Ferry National Historic Park*

My trip from Virginia to Harpers Ferry Historic Park took me north along Mosby Highway (Rte. 17), an area once part of “Mosby’s Confederacy.” A legendary Confederate commander, Colonel John Mosby patrolled this area of Northern Virginia during the Civil War and earned legendary status for his guerrilla tactics against the Union army. Considered an irregular officer by the Union Army, Mosby and his band of cavalry rangers harassed Union soldiers, destroyed supply trains and generally made nuisances of themselves for the better part of four years with relative impunity. The Union Army went so far as to place a bounty on Mosby, hoping to capture him alive or intimidate him into lessening his brazen and aggressively bold activities in a region so close to Washington D.C. Mosby was never captured and remained a folk hero in this part of Northern Virginia, though his legacy was somewhat tarnished by his post-war support of the Republican Party during Reconstruction. The legendary status of Mosby, however, seems to have been resuscitated, as portions of his former domain now fall under the John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area designated in 1995 by the Commonwealth of Virginia as the state’s first official heritage tourism region.

My route north to West Virginia and into territory controlled by the Union during the war continued along the Stonewall Jackson Highway (Rte. 340), yet another of many Virginia highways named after prominent Confederates. Roadside signs, located at periodic intervals along the highway, inform the traveler of the official name of the highways. The signs mark the area along the highway as Confederate territory, holy lands that must be protected by contemporary Confederate heritage groups and neo-Confederates (Hague and Sebesta 2006). The state of Virginia chooses to honor its past national heroes despite the fact that both men fought on behalf of a cause tied to racism and slavery. Throughout the United States, Confederate heritage groups during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century lobbied state and local governments to have highways named after Confederate heroes as a way of reclaiming these areas as Confederate spaces. Hague and Sebesta (2006) document one such case where the UDC worked to have a series of small local highways connected into a greater “Jefferson Davis National Highway.” The highway extended into states that did not actually fight for the Confederacy, including California, Washington, and Arizona, as a way of both claiming the territory for the Confederacy and to establish Davis as a national hero as part of reconciliationist Lost Cause discourse.



Figure 6.3

Roanoke Roadside Marker

A roadside marker proclaiming that Brandon Ave. in Roanoke Virginia is part of the “Robert E. Lee Memorial Highway.” Placed there in 1923 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, this is one example of a larger road naming project undertaken by neo-Confederate memorial organizations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bohland).

Though these markers are seemingly innocuous and blended somewhat invisibly into the landscape, they are prime examples of what Billig (1995) refers to as “banal nationalism,” everyday semiotic signs and symbols that serve as constant reminders of a particular nation and its glorious past. Though these signs and markers about the past-Civil War, Revolutionary War, or otherwise-are virtually ignored by the majority of citizens driving through, they are nonetheless permanent reminders of what people and events from the past are considered sacred and relevant within various parts of the country. Billig (1995, 28) comments that, “Had the Confederate forces not been defeated in the Civil War might the territory now provide the locus for two independent states each nurturing its own its own separate culture and historical myths?” Though the Confederate state was certainly short-lived and ultimately defeated in battle, an emerging post-Civil War white Southern nationalist mythology did develop in the Southern states around the Confederacy and its supposedly glorious heroes. The everyday presence of the “banal Confederacy” along the road-scapes of Virginia is but one small way that the Confederate past is continually remembered and reminded.

As I continue along the Stonewall Jackson Highway into the extreme Western portion of West Virginia, the highway is subsequently renamed the Lord Fairfax Highway, somewhat ironic considering that Stonewall Jackson himself was actually born and raised in the territory that would eventually become West Virginia during the war. I’ve officially

entered into the North, though I have not crossed the mythical Mason-Dixon Line that is traditionally mentioned as the separating line between north and south. West Virginia became a new Union state in 1863, following an extended occupation of this portion of Virginia by the Union Army and a vote to secede from the state of Virginia. The population of this mountainous region had long resented the power of slave aristocracy in the Virginia government and its subsequent treatment as a backwoods region by the General Assembly.

Within the small extended arm of West Virginia along Lord Fairfax Highway is Jefferson County, West Virginia. The county, home to Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, was actually one of the few areas of West Virginia where the occupants remained loyal to the state of Virginia during the war, with a majority voting against leaving the Commonwealth. Once a somewhat poor, isolated agrarian region, this part of West Virginia is now strongly tied to the suburban sprawl around Washington D.C. Jefferson County actually borders Loudoun County, Va. to the south, the fastest growing county in the United States according to the 2000 census (United States Census Bureau 2000). Growth rates in Jefferson County are similarly substantial, with a nearly 35% growth in total population since 1980 (Scenic America 1999). Driving through Charlestown, the largest town in Jefferson County, it is clear that much of this suburban sprawl spread across the borders and into West Virginia. Only a few miles from Harpers Ferry, for example, there are a whole series of hastily erected suburban homes located in subdivisions that were likely farmlands only a few years earlier. During the twenty year period from 1972-1992, the county lost over 18,000 acres-20% of its entire agricultural land-to commercial and residential development (Scenic America 1999).

The encroachment of modernity into Jefferson County and the clash between rural and urban life is not without historical precedent. Because of its geographic importance, located at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and along the old Winchester and Potomac Rail Line, the county has long been an important transportation and exploration gateway for the entire region. The small town of Harpers Ferry, located on the plains and heights adjoining the meeting of the two rivers, was the most important town in the county and its economic center. Tapping into the natural power of the rivers, industry came to Harpers Ferry during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. A number of private mills and foundries prepared iron, cotton, flour and sawdust for shipment locally and regionally along the river routes (National Park Service 2006). A federal armory, originally placed in town by

President Washington in 1796, was the town's largest employer, producing thousands of rifles and pistols each year for the United States army.

Despite its geographic importance, Harpers Ferry would likely have faded into historical obscurity like many other early 19<sup>th</sup> century river towns if not for John Brown's infamous raid on the federal arsenal in 1859. John Brown was an avowed anti-slavery advocate and abolitionist that had first come into national consciousness as part of the violence of "Bleeding Kansas." In an act of retribution following the burning of the anti-slavery capital of Lawrence and the caning of abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner on the senate floor, Brown and his sons murdered pro-slavery Missouri men with hatchets at Pottawatomie, Kansas on May 24, 1856. Brown later planned to carry out an even larger-scale attack on American slavery in 1859, a raid that would lead to his eventual death and subsequent martyrdom as an abolitionist hero.

His raid on Harpers Ferry, a somewhat poorly conceived attempt to gain weapons in order to lead an armed slave insurrection throughout the southern states, was the violent spark that ignited the powder keg of sectional discord. It was arguably the single most pivotal event that led the United States into Civil War. Following the failure of the raid and his arrest by federal forces led by then Union Colonel Robert E. Lee, Brown's trial and execution in nearby Charlestown became national news. Indeed, Lee was not the only soldier present at Brown's raid and trial that would later become important figures in the Civil War as soldiers for the Confederacy. Confederate cavalry hero J.E.B. Stuart served as Lee's aide during the raid and Lost Cause idol Stonewall Jackson served on guard duty with his cadets from the Virginia Military Institute during Brown's execution. Brown's mythical legacy as a martyr for the anti-slavery cause proved a powerful force for the Northern cause during the war itself. The song "John Brown's Body," for example, became an anthem of the Union army to be sung along marches and before entering into combat against Southern troops.



Figure 6.4

Harpers Ferry National Historical Site

The simulated historical 19<sup>th</sup> century village at Harpers Ferry National Historical Site, a community literally frozen in time by the National Parks Service (Bohland).

In an effort to preserve the lower portion of Harpers Ferry for American heritage tourism, the National Park Service purchased over 2,500 acres of the original town during the late 1950's. The once thriving town had become run-down and decrepit, with little remaining of the pre-war industry which had made the town such an important site during the Civil War period. One of the main post-war employers in town was the all-black Storer College, which opened after the war as an educational center where freed slaves learned in the shadow of John Brown's legendary raid. Indeed, Harpers Ferry's main importance after the war was a symbolic one, as Brown's raid brought heritage tourists, national heritage organizations such as the UDC, and speakers to the town eager to tap into its mnemonic power. Frederick Douglass spoke at the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Storer College in 1881, delivering a famous address where he noted that Brown's "zeal in the cause was greater than mine." In 1906, W.E.B. Du Bois organized the first conference of his Niagara Movement on the campus of Storer College, delivering a keynote speech focused on the exploitation of African-American and working class labor in 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Despite the presence of these famed Civil Rights leaders, Storer College closed its doors in 1954, leaving the town with a limited economic base for continued survival.

The timing of the federal government's purchase of the lower portion of Harpers Ferry in the late 1950's at the onset of the Civil Rights Movement may not have been a coincidence. By opening a federally-funded and operated National Park at a site so steeped

in African-American history and memory, the Federal Government tacitly positioned itself as a defender of the African-American past and guardian of John Brown's egalitarian legacy. The timing of the purchase also coincided with the upcoming centennial celebration of the Civil War and, following extensive renovations to the area, the NPS opened Harpers Ferry National Historic Park to the public in 1963 during the centennial celebrations. According to the NPS website, over 260,000 people visit the park each year, many of whom no doubt combine a trip to Harpers Ferry as part of a visit to either nearby cities of Washington D.C. or Gettysburg, Pa (National Park Service 2006). The NPS now owns property in both the lower and upper portions of the town and operates ten separate museums and information centers-focused on topics of nature, industry, the Civil War, John Brown and African-American history-within the various restored buildings on the park site. In doing so, the park operates as a heritage Disneyland of sorts, offering a multitude of heritage tourist options to hopefully pique the interest of all types of visitors to Harpers Ferry.

Similar to Williamsburg, contemporary visitors to the park find an impressively restored simulation of 19<sup>th</sup> century Harpers Ferry along the banks and cliffs of the Shenandoah River. The entire park is a giant replica of a small, 19<sup>th</sup> century town, the sort of "Main Street U.S.A." landscape that would have been found in thousands of similar American towns of the time period. Indeed, the simulation is so convincing that the filmmakers of *Gods and Generals* chose the park to stand-in for the town of Fredericksburg, Va. during scenes depicting the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg. The park also hires actors to perform living history displays along the restored downtown as part of their attempt to present an authentic experience to the visiting tourists. The park also stages larger-scale historical reenactments on occasion, including an annual Christmas weekend display focusing on how the common Civil War soldier coped with the hardship of celebrating the holidays away from friends and family.<sup>108</sup> As with other living history museums, the park functions as a center of societal spectacle, utilizing elements of theatre, amusement and entertainment in an effort to bring history alive to its visitors (Urry 2000).

Despite the presence of multiple museums on such varied topics, Harpers Ferry operates as a single living history museum, designed to transmit and coordinate the expansive nationalist themes within the park that are pre-approved by local and national NPS officials. As is the case with many federally-operated history museums, Harpers Ferry

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<sup>108</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Harpers Ferry does not stage any simulation of John Brown's Raid itself or his trial.

seeks to (re)familiarize its visitors with a highly generalized and nationalist version of the American past (Luke 2002). In this case, the NPS version of American history suggests that the story of the town of Harpers Ferry and its citizens is operates as a microcosm of the dominant national story, one where America learns from the mistakes of the past and progresses towards a more harmonious and egalitarian future. It is history ultimately designed to present a feel good message, one that accentuates a common theme of American exceptionalism, proclaiming the United States as “the greatest nation on earth.” It is the story of an America that fulfills the promise of the Declaration of Independence, life and liberty for all citizens, by fighting a divisive Civil War. The promise of the war, however, is not fully achieved until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s, the standard rhetoric of a second Reconstruction offered in contemporary American history. Though the version of history presented at Harpers Ferry does not completely shy away from the mistakes and horrific events of the past, particularly racial injustice, it does so as part of a greater effort to present what we have learned from the past and subsequently corrected as a united, freedom loving nation.

The first building visited by most tourists to the park is the information center, located just beyond a parking lot where the NPS tour buses drop off visitors.<sup>109</sup> As is standard at most NPS historical parks, the information center features a film designed to orient visitors to the area. At Harpers Ferry, the film portrays the town as being at the “confluence of nature and history,” a site where the catastrophic forces of the human and nature worlds periodically flood. The use of the flood by the narrator is both literal and figurative, as flooding from the two rivers is a constant concern in what is presented as a typically American working-class town. The film features a score of country music highlighting the natural beauty of the area and the greater American struggle to be free. According to the film, Harpers Ferry chronicles the passage of time present within American history. The story of the area’s indigenous people’s is only briefly mentioned, with the narrator noting that the “land brought the people here” and, in the logic of stereotypical American colonialism and the myth of the noble savage, states that the native peoples “lived in harmony with nature” in the region. NPS living history actors portray these changes on

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<sup>109</sup> Visitors to Harpers Ferry park their cars in a lot located approximately a mile away from the restored town. The NPS provides a shuttle bus to the park itself as a way of both protecting the park itself and in order to regulate the number of people visiting Harpers Ferry at any one time.

screen, mimicking the evolution of the town's economic base from small artisan shops to larger scale factory work during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a site where the advancement of the town from a primitive, indigenous site to an early industrial center mirrors the supposed progress of the nation itself.



Figure 6.5

Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers at Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

Because the town lies on the floodplain of these two rivers, it has been the site of periodic devastating flooding (Bohland).

According to the film, it was John Brown's Raid and the subsequent Civil War that forever altered both the historical course of the town and America itself. Harpers Ferry is also proof that events taking place in Jeffersonian, small town America can and do play significant roles in the greater American epic story. Harpers Ferry would subsequently become, as noted in the orientation film, a town that becomes a "pawn in the conflict" having found itself caught up in the confluence of political forces sweeping across the nation. Thus, the town embodies all American small towns divided and destroyed by the sectional strife of the Civil War era. Both the introductory film and museums throughout the entire park emphasize how the pre-war events in this small, typically American town served to divide both the region and the nation into two warring nationalist factions. In doing so, the park subscribes to stereotypical rudiments of the classic "brother against brother" theme so omnipresent in 20<sup>th</sup> century Civil War scholarship.

This particular dominant thematic script emphasizes how the American family was split in two by sectional discord, only to be harmoniously reunited after the end of the war with all sins forgiven. Former Confederates such as Robert E. Lee become American heroes

under this reconciliationist adaptation of Civil War memory, men whose critical role in waging war against their own country is excused by historians because of their supposed post-war desires to peacefully reunite the nation. Such rhetoric ignores the persistence of sectional discord well into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, preferring to gloss over the legacy, hatred, and pain of the Jim Crow Era post-Civil War south. This brother against brother version of the Civil War, so present throughout Ken Burns' PBS television series *The Civil War*, also tends to over-emphasize the military events of the war itself which are presupposed to have solved the long-standing sectional divisions and racial inequality present in the United States. In doing so, the "brother against brother" framework often fails to recognize the multitude of issues not resolved by the war, particularly the failure to provide equality and true freedom for African-Americans in the Reconstruction-era southern states.

The final section of the film emphasizes how Harpers Ferry restored itself anew after the war to become a place where America would finally heal from the wounds of sectionalism. The film tells a fairly sanitized version of Reconstruction, one that emphasizes the uplifting story of Storer College as proof that the nation was becoming a better place after the war. The school is linked by the film to the legacy of abolitionism embodied by the life and death John Brown. Set to the backdrop of "John Brown's Body," the film notes how Harpers Ferry became "holy ground" for African-Americans, a pilgrimage and educational site where African-Americans could finally work to achieve the heretofore elusive American dream. The fact that the town and much of the nation remained racially segregated and divided well after the war is conveniently ignored by this feel-good nationalist script.

Once finished with the orientation film at the introductory center, visitors to Harpers Ferry spend the majority of their time moving through-usually quite quickly, from my observations-the park's eight small history museums. Not surprisingly, the largest museum features a series of exhibits focused on the seminal event in the history of the town-John Brown's 1859 raid on the federal arsenal. As in many history museums, the John Brown museum is designed as a chronological walk through the American past. The visitor to Harpers Ferry progresses, just as the nation ultimately progresses, from the beginnings of the American slave system and ends with a series of photographs and displays focused on contemporary issues of American Civil Rights. This technique of museum exhibition is an example of what Craig (2003, 261) refers to as the "grand narrative museum layout...the

effect of these museums is to locate the spectator at a privileged position from where they can see the ‘whole’ history, in what might be seen as a totalizing gesture.”

The John Brown museum features extensive collections of historical artifacts displayed by the museum and more visually oriented displays featuring hundreds of replicas 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs as well as infotainment exhibits comprised of videos, life-sized mock ups of famous 19<sup>th</sup> century rooms and buildings, electronic timelines, computer screens and other hands-on displays designed to make history more interactive and interesting for young visitors. The final room visited by museum-goers, for example, is a full-sized replica of the courtroom in nearby Charlestown where Brown was tried and convicted for acts of treason in federal court. It functions as a stage of sorts, a simulation site where visitors are encouraged to imagine that they were there when the verdict was rendered against Brown. Such replica displays, in addition to the myriad of displayed photographs from the time period, further allow the museum to make a claim of authenticity, creating a sense of realism and visual authority for the exhibition regarding what the past was actually like (Craig 2003, 260).



Figure 6.6

Simulated courtroom in the John Brown Museum

Located at Harpers Ferry, WVA.

(Bohland).

The hundreds of artifacts on display from John Brown’s life and the raid on Harpers Ferry, including items such as a Brown-family sword used in killing pro-slavery men during the “Bleeding Kansas” massacre at Pottawatomie Creek, also serve as spectacular sites of amusement, pleasure, and disciplinary knowledge. Like the mock courtroom, the artifacts

act as simulation devices, though in this case, at a miniature scale. They facilitate an imaginary trip back in time for the museum goer, as by staring with awe and amazement at the strange tools and weapons of 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, the visitor might envision seeing the actual historical events at Harpers Ferry as they happened. Museum artifacts are also carefully chosen objects of disciplinary power which transmit pre-approved knowledge codes to the visitor. The written scripts that accompany each artifact and photograph, for example, provide the visitor with an official version of what the reader should know about each picture or object. As noted previously, these scripts throughout Harpers Ferry Park attempt to link the town and its history to a greater national story of progress and improvement. John Brown's Raid, linked throughout the museum to other acts of slave resistance both violent and non-violent, becomes the critical masculine act of national bravery that would eventually lead the nation down a path to right the historical wrongs perpetrated against African-Americans.

Like many other federally-funded museums, Harpers Ferry presents the American story as a narrative tale replete with larger than life heroes that dedicated their life to fulfilling the promise of American national values. In an act of museum governmentality, these heroes are presented as everyday humans with some inherent flaws. It is their nobility and commitment to American values which makes them worthy of admiration and adulation. From these men, citizens can learn examples of what makes a true American citizen and ultimately become more docile and patriotic members of the nation. The John Brown museum features a whole range of quotes from well-known American historical figures prominently displayed above artifacts, pictures and paintings. One poster board, displayed amid a series of artifacts from Brown's ill-fated raid, is entitled "Perspectives." It includes reactions from a little-known Virginia legislator, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass and John Brown himself to the raid at Harpers Ferry. Of the four chosen perspectives, only the quote from the Virginian, carefully chosen to be a somewhat non-descript historical figure rather than a well-known hero from the period, does not frame Brown as a true American hero and champion of American freedom and values. Brown's ascendancy from traitor to national hero is affirmed by his association with well-known figures from the American past such as Douglass and Thoreau. Another display entitled "Slavery's Storm" includes quotes from prominent Americans including Jefferson, Washington, and John Quincy Adams regarding the institution of African-American slavery. The quotes are

carefully chosen to illustrate that even though some of our founding fathers were slave-owning plantation aristocrats, they were often conflicted about the severity of the institution and its continued practice in the southern states.

As noted in Chapter Two, the majority of the decision making at museums actually goes on backstage, where curators, museum boards, and historians make a whole range of decisions regarding what items are placed on public display, which are to remain in storage and how the chosen artifacts will ultimately be presented to the public. Thus, the various cultural and political decisions made within museums remain hidden to the public, only to be later naturalized as truth by the disciplinary apparatus of the museum. As noted by Karp and Levine (1991, 1):

Every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it. Decisions are made to emphasize one element and to downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others...the very nature of exhibiting it, then, makes it contested terrain.



Figure 6.7  
John Brown Info Board  
The African-Americans on Brown information board in the John Brown Museum at Harpers Ferry (Bohland).

Figure 6.8  
John Brown Info Board  
A series of information boards focused on African-American slavery in the American South prior to the Civil War (Bohland).

As a series of museums and interpretive displays funded by the federal government, Harpers Ferry National Park must attempt to present and attend to a whole series of disparate and highly contested versions of history present throughout American society. As previously argued, federal museums typically choose to characterize American history as a

nationalist story of progress and heroism, one where America ultimately redresses its historical wrongs. Federally-funded museum exhibits focused on the Civil War, for example, tend toward themes of national reconciliation and the stereotypical brother against brother script whereby anecdotes of families torn apart by war symbolize the fracture of the nation during the conflict. Though both museum scripts are certainly omnipresent at Harpers Ferry, a number of the exhibits on display within the park's museums deviate somewhat from parts of the brother against brother script by actually framing the historical events of the town within the context of the long-standing American struggle for civil rights. The John Brown museum, for example, includes a display of quotes from modern African-American Civil Rights leaders centered on John Brown's legacy as well as a series of photographs documenting other cases of Americans that "follow in Brown's footsteps" by protesting and fighting for contemporary human rights issues such as environmental activism and abortion rights. They are merely framed as new challenges, like slavery was in Brown's time, for the nation to overcome along its progressive linear path towards its prescribed destiny as the greatest nation on earth.

It is important to note that the majority of the exhibits at Harpers Ferry are designed by museum professionals to appear neutral in regards to the Civil War. This stance by the NPS reflects the continued domination of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century theme of reconciliation. There are two small Civil War museums located in the park, with one focused on the war in Jefferson County and another primarily on the 1862 battle fought over the town as part of Lee's first invasion of the North. The majority of these exhibits at Harpers Ferry center on the symbolic and strategic importance of the town during the hostilities, standard practice at the majority of federal Civil War museums and seemingly preferred by Civil War buffs primarily interested in military oriented matters. These exhibits deviate little from the reconciliationist rubric omnipresent throughout the park and within most other NPS operated Civil War sites. One display entitled "Harpers Ferry during the Civil War" features photographs of the town in 1860 and then another immediately following the end of the war, illustrating the devastation brought on the town and the entire nation.

Unlike the broad nationalist presentation of John Brown in the park museum, which links the event to an entire history of American civil rights, these two Civil War museums provide little historical context of the war and its mixed legacy within American history. Though this lack of context might be understood as a decision by the curators to

offer a Civil War museum on-site designed primarily for the tourist interested in military affairs, it does result in a much less affective exhibit than those found at the John Brown museum. By choosing to present banal military matters and troop movements in a bland, non-offensive manner, the museum attempts to avoid controversy by merely acting as a facilitator of historical facts to the public. This is the classic, watered-down presentation of American history on display within history museums throughout the United States and lectured by secondary school teachers to millions of disinterested American teenagers.

Following the standard themes of reconciliation and honor to both sides, a meta-narrative script made famous by the Ken Burns Civil War series and the work of historians Bruce Catton and James McPherson, Harpers Ferry National Park glorifies soldiers from both armies for their valor and manly service. The 1862 Battle of Harpers Ferry museum includes the prerequisite number of artifacts from the battle, as well as battle maps detailing the troop movements involved in the battle. Again, the museum is careful to present perspectives from both sides without appearing to promote one viewpoint over another. In some cases, the museum actually seems to go out of its way to exalt the Confederate side, perhaps as a way of appeasing the thousands of Southern apologists that would no doubt protest any federal museum that fails to shroud the Confederacy in glory. A display on the 1862 Battle of Harpers Ferry, for example, includes the written text: “Robert E. Lee could not have selected a more qualified officer than Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson...the results of Jackson’s effort at Harpers Ferry has been called his most brilliant victory.” Another display on Robert E. Lee mentions his “daring plan” to invade the North. It discusses his rag-tag group of soldiers, presented as a hungry, barefoot, and under-equipped force with little chance of success against the might of the Industrial North. Such text covers Lee and Jackson in glory and feeds the heroic against all odds mythology regarding the Confederate forces. In doing so, the museum strays perilously close to Lost Cause orthodoxy, illustrating the powerful and pervasive nature of the myth as it has managed to penetrate even a federally-funded national park.

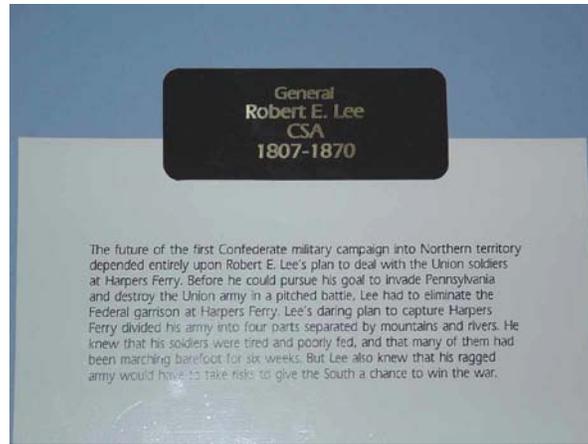


Figure 6.9

Text at the Civil War Museum at Harpers Ferry.

The text, focused on Robert E. Lee, follows the typical Lost Cause myth storyline by suggesting the doom awaiting the “ragged” and “poorly fed” Confederates (Bohland).

Thankfully, the presentation of Civil War memory at Harpers Ferry National Park does not wholly subscribe to all elements of Lost Cause mythology. Taken in totality and in comparison to many other museums in the region, the presentation of issues of slavery, Civil Rights, and African-American history at Harpers Ferry is a more balanced one. By presenting African-American history and memory as central to the story of Harpers Ferry, the park suggests the same regarding the nation itself. The park curators clearly do not subscribe to one of the major tenets of the Lost Cause, the claim of slavery not being the central cause of the Civil War. The curators are thus rejecting the continued claims by neo-Confederate historians that the war was primarily fought over issues like tariffs and states rights, a position that ironically places right wing, paleo-conservative neo-Confederates in agreement with Karl Marx regarding the inherent economic causes of the Civil War. Though the park’s presentation of history does include some elements of Lost Cause orthodoxy and a preoccupation with military issues in its Civil War museums, visitors to the park leave Harpers Ferry with at least an understanding of how historical issues of African-American slavery and civil rights continue to impact American culture and politics in the present-day. Though this message is framed within a highly nationalist narrative of American progress, it is certainly a welcome thematic script that is not present within many of the Civil War museums located within the Shenandoah Valley just across the border in Virginia.

### *The Old Court House Museum*

My trip through the Civil War museums of the Shenandoah Valley continued as I left Harpers Ferry and drove south back across the Virginia border. Heading west along Rte. 7, my ultimate destination was downtown Winchester, Virginia and the newly established Old Court House Civil War Museum. The town of Winchester, located at the northern tip of the Shenandoah Valley along Interstate 81, is a gateway community between North and South which is located only a few miles from the West Virginia border and fifty miles from southern Pennsylvania. During the Civil War, it had the unfortunate distinction of not only being located both along the border between two warring territories; it also linked the key rail and ground transport lines of the Valley, the key transportation arteries linking the northern and southern towns of the region. Not surprisingly, the town's geographic location made it a key strategic site for both armies and the town's citizens faced the threat of almost constant invasion and occupation during the four years of armed conflict. Winchester actually changed hands over seventy times during the war, at a rate of once every three weeks for all four years of the war, making the town one of the most heavily contested communities of the entire war.

As in Jefferson County, West Virginia, citizens of the area now face a more contemporary invasion from the marching forces of modernity. The city of Winchester and outlying northern and eastern areas of Frederick and nearby Warren counties are currently in the process of joining the ever-growing consumer and residential sprawl connecting previously rural areas of northern Virginia and southeastern West Virginia with the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. This entire region of the northern Shenandoah Valley lies within a broad portion of Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland identified as a "last chance landscape," defined by the environmental organization *Scenic America* as a pristine rural areas facing particularly acute threats from encroaching suburban development (Scenic America 1999).<sup>110</sup> The population of Frederick County, surrounding the independent city of Winchester, rose 29.5% from 1990-2000 and has seen yearly growth at rate of nearly 3% a year since 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). This places the county well above the population growth rates for the majority of central and southern Shenandoah

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<sup>110</sup> The Shenandoah to Catoctin Mountain region is one of 12 in the United States identified by the Scenic America (1999) as a "last chance landscape." The imaginary region is defined by the organization as bordered by Interstate 81 to the west, U.S. 15 to the east, U.S. 211 to the south, and the Mason-Dixon Line to the north.

Valley counties as well as the national average of 13% growth from 1990-2000. Eastern Frederick County is now a typically suburban landscape, replete with homogenous suburban housing developments, new upscale strip malls, and gas stations where transplanted “Yankees” take their SUV’s to go and fill up.



Figure 6.10

Historic, pedestrian only downtown of Winchester, VA.

The downtown is a near ghost town on a Sunday, a left over vestige of Virginia’s Blue Laws (Bohland).

Like the many contemporary American cities, Winchester’s downtown area underwent extensive renovations in an attempt to remain economically relevant during this contemporary period of massive suburban economic growth and develop the district as a potential site for tourist visitation. The revitalization program began in 1985 following the designation of the downtown as a “Main Street Community” by the Virginia Department of Housing, a new framework approach for redevelopment that combined new ideas in promotion and design with access to new funding streams to carry out the planned renewal. The National Trust for Historic Preservation later designated forty-five square blocks of the downtown as a historic area, proving further access to funding and allowing local officials to pass strict zoning and property laws in an effort to protect the area’s 19<sup>th</sup> century housing stock. The central component of the downtown revitalization program was the opening of a pedestrian-only shopping mall along a five block portion of North Loudoun Street. Known as “Old Town Mall,” the area is currently home to a larger number of antique shops, cafes, restaurants, bookstores, and specialty shops and is now duly promoted by the city of Winchester as one of the prime tourist destinations of the Frederick County region. The area merchants have made the somewhat strange choice of not opening the vast majority of

their shops and restaurants on Sundays, a day when a large number of day trippers from the Washington D.C. area or weekend heritage tourists would be most likely to visit the downtown district. I had the misfortune of making my own visit to Old Town on a Sunday and the vibrant downtown atmosphere lauded by the regional tourist board was nowhere to be seen. In a scene reminiscent of the days before the repeal of Virginia’s antiquated blue laws, Old Town was a ghost-town where the only people downtown congregated in the one coffee shop heathen enough to dare open on a Sunday afternoon in October.

The Old Court House Civil War Museum is one of the few businesses on the Old Town mall actually open on Sundays, allowing visitors to participate in a Civil War Sabbath ceremony of reverence and worship for the fallen dead. The entrance to the old courthouse features a statue to the common Confederate soldier, present in town centers throughout the American South. The text of this particular statue reads “In Lasting Honor of Every Confederate Soldier from Winchester and Frederick County Who Faithfully Served the South.” These signs, located strategically at the center of local government for the area, served to mark the entire town as Confederate memorial space. In a town as contested militarily as Winchester during the war, the statue dedication reclaimed Winchester as southern space, territory that would never be recaptured during the politically contentious post-war period.



Figure 6.11  
 Historic Marker in Winchester  
 The “Loyal Quaker and Brave Slave” marker in front of the Old Court House Civil War Museum in Winchester, VA (Bohland).

Located directly across from the statue is a new interpretive marker, one of seventy-three erected by the Shenandoah at War Heritage Foundation and the Virginia Civil War Trails over the last five years.<sup>111</sup> The marker, entitled “Loyal Quaker and Brave Slave,” tells the story of how a local anti-slavery Quaker woman and a slave named Thomas Laws spied for Union General Phillip Sheridan against the South in 1864. According to the text of the marker, it was the information they provided Sheridan regarding Confederate troop positions that led to Sheridan’s defeat of General Jubal Early’s Confederate forces and allowed the Union to hold the city of Winchester for the rest of the war. The marker provides the visitor to the Old Court House Museum with an early introduction into the history of Winchester during the war as well as one of the thematic scripts present within the Old Court House Museum: the extended and divisive battles for the control of Winchester serve as a metaphor for sectional discord of the entire Civil War. The marker also acts as a site of counter-memory to the Lost Cause influenced dominant memory represented by the adjacent Confederate statue. It does so by noting the brave and heroic actions of local anti-slavery Quakers and African-American slaves who did not “faithfully serve the South” as did the adjacent everyman Confederate statue memorialized in bronze. It is also a counter to the attempts by Confederate heritage organizations such as the UDC and SCV to memorialize the faithful slaves, a distinction that Thomas Laws would no doubt fail to receive from Confederate heritage groups.

Prior to opening in the historic Court House in 2003, many of the items now on exhibit were displayed in two small, cultural museums in the Winchester area. These artifacts come primarily from the massive private collection of local area resident Harry Ridgeway. Ridgeway, now a vice president of the new museum board, traveled throughout the region collecting military relics, ammunitions, and personal memorabilia from the common soldiers. Seeking a permanent home to display all of his collection of artifacts together, Ridgeway and local heritage activists worked with local officials, eager to place a tourist attraction in the Old Town area, and acquired a lease to the vacant Old Court House located on the Loudoun Street pedestrian mall. According to manager Sally Coates, the museum typically receives around two-hundred visitors each weekend, mostly from individuals or families passing through Winchester while visiting other Civil War attractions

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<sup>111</sup> The organization actually held their public celebration of the dedication of these markers on the steps of the Old Court House Museum in Winchester.

or in town for the annual Apple Festival in the fall (Taylor 2003). Indeed, as my own experience in the area suggests, the Old Court House Museum may actually benefit from the lack of Sunday activity in the pedestrian-only mall. It is one of the few things for visitors to do if they happen upon the downtown area on the day of the Christian Sabbath. The museum is only beginning to advertise and promote itself as a regional tourist site and has not yet shown up on a number of the regional tourist pamphlets and literature distributed at rest areas and local tourist centers. Indeed, I only found out about the museum as part of an interview with a member of the UDC in Front Royal who was quite unsure about exactly where this new museum was located.



Figure 6.12

The Old Court House Building in Winchester, VA.

(Bohland).

As well as providing a tourist anchor for the area and helping to restore a beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century structure, locating a Civil War museum in the Old Court House simply made sense given the associated history of the building with the conflict. The court house dates to 1840 and was a hospital and a prison for soldiers of both sides during the Civil War. Following extensive renovations to the second floor, the Old Court House Museum opened to the public in 2003, making it the newest of the Shenandoah Valley area Civil War museums. The museum feels brand new, with fresh paint on the walls, beautifully finished wood floors, and well-maintained exhibit areas. The renovations to the building are ongoing, as the old first floor courtroom is currently being remodeled into an activity room and permanent living history center. On my visit to the Court House, a local young boy dressed

in Confederate re-enactor garb sat in this muddled first floor space and offered to perform for us. He spent about ten minutes showing us how to load a rifle, prepare his pack, play his drum, and other assorted skills learned from a couple of years on the “re-enactor circuit” of the region. The boy told us that he volunteers at the museum quite often and the curators of the Old Court Museum also stage more elaborate living history displays on a periodic basis, including mock military drills on the front steps of the courthouse and a provost guard patrolling the pedestrian mall.

As the museum is still in its early stages of development, the Old Court Museum is an ideal site for critical engagement. It is a museum clearly in the process of determining what its particular niche will be within an already relatively-crowded assortment of regional Civil War museums. Upon entering the second floor display area, the future architectural plans for the museum are displayed across the back wall as a way of both informing the visitor about potential exhibits and to solicit donations to the operating fund. Though the museum charges \$3 for adult admission, there are a number of signs asking patrons to either volunteer their time or to make additional contributions to the museum operating fund in order for the museum to continue its extensive renovations and make “our dream become reality.” These series of pleas for additional funding are now a typical sight in small-scale Virginia museums, as the same right-wing neo-Confederates that might philosophically support such institutions consistently vote for candidates that reject the higher state taxes necessary to adequately fund them.

There are also a large number of “works in progress,” “watch our progress,” and “coming soon” signs located throughout the second floor display area. The text on one of these signs states that “Great Things Are Coming” in the days ahead, also noting that the museum is in the process of “Making History.” In doing so, the Old Court House Museum is the rare educational institution to publicly admit the role of the museum in the construction of historical knowledge. Underneath the words “Under Construction,” another plaque reads:

*Witness to War*, the permanent exhibit for the Old Court House Civil War Museum is a work in progress. Typical museum development takes 3-5 years from concept to installation. The Museum Committee and the design team have been meeting since 2001.

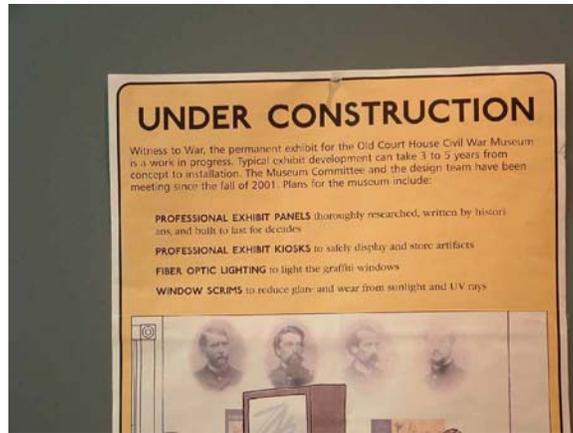


Figure 6.13

Under Construction Sign

One of the many signs at the Old Court House Civil War museum noting the building of new exhibits in the museum space (Bohland).

As noted in the above italicized text, “Witness to War” is the title of the permanent exhibit at the Old Court House Museum. Indeed, it emerges as the dominant theme for the entire museum. The design of the museum is to make the visitor a passive observer to the Civil War and the awesome military power of the conflict. The vast majority of the museum is devoted to the exhibition of over 3,000 military artifacts collected by Ridgeway over the past sixty years. Each artifact includes a simple text of how the artifact was cast, who manufactured it, its material significance, who owns the artifact and where and when it was found. In doing so, the curators of the Old Court Museum utilize the classic museum spectacle of collecting and displaying as a discursive strategy to instruct patrons about the narrative meaning of the Civil War. Entire rows of glass display cases hold dozens of giant artillery shells excavated by Ridgeway and others from the grounds of former battlefields in the local area. Another glass case displays ten rows of brass belt-buckles from Union soldiers found on Shenandoah Valley battlefields and farmlands during the last 140 years. After viewing these artifacts, visitors become witnesses to the horrible price of war, presumed to extract an understanding of the real Civil War from the disciplinary power of these antiquated display relics.

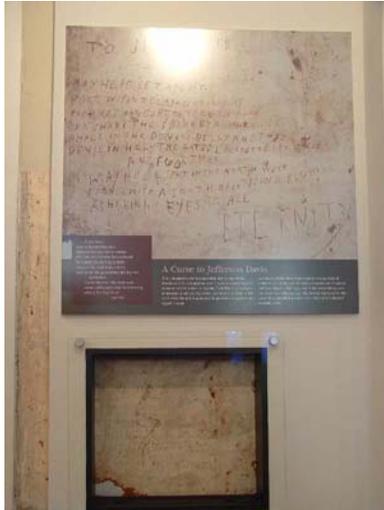


Figure 6.14

Solder Graffiti

An exhibit of soldier graffiti at the Court House Museum, the unsigned curse to Jefferson Davis (Bohland).



Figure 6.15

Civil War Belt-Buckles

Row after row of Civil War belt-buckles on display at the Old Court House Museum (Bohland).

The witness to war thematic script is also supported by the exhibition of soldier graffiti at the museum. As noted previously, the structure served as both a prison and a hospital for men of both armies during the Civil War. A number of the men wounded and imprisoned at the Old Court House carved their names and other personal messages onto the walls of the building. Renovators uncovered these curses during their work on the second floor display area and these signatures and messages are now prominent features at the Old Court House Museum. The museum now covers these carvings in glass in order to preserve the messages for future display, including one which museum manager Sally Coates called the museum's "premier exhibit," an unsigned curse to Jefferson Davis (Taylor 2003). It reads:

To Jeff Davis, may he be set afloat on a boat without compass or rudder  
 then that any contents be swallowed by a shark the shark by a whale  
 whale in the devil's belly and the devil in hell the gates locked the key lost  
 and further may he be put in the north west corner with a south east wind blowing  
 ashes in his eyes for all eternity.

The curse, as well as other examples of soldier graffiti displayed at the Old Court House Museum, provides the museum with a powerful mnemonic device not present at

most other similar small-scale history museums. They become windows to the past, scripted relics that are actually a permanent part of the museum's edifice. The graffiti provides the museum with a certain authority as an authentic site where the events of the past are still visible, allowing visitors to participate in an imaginary journey back to the time when the museum contained soldiers from both armies in desperate conditions. They also serve as marketing devices, unique artifacts not found at most small-scale American history museums. The graffiti is the museum's niche within the competitive and crowded subculture of Civil War heritage, a useful tool for attracting visitors to the museum and to the newly renovated downtown Winchester.

Rather than focusing on more complex and contentious issues of Civil War memory, the museum chooses for the most part to concentrate its focus on the much less controversial topics of new military technology and the enormous human costs of the war. This may be due in part to the fact that the museum is located in Winchester, a town that geographically straddles the historical border between North and South. The Old Court House Museum risks alienating and excluding visitors from nearby Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Northern Virginia, as well as many of the new residents of the area that moved into the area from the D.C. area, if it exhibits an openly pro-Confederate bias. Similarly, a portion of the local and regional population, particularly those with long-term roots in the area, would likely object to any attempt to portray the Confederacy in a less than favorable light. The museum attempts to position itself as a neutral witness to the division of past military conflicts. Little space is reserved at the Old Court House for exhibits focused on controversial topics such as secession, slavery, and the overriding causes of the war. Instead, as noted in the mission statement of the museum printed on the bottom one of the posters on the front wall discussing future plans for the institution, the focus is on:

Promoting an understanding of the harsh realities of war, as well as the dramatic impact on the soldiers from both sides and the people in Winchester and Frederick County, Virginia where the armies campaigned and fought.

In addition to "Witness to War," the other permanent exhibit at the museum features the title "Like Grass Before the Scythe: The Terrible Price of the Civil War." It is a nationalist narrative of "man versus machine" designed to impart the horrors of war and illuminate the bravery of the men that dared to march in battle against these unspeakable new killing technologies. As would occur later to American soldiers in the First World War,

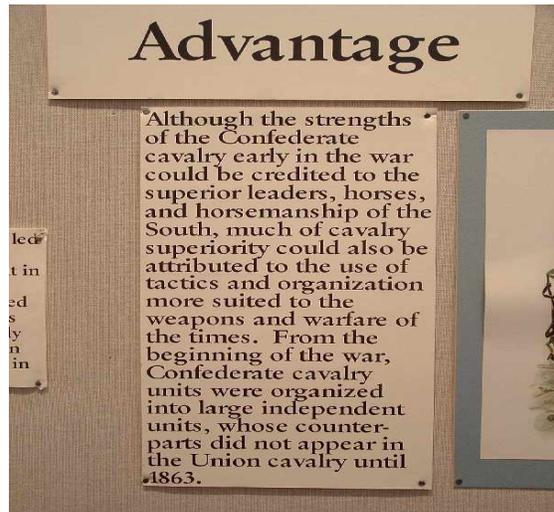
soldiers of the Civil War faced the awesome slaughtering capability of the era without the tactical awareness necessary to react to it. Many of the artifacts from the Ridgeway Collection could have been responsible for the death of soldiers on the field, imbuing them with a particular bio-power as relics with the power to take away human life (Luke 2002, 110). By viewing these artifacts of death, museum goers become witnesses to the deaths of thousands of men on the battlefields. This is history as necrology, where the sacrifices of the young men of the past become real to the visitor within the glass display case of the history museum. As viewers look at the museum’s impressive collection of cannonballs, artillery shells, guns, swords, and minnie balls on exhibit, they can also read text on the awesome killing power of Civil War era military technology.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 6.16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Civil War Shells and Munitions</p> <p>Displays of artillery shells at the museum, part of the theme of “killing technology” on display at the Old Court House Museum (Bohland).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 6.17</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Common Soldier Relics</p> <p>A display of common soldier relics at the Old Court House Museum (Bohland).</p>
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Conversely, the museum also utilizes life, as represented by the life of the “common soldier,” to reinforce the museum’s theme of the tremendous hardships faced by enlisted men in both armies. By displaying common soldier artifacts, such as photographs and both medical and personal items, the curators attempt to illustrate the hard life and suffering faced by the common soldier.” As visitors, we are reminded in viewing the belt-buckles and playing cards that these personal items once belonged to vibrant young men not unlike ourselves, soldiers whose sense of duty led them to service where their future dreams were snuffed out on the killing fields of the South. The ultimate meaning to be transmitted

through such artifactual displays is a nationalist one. It is to remind museum visitors of the ultimate sacrifice made by Civil War soldiers, men that gave their bodies and their lives in service of their country. It is therefore a museum both of war and remembrance, a small-scale site of governmentality designed to discipline citizens into acceptance of particular foundational scripts concerning American history emphasizing the cultural values “we” cherish and ultimately emulate: freedom, sacrifice, duty, honor, and courage. It is through such spaces of disciplinary knowledge that the nation becomes, as Benedict Anderson famously put it, imagined in the mind of its citizens (B. Anderson 1983).



<p>Figure 6.18</p> <p>Changing Technology of War Info Board</p> <p>The awesome new killing technology of war script is evident in this bulletin board text at the Old Court House (Bohland).</p>	<p>Figure 6.19</p> <p>Old Court House Info Board</p> <p>A list of Confederate “advantages” includes this text which supports Lost Cause mythology regarding the superiority of Confederate officers (Bohland).</p>
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In an attempt to provide some additional textual context to the multitude of artifacts on exhibit, the museum curators placed a number of bulletin boards above the glass display cases. The presence of these bulletin boards, with text obviously printed off a computer onto cardboard paper, permeates the museum with an amateurish feel typical of most secondary school science fairs. Eight of the bulletin boards displays center on military related issues, including the volunteer make-up of each army and the plight of the common soldier of the war. As is typical of Virginia Civil War museums, there is also the standard picture of both Lee and Jackson and the accompanying text covering both of their careers in Lost Cause glory. This is somewhat ironic in a museum focused on the awesome power of

killing technologies, as both men exhibited on occasion some of the same failed military tactics of the time period which the museum seems to be critiquing as acts of butchery. At Gettysburg, for example, Lee sent his men straight into well-armed centers of the highly-fortified Union line and his army suffered incredible losses as a result. Another series of boards deal with common Civil War topics present in most general history texts and museum displays such as the ubiquitous list of “Southern Advantages and Disadvantages” that invariably mentions the awesome skill of Southern commanders, particularly in cavalry units, as compared to their Northern counterparts. Like the idolization of Lee and Jackson, this is yet another example of contemporary Lost Cause discourse subtly and unobtrusively presented as historical fact in a disciplinary museum setting.

*Warren Rifles Confederate Museum*

*May the work of the UDC be a blessing to the nation as a whole  
and may peace, harmony and love abound in the hearts of  
all Confederate daughters.*

Mrs. Frank Harrold, President  
Georgia Division, UDC 1920-21.<sup>112</sup>

The final stop in my tour of Civil War museums of the Northern Shenandoah Valley was the town of Front Royal, Virginia. From Winchester, Front Royal lies twenty five miles south of the town along State Rte. 307. The northern and southern forks of the Shenandoah River meet at Front Royal and the town served as a transportation center both along the river-way and the Shenandoah Railroad. During the four years of the Civil War, Front Royal's strategic location, only seventy miles from Washington D.C. along a gap in the Blue Ridge, meant that the townspeople faced periodic raids and violence from armies on both sides. In May of 1862, the largest battle around the town took place when Confederate General Stonewall Jackson defeated a smaller Union force under Nathaniel Banks at the Battle of Front Royal.<sup>113</sup> Front Royal also famously served as a center for Confederate spies who utilized the town as a natural base for their secret forays behind enemy lines. The most famous Confederate spy of the entire war, the irrepressible Belle Boyd, called Front Royal home. Her small cottage is now located next to the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum that served as my ultimate destination on the trip south from Winchester.

The modern town of Front Royal serves as a gateway along Interstate 66 to the massive sprawl of Northern Virginia and Washington D.C. Like Winchester and Frederick County, Front Royal and surrounding Warren County lie within a region experienced unprecedented growth as a result of being unfortunately located in relatively underdeveloped and scenic rural landscapes still close to Northern Virginia. The population of nearby Warren County grew 20.8% from 1990-2000, with a nearly 8% projected growth rate from 2000-03 (United States Census Bureau 2000). The town is also located at the northern edge of Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive, placing it in a particularly advantageous

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<sup>112</sup> Quoted from *United Daughters of the Confederacy: Past and Present*. Information brochure, Back Cover. Distributed at Warren Rifles Confederate Museum, October 2004.

<sup>113</sup> The town now contains a series of markers maintained by the Civil War Trails organization that allows visitors to take a self-guided driving tour of the key sites involved in this battle. The Front Royal Visitors Center also provides visitors with a free map of the battle sites.

position for tourist development and visitation. As a result, the town now contains a fair number of bed and breakfast cottages, country inns, and gourmet restaurants that cater to weekend visitors and the nouveau riche suburbanites now living in the area. The downtown area, while still containing some outdated vestiges of an earlier “Andy Griffith” era, is in the process of gentrifying and historicizing, replete with the prerequisite designated historic area and restored 19<sup>th</sup> century housing stock.

The Warren Rifles Confederate Museum and the Belle Boyd Cottage are situated within the town’s main historic district just off the downtown business strip. As previously mentioned, the small museum is owned and operated by the local Warren Rifles Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.<sup>114</sup> This seems to be quite a lively chapter, with fifty-five current active members and monthly meetings held in a large room located above the museum that acts as their meeting hall. This UDC chapter also allows the SCV to hold their local meetings here as well, making the building a true regional center of Confederate memorial activity and heritage education. It is only open to the public from April 15<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, though they are open by appointment during the winter and early spring months. On our visit to the museum accompanied by my wife, we were required to make a personal appointment with the head of the local chapter in order to visit the space. After briefly discussing my dissertation topic at a very general level, mentioning only that I was working on a doctorate at Virginia Tech centered on Civil War memory in the Valley, the curator agreed to open the museum up to us on a Saturday afternoon.

My wife and I were met at the museum by Mrs. Jackson, a sweet-natured older woman and member of the Warren Rifles Chapter who serves as one of the museum’s de facto curators.<sup>115</sup> We were the only people visiting the museum and found ourselves accompanied the majority of the time by Mrs. Jackson. Though this did make critical note taking difficult, it did provide us with access to the museum’s inner sanctum that I did not have at either Harpers Ferry or the Old Court House. We ended up getting us what amounted to a guided tour of the museum collections and Mrs. Jackson spoke to us at length about both the museum and her beliefs on heritage and the greater purpose of the UDC. She seemed to warm up to us after my wife informed her that her grandmother is a “kindred

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<sup>114</sup> Many of the local UDC and SCV chapters throughout the South are named after the local Confederate unit that served during the Civil War. The Front Royal area chapter takes its name from the Warren Rifles unit of the Confederate Army.

<sup>115</sup> I’ve used an alias for the woman we spoke to on our visit.

soul,” a member of the Savannah Chapter of the UDC that apparently was the first ever chapter of the organization. This fact actually makes my wife eligible for UDC membership, something Mrs. Jackson was quick to point out as soon as she was informed of my wife’s Confederate lineage.



Figure 6.20

Confederate Museum Display Box

An example of the amateur style of museum display at the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum. Relics are literally piled on top of each other in the glass display cases (Bohland).

Once inside the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum, the visitor passes through a small gift shop and enters a small room that is literally jammed full of a whole range of Confederate artifacts and memorabilia on display.<sup>116</sup> The space is literally an archive of the original Lost Cause, fitting for an organization which has long served as the amateur “cultural custodians” of the Confederate past (Brundage 2005, 125). In nearly every glass display case, the exhibition of artifacts at the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum is of a highly amateur quality, with relics and documents piled next to each other by the dozens in the display cases in a haphazard manner. It is absent of the degree of precision and museum professionalism present at Harpers Ferry or at the Old Court House space. The accompanying text for each artifact is printed on small index cards located next to the items, though in some cases the curators actually overlap these cards, making them somewhat unreadable to the visitor. The museum is a repository of Southern public history, an amateur movement of Southern white women which provides a more populist version of

<sup>116</sup> As part of our tour, Mrs. Jackson later took us to two storage rooms filled with Confederate memorabilia that has either not yet been catalogued by the chapter or space has not been found to display them.

Confederate memory than is disseminated by professionals in Southern universities and museum spaces. Despite this striking amateurism and its obvious pro-Confederate bias, the museum is featured on many Civil War related tourist websites and brochures for the region and does manage to receive thousands of visitors each year.<sup>117</sup> The sign-in book at the front of the museum is full of visitors from around the country and the world, including large numbers of visitors from the United Kingdom, a country noted by Jackson and others on my travels as having a particular affinity for Civil War related tourism.

This educational component of the Warren Rifles chapter is consistent with the organizational history of the UDC and serves as one of the main motivations for the chapter to operate a public museum. As noted in their informational brochure presented to visitors at the museum:

The United Daughters of the Confederacy was incorporated *under the laws of the District of Columbia* on July 18, 1919. The objectives of the Society are historical, benevolent, *educational*, memorial and patriotic to: *...collect and preserve the material for a truthful history of the War Between the States, to record the part taken by Southern Women in patient endurance of hardship and patriotic devotion during the struggle...[and] to assist descendents of worthy Confederates in securing proper education* (my emphasis).<sup>118</sup>

As well as illustrating how the organization continues to use sectionalist and divisive language in their official documents, the above italicized text notes the long-standing educational objectives of the UDC.<sup>119</sup> As part of this educational component, the organization operates a public library and Confederate archive within the national headquarters of the UDC in Richmond, Virginia for scholars pursuing work in Confederate history. The national headquarters of the UDC also provides funding and logistical support for “Children of the Confederacy” chapters throughout the South. These local COC groups serve as indoctrination sites for the young people into neo-Confederate versions of history and provide useful recruitment pools for entry into either the UDC or SCV as adults. Like the UDC, the COC holds an annual national convention where a variety of speakers on

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<sup>117</sup> This information is anecdotal, provided by Jackson on our tour of the museum. I was able to look at the sign in book and did note that, though the museum certainly received far fewer visitors than Harpers Ferry, it still received enough yearly visitors to remain financially healthy.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted from *United Daughters of the Confederacy: Past and Present* information brochure, Inside Cover. Distributed at Warren Rifles Confederate Museum, October 2004.

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter Three for a discussion of the role the UDC has historically played in Southern education and Lost Cause dissemination.

Confederate heritage issues present to middle and high school aged children. The June 2004 national COC convention took place in the Shenandoah Valley at nearby Winchester, further illustrating the centrality of the region for Confederate heritage activists.

In addition to its support of the COC, the UDC also fulfills its educational goals by awarding a number of university scholarships and merit awards named after Confederate military and political heroes to students at universities throughout the country. The majority of the UDC scholarships are presented to students at military schools, including The Citadel and all of the United States Service Academies. Within the Shenandoah Valley, the UDC honors the student with the highest academic average in physics at VMI with its annual Stonewall Jackson Award. Somewhat bizarrely, the UDC also offers a Jefferson Davis Award at Maine's Bowdoin College to a student excelling in Constitutional Law. The UDC also supports post-graduate thesis work in Confederate history and memory with the Mrs. Simon Baruch University Award. In fact, when I told Mrs. Jackson of my interest in issues of Confederate memory for this dissertation, she eagerly suggested that I apply for this award.<sup>120</sup>

Each local chapter must also participate in various educational activities within their own communities. Typically, members of UDC chapters volunteer themselves as expert speakers on the Civil War and heritage issues at local schools and civic organizations. The women usually arrive for their speaking engagements in full period costume, wearing hoop skirts and Old South lace gowns a la Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*. As I relate in detail in Chapter Seven, I experienced this outreach program first hand as an instructor at Hollins University when a student writing a paper on Civil War memory for a cultural geography course invited the local president of the Roanoke-area UDC to discuss their organization with our class. The speakers, which also included members of the Fincastle Rifles SCV chapter, claimed that they "do this quite often" and had just given a presentation to a group of home-schooled children the same week. Other UDC chapters, particularly in chapters of the Deep South and Texas, fulfill their educational commitments by offering essay contests for local school children on issues of Confederate history and heroism.

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<sup>120</sup> This is quite typical of the conversations I had with neo-Confederates over the course of my research for this study, as most of them assume that a Virginian writing on Civil War memory must be taking a Lost Cause influenced approach to the work. Additionally, when I mention Virginia Tech, they all assume I work with or have been influenced by the work of James. I Robertson, Jr. Robertson commonly speaks at UDC national events and is an honorary member of the organization.

By operating a public museum, the Warren Rifles chapter fulfills its educational mandate in a rather unique fashion. It is the only public museum operated by the UDC in Virginia and one of only two currently operated throughout the southern United States.<sup>121</sup> Like all public history museums, it is a disciplinary site where particular versions of the past are disseminated to visitors. It receives random visits from curious adults visiting the Front Royal area, many of whom are perhaps unaware of the museum's association with the UDC's and its subsequent pro-Confederate version of Civil War memory. For her part, Mrs. Jackson reflected little concern over her organization operating such a public museum space, noting that "Yankee groups" could do the same thing. The pro-Confederate bias of the museum, however, may actually attract alike-minded visitors to a space deemed to present an alternative to the "pro-Yankee" museums operated by the National Park Service. The museum continues to receive local Warren County school children on field trips, a tradition at the museum since its opening over seventy years ago. Though Mrs. Jackson admitted that the museum does not have as many school groups visiting Warren Rifles as in the past, they make it a point to invite local schools to the museum every year. The school children that do come to the museum learn about the Civil War past in what amounts to a memorial shrine for the worship and adoration of the heroic Southern dead, the ultimate sanctuary of 1870's Lost Cause memory.

In addition to its pro-Confederate educational component, the museum is a house of ancestor worship of the type described famously by Gaines Forster in *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, a fanatic civil orthodoxy obsessed with the myths and stories of the past as a way of affirming their Southern identity in the present (Forster 1987; Goldfield 2002). The practice of memorial rituals by the UDC has a long history that dates back to the official beginnings of the organization following the when several existing Confederate ladies heritage organizations combined under the Daughters umbrella in 1894 (Blight 2002; Shackel 2003). As noted previously, the UDC raised funds for many of the statues dedicated to the Confederate common soldier found throughout the Southern United States. The dedication of these statues usually involved elaborate and political rituals designed to both remember the fallen Confederate dead and to rally Jim Crow Era Southerners against Yankee-led Reconstruction (Blight 2002; Blair 2004).

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<sup>121</sup> The other is in Charleston, S.C. in the upper level of the old slave market building in the historic district.

The collection and display of these artifactual pieces amounts to a ritualized civil ceremony that allows UDC members to participate in acts of reverence and connection towards their idealized ancestors of the past (Wilson, C. 1980). Though civil in nature, this form of ancestor worship was almost always combined with Christian imagery and symbolism, particularly as purveyors of the Lost Cause attempted to link the Confederacy and its various heroes with evangelical Christianity. As noted throughout the dissertation, the Civil War was cast in the South both during and after the war as a theological struggle, a Christian holy war waged between the soldiers of the godless north and the pious men of the Confederate states (Hague and Sebesta 2002; Phillips 2006). Not surprisingly, the Warren Rifles Confederate museum features a number of Christian items as part of its collection, including a variety of Christian Bibles and prayer books carried by Confederate soldiers and spies during the war, all exhibited as proof of the Christian values held by Southern men and women.



Figure 6.21

Lee Display Box

A display box devoted entirely to Robert E. Lee. Many of the other Lost Cause heroes have their own separate artifact displays (Bohland).

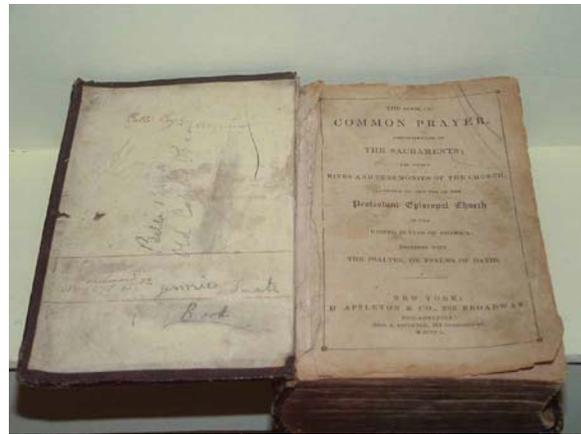


Figure 6.22

Confederate Bible

One of the many Confederate Bibles and prayer books on display at the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum (Bohland).

Many of the Christian laden rituals practiced by the UDC after the war, including wreath laying ceremonies, the dedication of Confederate Iron Crosses on the graves of veterans, and the observance of Confederate holidays, continue to be performed in the present by nearly every chapter of the UDC throughout the United States. Following the end of the Civil War, it was primarily the white women of the South that took on the task of

archiving ancestral Confederate military records and relics. As noted by Goldfield (2002, 97), “White women of the Old South had always served as record keepers, inscribing the family lineage in the heirloom Bible...it came as a natural, an honorable, calling to chronicle the heroic deeds of a dead civilization so that it and they might live again.” This tradition of collecting and chronicling the ancestral past continues to be carried on by present-day members of the UDC at the Warren Rifles Museum. By caring for, collecting, and displaying this hodgepodge assortment of Confederate memorabilia, the ladies of the Warren Rifles chapter of the UDC can volunteer as amateur curators at the museum and participate in a near daily ritual of Confederate memorialization. In doing so, they can affirm both their own personal devotion, as well as their gaining status for their own particular UDC chapter, to the everyday remembrance of the Confederate cause in a manner not present within many other chapters. Our tour guide Mrs. Jackson was quick to point out to us, with a great deal of pride in her voice, that her chapter was the only one in Virginia operating such a museum.

Within this dark mnemonic space, somewhat reminiscent of a stereotypical grandmother’s musty basement, the visitor finds hundreds of browning documents and decaying artifacts. Twenty or so glass cases hold the museum’s most hallowed artifacts, ranging from letters written by Confederate officers to the standard military items present in most Civil War collections. The artifacts range from the stereotypical to the macabre, a strange assortment of Confederate bric-a-brac collected and donated since the museum first began operating in 1936. Among the hundreds of items on display is a framed Confederate battle flag used by the local Pegram’s Battalion lies across the back wall of the museum, noted on our tour by Mrs. Jackson as one of their most prized possessions. The flag display includes a document with the list of battles the unit engaged in during the war, noting their participation in actions from 1861 to one of the last battle’s of the war at Five Forks, Virginia. In another display case at the front of the museum and listed under the topic “History,” the remains of an unknown soldier’s hip bone embedded with the bullet that may have killed him lies next to a pair of riding gloves and a riding stirrup. According to the accompanying text, it was found at the Seven Pines battlefield and loaned to the Warren Rifles chapter by the Virginia Chapter of the UDC.



Figure 6.23

The Pegram Battalion Confederate Battle Flag. This is one of the prized possessions of the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum (Bohland).

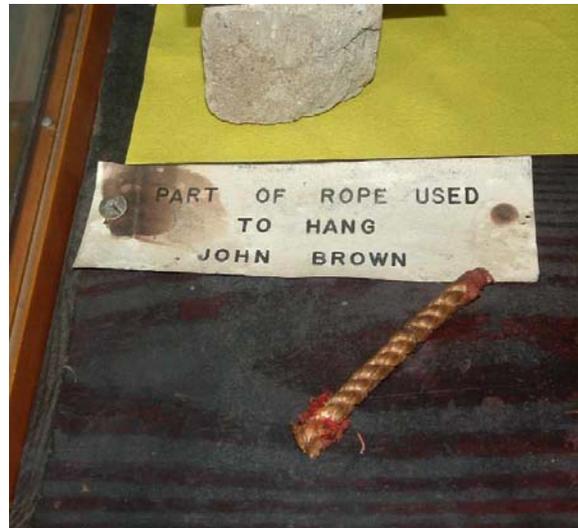


Figure 6.24

John Brown Rope Relic  
A piece of rope supposedly used in the 1859 hanging of John Brown. One of the “treasures” of the museum (Bohland).

Perhaps the strangest and most disturbing piece at the museums found in the same display case as the preserved hipbone. On a decaying piece of paper with burned edges reads the text: “Part of the Rope Used to Hang John Brown.” There is no mention on the card of who found this piece of rope and when it was donated to the Warren Rifles chapter, details noted on nearly every other relic on display at the museum. Indeed, the authenticity of this piece might be open to debate, as it seems to be item with a great deal of mystery and oral history surrounding it.<sup>122</sup> The artifact itself is a small, frayed piece of rope, its edges somewhat ominously stained red as if to remind the viewer of Brown’s blood. Having just visited the John Brown Museum at Harpers Ferry on the same trip to the Northern Shenandoah Valley, I was struck by the incredible difference in the representation of John Brown at Warren Rifles. Though I would hardly have expected a glorious memorialization of Brown at a Confederate heritage museum, the callous banality of the Brown rope exhibit dramatically illustrates the still-simmering hatred held by the UDC towards a historical figure from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, my reading of this artifact suggests that the piece of rope is

<sup>122</sup> When asked about the piece, we got very little information about it from our tour guide. Rather, she simply seemed proud that her small museum had acquired a piece of rope used in the death of John Brown.

displayed at a museum as a particularly treasured item, one held in veneration and nostalgia towards the act of hanging of a man considered by any good neo-Confederate to be the ultimate traitor and villain of the South.

Not surprisingly, the museum offers a far different degree of reverence towards Confederate soldiers than afforded the “villainous” John Brown. There are a large number of memorial plaques located throughout the museum, taking up seemingly ever vacant piece of wall space available in an already crowded space. The majority of these plaques read “In Memory Of,” donated by the local descendents to their Confederate ancestor(s). Members of various Warren County families purchased these plaques as a way of honoring their familial links to the Confederacy and noting their own families past and present dedication to the cause. Some of these plaques include pictures of their Confederate ancestors while others are far more elaborate and extensive. The local Buck family purchased a series of these memorial plaques at the museum, including one at the back wall of the museum listing the names and ranks of over twenty members of the Buck clan that honorably served in the Confederate military. The Buck family seems to have achieved some degree of status within the local Confederate heritage community as a family that served with particular distinction and has the contemporary financial resources to purchase elaborate memorial signage at the museum.



Figure 6.25

Confederate Plaque Display

A display of plaques on one of the walls of the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum (Bohland).



Figure 6.26

The Women’s Display at the Confederate museum.

This display features Old South dresses and a tribute to Belle Boyd (Bohland).

As well as affording space to the memorialization of local soldiers, the Warren Rifles chapter also includes the prerequisite Lost Cause exhibits honoring its most famous heroes. One of the most celebrated figures at the museum is Belle Boyd, the hometown Confederate spy who seduced Union officials in nearby Washington D.C. in order to gain information for the Confederate command. Like her male counterparts, Boyd receives her own display case at the museum full of treasured relics related to each Confederate idol. Boyd's case features three of her elaborated period dresses, restored by local UDC members and prominently displayed on female mannequins that look amazingly like Scarlet O'Hara. Lee's case is a bit more crowded, including a large number of his personal war correspondences, small daguerreotype portraits, buttons from his uniform, and a walking stick used by the great man. Lee, along with other Confederate heroes including Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, John Mosby, Joseph Johnston, J.E.B. Stuart and Jubal Early, is further memorialized along a hero wall of framed photographic portraits located within a large section of the right side of the museum. The display instantly recalls displays of family photographs found in many American homes, suggesting the reverence these Confederate matinee idols are held in within UDC memory and lore.

Like his Confederate icon counterparts, items related to Colonel John Mosby are exhibited within their own display case. The Mosby display case includes a framed copy of a Confederate medal of honor awarded to him postmortem by the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1979 for "uncommon valor and bravery involving risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in defense of his homeland and its noble ideals." As mentioned previously, the "Gray Ghost" of the Confederacy is a local legend in this part of Northern Virginia, a region sometimes referred to as Mosby's Confederacy. Prior to the onset of the war, Mosby received a "gentleman's education" at the University of Virginia before becoming commander of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Cavalry (Blight 2002, 297). His cavalry unit proved to be a major problem for Union forces in the region throughout the entire war, capturing supply wagons, trains, and even Union officers. Mosby and his Rangers supposedly went so far as to hang some of the men he captured, though this claim is vehemently disputed by neo-Confederate historians and heritage groups. As a result of his wartime activities, he became a romantic and legendary figure throughout the South, a Lost Cause idol with a reputation with the common people similar to both Jackson and Lee. Conversely, Mosby was one of the most reviled of all Confederate commanders in the North, where as a result of his

ruthless reputation and guerrilla tactics, he was considered to be an irregular outlaw with a bounty for his capture higher than most other regular Confederate officers and officials.

As Front Royal lies at the southern edge of Mosby's Confederacy and was the scene of many of his daring exploits, the Warren Rifles Chapter reveres him as a both a Confederate hero and a native son. Our tour guide Mrs. Jackson claimed herself to be a relative of the "Gray Ghost," a detail she imparted to us with no small amount of pride in her voice. When discussing Mosby with her, I attempted to explain to my wife who he was and why he is so adored in this part of Virginia. In doing so, I made the mistake of calling him an irregular commander, a term that clearly offended our host to the point that she stopped the tour to inform us in a vehement tone just how regular a soldier Mosby actually was.



Figure 6.27

#### Mosby Certificate

The certificate honoring the 1979 Confederate Medal of Honor awarded to John Singleton Mosby, the "Gray Ghost of the Confederacy" (Bohland).

The outward anger expressed by this small, previously gracious Southern woman towards what she considered to be a slight against her beloved ancestor forced me to attempt to repair the damage to our relationship by noting that, "that's what the Yankee's thought about him anyway." This seemed to do calm her down somewhat and she then proceeded to then tell us a story about a "damn Yankee" teacher that had once visited the museum and dared to challenge her version of Mosby's Confederacy. As part of this tale, she noted that:

I told him [the damn Yankee] that during Mosby's time Yankee soldiers would come into this area and these mountains looking for him (pause)... And they would just disappear. Those Yankees did not come out of here alive...you should remember that, sir. Yankees that were never to be heard from again. That sure shut him up, I tell you that much. He did not have much to say to me after that.

There is more than a little irony associated with both the vehement and intimidating defense of Mosby's character and the general reverence afforded to his Civil War legacy. Following the end of the war, Mosby actually became one of the most reviled of all ex-Confederate heroes as a result of his Reconstruction era political stances. Unlike Jubal Early and many of the other Virginia ex-Confederates, Mosby refused to participate in most of the early and more divisive Lost Cause celebrations that both covered the Confederate cause in glory and encouraged continued antagonism towards the federal government. In an act considered by many original Lost Causers to be tantamount to treason, Mosby actually became a vocal member of the hated Republican party who publicly campaigned for former Union generals for president-Ulysses S. Grant in 1872 and Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. In doing so, Mosby became one of the first ex-Confederates to espouse the new reconciliatory version of the Lost Cause, a narrative which favored reunion instead of confrontation with the North for the sake of New South economic development and new American military unity on the Western frontier. Mosby actually worked for the Grant government, accepting a position in both the foreign-service and the justice department as a reward for his support in the campaign (Seipel 1983).

Going against the claims of more divisive strains of Lost Cause orthodoxy still argued by contemporary neo-Confederate groups, Mosby admitted that slavery was the cause of the war and noted proudly that he and other Confederates committed unlawful acts of treason against the United States by seceding and fighting against it (Blight 2002, 297). Mosby was also one of the few ex-Confederates that dared to take on the post-war myth regarding Robert E. Lee's supposed invincibility as a military man and gentleman of the highest order (Blight 2002, 298). Following all of his controversial statements and activities, Mosby's legendary status as a Confederate hero became tarnished and he never achieved the sort of mythological status assigned to Jackson and Lee. His open and honest interpretations of both his own military career and that of the Confederate nation was in stark contrast to the glowing and glorious versions of the Old South propagated by the

UDC, UCV, SCV, and other Confederate heritage organizations. After Hayes' election as a result of the Compromise of 1877, Mosby moved out of Virginia and lived the majority of the rest of his life outside of the Jim Crow era Southern states.

Within the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum, a space so dedicated to the continued dissemination of Lost Cause mythology, the reverence shown by the UDC towards this contentious and traitorous man suggests a resuscitation of his glorious military legacy among some neo-Confederate groups. It is only Mosby's glorious military activities that are of interest to the UDC's Lost Cause version of the past, not his post-war career that involved outright dismissals of such Confederate mythology and nostalgia. It illustrates the need for context within history museums in order for historical figures to be placed within a broader narrative of the past that provide the visitor with a more thorough and holistic representation of our national history and the figures who shaped it. The Warren Rifles Confederate Museum provides only a partial perspective of John Mosby, portraying him only as an uncompromising Confederate soldier and not the complex man with a somewhat radical post-war political career.

Museums such as the Warren Rifles Confederate Museum and the Old Court House that primarily rely on the display of period artifacts, pictures and portraits do so expecting visitors to learn from them. This amounts to a lazy and simplistic form of museum exhibition, one in which visitors learn "truths" of the past from only one perspective. Indeed, the type of wide-ranging historical context present at Harpers Ferry regarding John Brown's legacy, both good and bad, cannot be found in most other Civil War museums throughout the country. The representation of Mosby at Warren Rifles also suggests that the UDC, like many heritage organizations and museum curators, engage in a selective memory of the past where contentious or controversial issues are forgotten or ignored. As Misztal (2003) reminds us, forgetting is a crucial constituent in the production of a nation's history. The 19<sup>th</sup> century French historian Renan (1990) once stated that, "The essence of a nation is that its members have many things in common, but that they also have forgotten some things." It remains critically important that scholars interested in issues of memory continue to interrogate museum spaces to uncover histories that have been suppressed or forgotten over time.

## Chapter Seven: The Stars and Bars in the Star City

### *Civil War Memory in the Roanoke Valley*

*“Roanoke was not anxious to be Western or even an All-American [city]. She wanted to be Southern. On the back of the city boundary markers was an invitation to those leaving the Magic City: “You All Hurry Back Now” (Fishwick 1959, 175).*

On April 27, the *Roanoke Times* ran an article entitled “Unflagging Controversy” and featured it as the main story on its front-page (Thornton 2005). The story, written by local-beat writer Tim Thornton, focused on a mini-controversy in the nearby town of Hillsville regarding the possible hanging of a Confederate flag on a flagpole at the Carroll County courthouse in honor of Confederate Memorial Day celebrations on April 30<sup>th</sup>. The flag proposal, recently offered by a local member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans to the local board of supervisors, suggested the courthouse was an ideal site for honoring the Confederacy. Like the majority of county courthouses in Virginia, the Carroll County courthouse featured a statue of an everyday Confederate soldier that was erected by the local UDC chapter in 1906.<sup>123</sup> The board of supervisors ultimately approved the proposal provided that the now infamous and ubiquitous Confederate battle flag—the so-called “Stars and Bars”—not be the Confederate flag used in the ceremony. The local SCV chapter agreed to instead use the third and final Confederate national flag in the ceremony, a white banner with a red stripe on the side and a smaller version of the battle flag in the upper left corner. This version of the flag was presented by its supporters to the board to be less offensive, even though it still features the same offensive Stars and Bars symbol as part of the flag. Despite its highly-charged political symbolism, the flag display received a somewhat limited amount of local opposition, amounting to only a few speakers at subsequent public board meetings.

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<sup>123</sup> Of the counties within an hour’s drive of Roanoke—Roanoke/Salem City, Craig, Botetourt, Bedford, Franklin, Carroll, Floyd and Montgomery—only Montgomery County does not have a Confederate soldier statue or memorial to the Confederacy located at or near the county courthouse.



Figure 7.1

Carroll County Courthouse Statue

The statue of a Confederate soldier outside of the Carroll County Courthouse, site of the Confederate battle flag controversy in 2005 (Bohland).

The article on the event, however, caused much more of a public controversy within the region than it had stirred up within Carroll County itself. The small Hillsville ceremony, which might have flown under the radar without the article, drew immediate criticism from area chapters of the NAACP. Twenty or so members of the organization actually attended the celebration and staged a counter-memory event with speakers denouncing the Confederacy and its support of slavery (Roanoke Times 2005a, B8). Joining them at the courthouse was a small contingency from the local KKK chapter in an effort to show support for the flag's display and Confederate Memorial Day celebrations. Though no violence ensued, the day's politically-charged events led a local SCV member named John Cahoon (2005) to write an editorial to the *Roanoke Times* regarding Civil War memory in the region. His letter was one of a whole series of pro-Confederate letters to the *Roanoke Times* generated in response to the Carroll County incident, including a May 2<sup>nd</sup> *Roanoke Times* article focused on Bridgewater University president Phillip Stone's new pro-Lincoln organization and a May 3<sup>rd</sup> staff editorial entitled "Confederacy's Portrait Requires Shades of Gray." In what amounted to a ranting neo-Confederate defense of the Lost Cause, Cahoon's (2005) editorial suggests that though slavery was "in the mix of issues" leading to secession, it was the illegal "Northern Invasion" of the South that was the true cause of the conflict. Cahoon chided the NAACP and its "unenlightened cohorts" for disrupting a "peaceful and benign" memorial celebration. According to Cahoon (2005, B11):

[The protestors] demonstrate a quantum lack of factual knowledge when they attempt to promulgate a view that the South fought solely to keep slaves and the North fought to free them....they seem to believe that if they can just take all those monuments down and keep people from flying that horrible Confederate flag, all their worldly problems will be over...it is indeed unfortunate that so much time and energy is wasted on the hopeless task of trying to distort and erase the memories of the Confederate soldier.

He further claims the Emancipation Proclamation to have been a “unilateral and illegal announcement by Lincoln” and suggests that if readers of his editorial want a “more balanced” understanding of Lincoln that they should read *The Real Lincoln* by Thomas J. Dilorenzo. This testimonial for Dilorenzo’s book is not a surprise, as it a particular favorite of neo-Confederates and Confederate heritage groups.<sup>124</sup> Written by a libertarian professor of economics at Loyola (Md.) University with a doctorate from Virginia Tech, the book vilifies Lincoln as a tyrant bent on destroying the Constitutional right of each state to legally secede from the Union (Beinrich and Potok 2004). The book is considered the founding text for a new anti-Lincoln contingency within the neo-Confederate movement and Dilorenzo himself is a re-occurring speaker at history seminars sponsored by the League of the South. In another example of Lincoln bashing by the Virginia Unit of the SCV, the same neo-Confederate organization Cahoon proudly claims belongs to, the group organized a secret anti-Lincoln circle at the 2001 state SCV convention held in Roanoke known as the John Wilkes Booth Camp in honor of Lincoln’s pro-Confederate assassin.(Beinrich and Potok 2002). This group dedicates itself to the spread of anti-Lincoln propaganda throughout the South and celebrates his assassination each year on the anniversary of Booth’s faithful shots in 1865.

In response to Cahoon and other neo-Confederate editorials printed in the *Roanoke Times*, the paper also published letters offering strong opposition to Lost Cause ideology. Virginia Western Community College History Professor David C. Hanson’s (2005) editorial chided Lost Cause supporters for refusing to acknowledge slavery as the cause of the war. He noted that, “The Confederacy was unapologetically founded in 1861 upon the belief that whites were meant to enslave blacks, and most Southerners at that time shared this opinion. That might make many Southern folks today uncomfortable, but it’s nonetheless true”

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<sup>124</sup> As I discuss later in this chapter, this book was recommended to my cultural geography class by one of a group of SCV and UDC supporters who delivered a presentation to my class on May 2005.

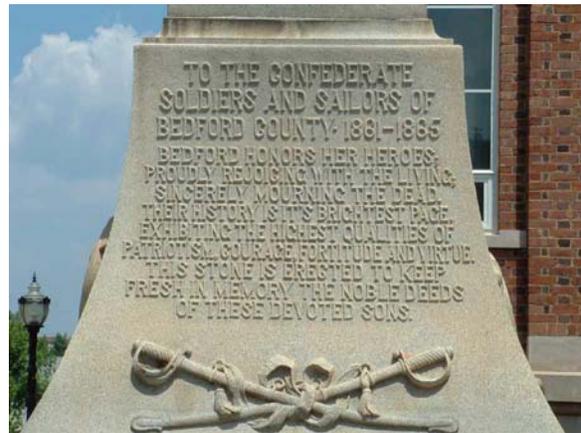
(Hanson 2005, B10). Similarly, a letter written by Bill Bunch (2005, B6) from the small southwestern Virginia mining community of Tazewell noted that, “Southerners can be justly proud of the way in which our ancestors fought, but don’t pine for the Old South of *Gone with the Wind*. It didn’t exist! I’m glad we’re not in the land of cotton, old times there were kind of rotten.”

In perhaps the most vehement rebuke of pro-Confederate mythology printed in the paper was an editorial entitled “The Confederacy through Black Eyes,” submitted by a local African-American man named Purcell Barrett (2005, B6). Barrett noted in the editorial how he grew up in Roanoke during the height of Jim Crow era in the 1950’s and attended segregated schools during his adolescence. Unlike all of the other letters printed by the paper, Barrett’s response linked 20<sup>th</sup> century issues of race in the American South with the conflict rather than simply rehashing tired historical questions like why the soldiers fought and what actually caused the war. The ultimate question Barrett asks the reader to consider is how much worse it might have been for African-Americans in the South if the Confederacy had actually won the war. Given the racism and violence associated with the Jim Crow Era and the public resistance of Southern white governments to federal Civil Rights legislation, Barrett’s question is a salient one. He further notes (2005, B6):

I’ve read with sadness and amusement, at times, the many letters to the editor recently concerning the Confederate states and the impact of the Civil War...I think that it’s fitting for me to remind my white brothers and sisters how blacks fared in these days...Now, what if the South had won the Civil War? Most likely, the South would have become a modern-day South Africa and apartheid would [still] be in vogue. Any black ask any black person who wanted freedom would be branded a communist and jailed just like Martin Luther King Jr...Ask any black person this question: *Do they wish the South had won?* (my emphasis)

As is evident from the outpouring of editorials to the *Roanoke Times* regarding the usage of the Confederate flag in Carroll County, issues of the Civil War remain omnipresent in this region some one-hundred and forty years after the end of the conflict. This is despite the fact that the greater Roanoke area, defined in this chapter to include the Western Virginia counties of Bedford, Franklin, Montgomery, Carroll, Floyd, Craig, Botetourt, and Roanoke as well as the independent cities of Roanoke, Bedford, and Salem, is not considered to have been a major theatre of military operations during the war. Though the region did contribute its fair share of soldiers to the Confederate cause, it remained somewhat of a

territorial backwater within Virginia, a mountainous border region with a relatively small agrarian population, no major urban centers, cadres of mountain-dwelling Northern sympathizers and relatively few slave plantations compared to the rest of the Shenandoah Valley and other eastern portions of the commonwealth. The contemporary urban center of Western Virginia, the city of Roanoke, did not actually exist during the war. It did become incorporated until 1882, when the Shenandoah Railroad decided to extend its line to meet up with the newly named Norfolk and Western Railroad at the junction of the small towns of Big Lick and Old Lick in Roanoke County.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 7.2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Robert E. Lee UDC Monument</p> <p>The monument is located in downtown Roanoke, Virginia. The monument is the site for an annual ceremony on Lee’s Birthday (Bohland).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 7.3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bedford Confederate Monument</p> <p>The base of the Confederate monument in downtown Bedford, Virginia, located outside of the courthouse (Bohland).</p>
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Though it has a limited regional historical connection to the Civil War as compared to regions of the northern and central Shenandoah Valley, the area is similarly obsessive when it comes to issues of Civil War remembrance and contains multiple mnemonic sites centered on the memorialization of the Old South and the Lost Cause. The compulsive regional fascination with all things Civil War exists throughout the Roanoke and New River Valleys, driving some locals to attend and participate in Civil War heritage festivals and to serve as re-enactors and living historians in order to impart their particular version of history primarily to children. It draws others to visit museum exhibits centered on the Civil War era, such as the Salem Museum’s recent display of *Gone with the Wind* collectables. It brings

teachers from both the area and the entire United States to the Hotel Roanoke to attend a conference, co-sponsored by Virginia Tech's Center for Civil War Studies, designed to impart to secondary school teachers the proper ways to effectively teach the conflict to their students. The Hotel Roanoke itself contains a series of wall murals and portrait paintings in its main lobby and sitting rooms with Civil War and Old South themes.

Just as in other areas of the American South, the continued fascination with Civil War memory impels various local heritage organizations to engage in memorial celebrations honoring their dead ancestors on Confederate Memorial Day and to mark Lee and Jackson's birthdays. As noted previously, it even inflames some area citizens enough to drive them to submit scathing letters to the editor to the *Roanoke Times*, the largest circulation newspaper in the region. This same newspaper, beginning in January 2005, also began printing in weekly installments a Civil War themed "breakfast serial" by Craig Crist-Evans entitled "The Shadow of My Fathers Hand," a series of fictional journal articles from a fourteen year old Tennessee mountain boy during the last two years of the conflict.

This chapter is an exploration of Civil War and Old South memory in and around my new hometown, the city of Roanoke, Virginia. I examine a number of sites, heritage events, museum exhibits and visual texts present within the greater Roanoke Valley where the Civil War continues to be remembered and its legacy continues to be debated within the contemporary greater Roanoke region. During a period from the summer of 2004 to the autumn of 2005, I attended a number of the regional heritage festivals, museum exhibits and teacher conferences throughout the Roanoke Valley. The content in this chapter amounts to a disparate collection of critical thoughts and qualitative data gathered from my exploration into Civil War heritage in this area. It includes analysis of various textual sites throughout the region, including the Salem Museum, Victory Stadium, and the Hotel Roanoke. It also contains research gathered from practice-based field work, including observations of the CWPT conference at the Hotel Roanoke from July 2004, a series of incidents and interviews with a student of mine at Hollins University, and the various memorial and heritage celebrations that I attended over the course of my research for this project.

As a resident of the city of Roanoke, my examination of these issues served as a personal journey and exploration of my newly adopted hometown and its surrounding environs. As I have previously in this dissertation, I grew up with a keen interest of Civil War history in the Western Virginia town of Blacksburg in Montgomery County. Despite

this fascination with Virginia history and the state's role in the Civil War, I knew very little about the history of the region itself and that of the nearby city of Roanoke. I approached the research for this chapter with perhaps even more enthusiasm and personal connection to both the material and the surrounding research area than in previous chapters. The inclusion of interviews and personal conversations with individuals devoted to issues of Civil War memory also invests this chapter with perhaps a more personal edge than in some of my other interrogative essays on the same subject. Though I am ultimately concerned with many of the same issues of Lost Cause mythology present in previous chapters, I also consider the question asked in the *Roanoke Times* editorial by Purcell Barrett mentioned previously when examining both individuals and mnemonic sites obsessed with Confederate memory: Do they actually wish that the South had won the Civil War?

*The Old South Meets the New South at the Hotel Roanoke*

In the initial years following the end of the Civil War, the economy of Western Virginia remained primarily based on small-scale agriculture. Indeed, the majority of white residents in the counties of Western Virginia worked and lived on small farms, as they had for well-over one hundred years. This part of Virginia was never littered with Tara-style mansions and giant tracts of land filled with cotton or tobacco plants. Because of the regional mountainous terrain, the county contained far fewer large-scale slave plantations prior to emancipation than in other parts of Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, as less than 20% of the agricultural land in 1860 was farmed using forced slave labor (Kagey 1988, 184). A small anti-slavery German Anabaptist population also existed in the county at the time of the Civil War, having moved south from the Northern Shenandoah Valley into the region seeking new land during the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Though slaves did constitute nearly one-third of the total inhabitants of Roanoke County by 1860, this was due mainly to the low overall white population of the county and of Western Virginia than the presence of large number of giant, Old South plantations (Kagey 1988, 184).

Once Virginia seceded from the Union, Roanoke County sent four companies to fight for the Confederacy, three of which fought for the entire war with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia (Kagey 1988, 204). Despite the regional difficulties caused by the loss of many of its younger citizens to the military service, the Roanoke Valley and the rest of Western Virginia arguably endured the destruction of war more favorably than other regions of the state. Due in part to the lack of urban centers, military bases, armories, or wealthy slave plantations, there were few destructive and large-scale battles fought within the region. This gave the area the distinction of being one of the few portions of the state to escape the conflict without having endured a major battle involving tens of thousands of combatants. Within the Roanoke Valley, the only military engagements of any consequence occurred as a result of raids into region led by Union generals in 1863 and 1864. In the 1863 raid, General W.W. Averell destroyed sections of the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, local telegraph lines and a large amount of military supplies in the town of Salem amounting to well over \$100,000 (Kagey 1988, 199). He eventually confronted Confederate troops on his retreat out of the area in a series of minor local skirmishes, though the Union appears to have lost the majority of its reported casualties to complications from the cold weather rather than Confederate bullets.



Figure 7.4

Hunter's Raid Monument in Roanoke, VA.

It is the only battlefield park located within the county (Bohland).

The following year, Union General David Hunter led a much larger raiding party into Central and Western Virginia, burning the campus of the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington and destroying buildings and supplies as they marched southward towards the rail center of Lynchburg. Confederate soldiers led by Franklin County native General Jubal A. Early, who would later gain post-war fame as one of the originators of the Lost Cause myth, pursued and met the Union Army in a series of small engagements in and around the towns of Lynchburg and Liberty (present-day Bedford). "Hunter's Raid" eventually moved westward through portions of Roanoke County, where units of Early and Hunter's armies met outside of Salem in a skirmish known as the Battle of Hanging Rock. The battle included only 6,000 total men with relatively few casualties reported from both armies. Three eventual presidents of the United States, Hayes, Garfield and McKinley, all served as officers in the Union army during the brief battle, which ended with Hunter's retreat over the mountains into Craig County to the relative safety of the Union territory in West Virginia.

Though the relative lack of destruction in the region meant it faced a less daunting path to economic reconstruction than present in communities located in eastern sections of the state, the citizens of Roanoke County and throughout the rest of Western Virginia still faced the difficult prospect of rebuilding their lives, economies, and communities after four years of bitter conflict (White 1982). As in other parts of the country, the Confederate

veterans lucky enough to survive the war returned home to Roanoke County seeking to quickly rebuild their families and communities. The majority of citizens in the area returned to small-scale farming, as it remained the primary economic activity of the Roanoke Valley in the initial decades after the war. Apart from its agricultural base, the Roanoke Valley was also home to two small colleges, Roanoke College and the all-female Hollins Institute. Both of these schools had the rare distinction among Virginia colleges of actually remaining open and operational throughout the entire Civil War (WPA Workers Writer Program, 1944). The decade from 1870-1880 included a sizable growth in population for the county from 9,350 to 12,436, facilitating the regional growth of small-scale commercial developments and industries such as mills, iron and marble foundries and shoemaking stores (Kagey 1988, 236-8). Big Lick also briefly became a center for tobacco distribution and processing, as by 1874 six tobacco warehouse operated within the small township.

Despite these gradual changes to the demographic and economic nature of the county, it was the expansion of both the Norfolk and Western and the Shenandoah Valley railroads into Roanoke County that proved to have the most lasting impact on the region. The newly-named Norfolk and Western company resulted from the consolidation of three rail lines in 1870: the Virginia and Tennessee, the Southside and the Norfolk and Petersburg railroads. Following the leadership of its new head Frederick Kimball, the new giant rail company began to ship coal to the eastern ports of Norfolk and Chesapeake from the newly-emerging mines in West Virginia and western portions of Virginia (Striplin 1997). At the same time, operators of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad sought to expand southward in Virginia to join up with the new Norfolk and Western lines somewhere between Salem and Lynchburg. This brought the prospect of joining the western tracks with a Shenandoah Railroad line already connected to the urban centers of the north through the rail-hub at its northern terminus in Baltimore, Maryland.

Big Lick, located along the old Virginia and Tennessee railroad, now found itself in an advantageous position in the competition among communities for the site for the southern junction of the two rail lines. Local lore holds that officials from Big Lick sent representatives in 1881 to a meeting of Shenandoah Railroad executives in Lexington with somewhere between \$5,000 and \$15,000 collected from local citizens and a promise of an acre of land if they chose Big Lick as the site for the junction (White 1982, 63). Regardless of whether this actually swayed the company's decision or not, it chose Big Lick as the site

for the rail connection and the completed the expansion of the line within a year. This set in motion a period of unprecedented expansion and growth in the region, as Norfolk and Western moved its corporate headquarters and primary machine shop to the newly-renamed town of Roanoke. Within two years of the physical joining of the Norfolk and Western and the Shenandoah lines, the N&W purchased a controlling interest in the Shenandoah Railroad and took over its entire operations.

Though the Roanoke Valley had not seen a great deal of armed violence during the Civil War, it would play an important role in the violence associated with the mining of coal and railroad development in Appalachia during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unlike the simulated and celebrated hyper-real Civil War battles and festivals of the contemporary Roanoke Valley, the actual history of Roanoke's association with the oppressive regional labor conflicts of the Western coalfield is largely unknown and completely uncelebrated by its residents. The Norfolk and Western railroad made much of its corporate fortune through railroad building and coal extraction in the Appalachian Mountains. Working in association with unscrupulous coal companies, N&W forced local communities and land owners to sell their property for new rail line development. Appalachia became a violent and explosive region, as poor mine workers and their families in some areas battled powerful coal and rail companies for union recognition and improved living and working conditions. Seeking protection for their rail lines and coal profits, N&W employed men from the newly organized Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, based in Roanoke, to serve as hired guns throughout Appalachia. From 1900 to 1936, Baldwin-Felts agents from Roanoke participated in strike breaking and union busting activities throughout West Virginia and Kentucky, becoming infamous for their willingness to use violent tactics and brutal intimidation to discourage working class movements.

This reputation for violence led the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company from far-away Ludlow, Colorado to bring Baldwin-Felts detectives to the area in 1914, as part of an effort to put down a strike by newly-organized UAW workers against the Rockefeller-owned Corporation. Once there, Baldwin-Felts agents shot into the tents of union activists and participated in the slaughter of twenty miners and their families as part of the "Ludlow Massacre" on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920 (Zinn 1997, 346-49). Baldwin-Felts men also served as thugs in the "Mingo County War," in and around the mines of Matewan, W.Va. The resulting violence in the region, which would later become the subject of the John Sayles film

Matewan, culminated in a series of town shootings on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1920 which resulted in the deaths of six Baldwin-Felts agents as well as three local citizens. Baldwin-Felts men even participated in the capture of an African-American man named Henry Williams in 1904 in their hometown of Roanoke. Williams was accused of assaulting, robbing and killing a white woman outside of their home, a crime for which he was later found guilty of and executed. Before turning him over to local authorities, W.G. Baldwin, the general manager of the Baldwin agency, forced a confession from Williams by getting him drunk on whiskey and intimidating him with the threat of mob violence should he be released (McDaniel 1979). W.G. Baldwin later spoke to a crowd outside of Williams' trial in Richmond that, "I was not working for reward money...I shall not touch a cent of it. I was working to capture a miserable dog of a man that attacked a white woman" (McDaniel 1979).

The violent union busting actions of the Baldwin-Felts agency contributed to the rapid growth and profits of regional coal companies and the Norfolk and Western Company which carried the majority of its coal out of the area. Roanoke became a major rail late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century rail center for the entire mid-Atlantic region. The once small agrarian population of Big Lick now grew to over 10,000 by the end of 1885 as part of the new urban center of Roanoke (Striplin 1997, 41). Through expansion and annexation, the physical size of the city also grew by over 3,000 acres from its 1874 boundaries. The new city of Roanoke quickly developed a new central business district, located in a swamp region at the central junction of the railroad tracks next to the African-American district of Gainsboro, complete with whole series of warehouses, churches, markets, saloons, hotels, law offices, restaurants and banks. Early Roanoke was a company town, as Norfolk and Western controlled much of the urban growth of the city through its development of the nearly 500 acres of land in and around the city that it purchased and owned. In its first year in Roanoke alone, Norfolk and Western officials constructed over one-hundred brick houses for its newly-arrived laborers and workers, with plans for another one hundred in 1882 (White 1982, 68). Management officials settled in a wealthier area of newly-constructed and elaborate Victorian houses, now referred to as the Old Southwest historic district, located in the southwestern outskirts of the developing city.

As part of its urban development plan for Roanoke, Norfolk and Western commissioned the building of a large-scale hotel to be located on a hill overlooking both the railroad tracks and the newly emerging downtown district. The three-story Hotel Roanoke,

designed in the same Queen Anne style as the passenger rail station, officially opened in December of 1882 as the grandest and most sophisticated hotel constructed in the western portion of the state. Along with its elaborate staterooms—each of which contained the only private porcelain bathtubs in the entire city—the hotel included a barbershop, bakery, saloon and chandeliered dining room which seated over 200 people (Piedmont 1994, 19). Seven years after an expansion in 1891, a fire nearly destroyed the entire hotel, causing it to close until it was finally rebuilt and renovated in 1897.

Once reopened, the newly refurbished Hotel Roanoke entered into a period of expansion and refurbishment in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the addition of a new East Wing in 1916 which added over 300 rooms to the hotel (Piedmont 1994, 31). Another expansion took place in 1931, bringing another 400,000 square feet of floor space, 60 additional rooms and a new garage for automobiles. The final renovations and additions to the Hotel Roanoke during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came in 1937, as part of a two year, multi-million-dollar effort designed in part to modernize and update the hotel in the wake of competition from new motor lodges. As part of its most elaborate and ambitious renovation to date, N&W officials added another 181 rooms to the hotel’s five floors, re-landscaped its grounds and installed air-conditioning to the entire structure. The restoration project also included a complete redesign for the hotel’s dining and ballrooms, the addition of a new Pine Room tavern and lounge, and a total revamping of the hotel’s lobby and front room spaces.



Figure 7.5

Front of the Hotel Roanoke

The front is virtually unchanged from its late 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance (Bohland).

Along with the adjacent Palm Room, formerly known as the Oval Room, the lobby and registration area were designed in an 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century antique décor. In choosing the design for the lobby, the Oval/Palm Room and the registration areas, hotel officials settled upon an “Old Virginia”/ *Gone with the Wind* theme for the interior furnishings. These rooms featured a variety of 19<sup>th</sup> century antiques in the style of a Virginia plantation drawing room including black marble tables 150 years old, three antique rosewood chairs, apple-wood tables, 100 year old chandeliers, and plush velvet couches (Piedmont 1994, 36). As the crowning touch for the room, hotel decorators strategically placed portraits of two great Virginia heroes of the past- George Washington and Robert E. Lee- on both sides of the back lobby wall facing guests as they enter the hotel. N&W actually obtained these portraits over forty years earlier, though they had remained in storage until the public unveiling as part of the lobby renovations. Though the choice of portraits of these two slave-holding Virginians for the lobby fit certainly the theme of a Virginia slave plantation, it also suggested a perceived geographic connection to the Old South heritage center of nearby Lexington and Washington and Lee University.



Figure 7.6

Hotel Roanoke lobby portraits of Washington and Lee.

They are located on either side of the registration

Desk in the Hotel Roanoke (Bohland).

The choice for an Old South motif for the newly renovated rooms of the Hotel Roanoke was a curious one considering the area’s limited connection to plantation

agriculture and the Civil War. The hotel never served as a haven for the Southern plantation elite and its Queen Anne architectural style little resembled the legendary giant antebellum big houses of the Deep South. Instead, the Hotel Roanoke was owned and operated by a company whose entire existence was inextricably tied to the wealth and growth of industrial capitalism. Instead of housing the remnants of the planter-class, it was a resting spot and meeting center for railroad executives and barons of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The hotel, like the city of Roanoke itself, stands as a monument to the power of the New South's role in the Industrial Revolution and the importance of the railroads transporting western coal to eastern ports. The use of Old South décor suggests a fantastic imagining of a Roanoke that never was, an idyllic remembrance of a simpler, gentler Southern agrarian era in the wake of the industrial changes wrought by proponents of New South ideology.

The decorators and designers of the Hotel Roanoke were not certainly alone in their admiration for and appropriation of stereotypical Old South imagery. During the 1920's and 1930's, there was a resurgence of Lost Cause ideology and Old South (re)imaginings. As a result of the perceived failures of the New South to bring industrial development and prosperity to the Southern states, nostalgia for the "prosperous days" of the agrarian Old South stood as a marked alternative to the bleak economic depression of the present (Schivelbusch 2001, 89). The poetic tragedy and mythology of the destruction of this Old South version of Eden also seemed a wholly appropriate escapism for a present time filled with such great poverty and social upheaval (Cullen 1995). The same period saw a revival of romantic plantation literature, as novels and plays with Old South themes proved as popular forms of diversion for people in regions throughout the entire country.<sup>125</sup> As noted by Schivelbusch (2001, 97), "[The plantation legend] became a part of the escapist dream factory that would ultimately appropriate all periods of human history and that would later be known as Hollywood....Southern culture was just as subject to Northern colonial exploitation as the Southern economy." Unlike many pre-war plantation epics, including Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, these post-war novels removed any criticism of the slave system embedded within the narrative. Indeed, the nostalgic remembrance of the Old South almost entirely omitted any reminder of the unpleasantness of African-American slavery, propagating images of the happy slave and of nurturing slave women who loved their master and his family.

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<sup>125</sup> Schivelbusch (2001, 99) notes that over 80 such novels were released in the period from 1930-1939 alone.



Figure 7.7

*Gone with the Wind* Museum Text

Text from the *Gone with the Wind* exhibit at the Salem Museum, Winter 2005 (Bohland).



Figure 7.8

*Gone with the Wind* Dolls

Dolls on display at the *Gone with the Wind* exhibit. Note the Mammy slave doll in the case (Bohland).

The most popular of these plantation novels was, of course, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, which sold over 1.5 million copies in the three years before the release of the Hollywood epic film in 1939. The film still remains incredibly popular some seventy years after its release, appearing periodically on cable television and enticing some obsessed fans to take visits to the no less than four museums in operation solely dedicated to nostalgia for the book and the film. Indeed, the cultural power of the *Gone with the Wind* version of Old South fantasy continues to resonate within many people within contemporary American society. Within the greater Roanoke Valley, the Salem Museum opened a *Gone with the Wind* exhibit in the winter of 2004. Rather than operating as an honest discussion of the film's legacy and content contextualized with the history of racism in the South, the exhibit functioned as little more than a kitschy celebration of the sweepingly romantic plantation epic. Among its displays were framed portraits of Scarlett and Rhett hung next to text discussing why the film remains so beloved seventy years after its release. Additionally, the exhibit featured a whole range of *Gone with the Wind* dolls donated by local citizens, including several of the various slave women from the film. Apart from one paragraph in a poster entitled "Detractors," nothing is mentioned regarding the offensive racial material present in the film.



Figure 7.9

Hotel Roanoke Dance Mural

One of the murals at the Hotel Roanoke, this one featuring Confederate generals dancing with their hoped skirted wives. Note the image of the slave girl dutifully serving them a cold drink in the lower left corner (Bohland).



Figure 7.10

Hotel Roanoke Colonial Mural

A mural above the registration desk at the Hotel Roanoke. This is another image of a slave serving their Old South colonial plantation master, this time from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bohland).

As part of their own effort to tap into the decorative power of Old South fantasy, Norfolk and Western commissioned murals featuring colonial and Old South themes on a number of the walls of the Hotel Roanoke as part of their 1937-38 renovation. The walls of the new Palm Room included paintings of four separate fictional balls, each from a different historical period in Virginia history. In one of the murals, a series of Confederate heroes including General Lee and Jefferson Davis merrily dance with their hoop-skirted wives on a plantation lawn. One of the women appears to be sitting the dance out and is offered lemonade and refreshments courtesy of an adoring and obedient young African-American slave girl. The nearby fountain room, a small drinking lounge featuring small tables and a large row of padded diner-style padded seating, also contained its own Old South wall mural adorning the entire portion of the room's available wall space. This painting portrayed imagined scenes from a giant slave plantation, including images of white aristocrat couples strolling through beautiful gardens while being attended to by a number of happy slaves dutifully serving their white masters (Piedmont 1994, 38).

The last series of historic murals adorn the wall just off the lobby and directly above the registration counter. This mural denotes particular key events in Virginia history from Jamestown to the end of the Revolutionary War. The Jamestown scenes at the beginning of

the mural show the English settlers landing on foreign shores populated by the curious and naked indigenous savages looking on the triumphant scene. The settlers are also imaged praying before God, happily celebrating a colonial style wedding and engaged in harmonious peace talks with the local savage Indian population. The second section of the mural is an extended portrayal of a Revolutionary war period, with images of Patrick Henry's orations on liberty and the surrender of British forces at the Battle of Yorktown. The final section of the mural, located directly above the registration desk, is another artistic imagining of the happy scenes found on an Old South plantation. As part of the scene, a gentleman caller pays his respects to a beautiful young blonde woman outside of the plantation. A young slave girl and her mother, imaged in almost exactly the same fashion as Mammy from *Gone with the Wind*, stands with a silver beverage tray just around the corner from the couple waiting for a call for service from their female master.

Following decades of declining business and the deterioration of Roanoke's central business district as a result of suburbanization, executives of the Norfolk and Southern corporation (formerly N&W) donated the entire 107 year-old structure to Virginia Tech in 1989. Following a successful multi-million dollar fundraising campaign, the hotel was completely renovated and the new edifice included a new large convention center addition that enabled the university to host a number of large-scale conferences and conventions only an hour away from campus. During the renovations, the decision was made to "preserve the past" by maintaining much of the hotel's original interior. The lobby, for example, still contains much of the original antique furniture and portraits of Lee and Washington hang on the back wall of the room, where they remain the visible focus for the entire room.<sup>126</sup> The portrait of Lee recently served as background in a 2005 *Roanoke Times* photograph taken of the 2005 Miss Virginia Kristi Glakas, appearing as the epitome of the modern day Southern belle, posing seductively in front of the image of the pious, Christian general.<sup>127</sup>

Similarly, apart from the paintings in the since removed Fountain Room, the original wall murals remain part of the décor of the present-day Hotel Roanoke, now under the dual management of both Virginia Tech and Doubletree Hotels. These murals continue to function as banal, everyday reminders of the Lost Cause, with its racist and insulting versions

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<sup>126</sup> The portrait of Robert E. Lee on display in the contemporary lobby, however, is a different one from the original Lee painting which featured Lee atop his war-horse Traveller.

<sup>127</sup> *Roanoke Times*. 26 June, 2005. A1.

of history now implicitly supported by both Doubletree Hotels and the largest institution of higher learning in the commonwealth. As an everyday monument to Old South memory and fantasy, it is perhaps wholly appropriate that the Hotel Roanoke serves as a center for conferences and events focused on the Civil War and the Lost Cause. The 2005 national conference of the Kappa Alpha Order, for example, took place from August 2-5 at the hotel's conference center facilities. As noted in Chapter 4, this college fraternity based in nearby Lexington, Virginia serves to widely circulate Lost Cause mythology to university men and women through its Old South balls and hero worship of its spiritual founder Robert E. Lee. Indeed, the location of the 2005 conference was designed to be near the Lexington campus, allowing the young men of KA to make spiritual pilgrimages to the heritage sites of Lexington, Virginia.

These images of Old South mythology stand as highly offensive hyper-tourist reminders of white southern hegemony in the American South and the racist interpretations of American history once in vogue in popular literature, cinema and secondary-school books throughout the United States. Somewhat amazingly in a town with a sizable African-American community, I found no record of any public protest or movement to remove such blatantly racist images from one of the most recognizable public buildings in the entire city. There are no signs or labels next of any of the murals that might provide some sort of context or explanation as to why such distasteful material remains part of the décor of the contemporary hotel, no attempt to justify their continued existence because the university perhaps considers them to be legitimate historic relics worthy of preservation and study. Instead, like the Robert E. Lee portrait in the adjoining lobby, they serve as the backdrop for numerous photographs including such as the annual group shot of the Miss Virginia candidates featured on the pageant website.

*Victory Stadium, Military Masculinity, and the Military Classic of the South*

Victory Stadium opened in 1942 as the largest outdoor stadium in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the 22,000 seat stadium made the city of Roanoke a major site for highly visible regional and state-wide events. It replaced the old Maher Stadium and was built on the same property of the former field, which had been given to the city by the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company. Instead of reusing the name Maher Stadium, city officials chose to call the new stadium “Victory” as a predictive vision for ultimate triumph of the United States and her Allies during the ongoing Second World War. Indeed, Victory owes its name merely to the coincidence of its opening during wartime, as Roanokers and Americans sought to honor the patriotic cause through local symbolic gestures such as the renaming of a local playing field. For much of its existence, Victory operated as a true multi-purpose venue. It hosted the city’s annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, was the home field for minor league football and soccer squads, a track for local auto races, a stage for rock and pop concerts, site for Virginia short-lived Commonwealth Games, and the home field for sports teams from the two city high schools. Few residents of the region would not have attended an event at the stadium during its heydays from 1945 to 1975.

In addition to the staging of local events, Victory gained its reputation as a site for some of Virginia’s most famous intercollegiate gridiron contests. Despite having no college or university located in the Roanoke metropolitan area with intercollegiate football squads, more than one hundred college football games took place at the stadium in a thirty-year period from 1942-1972. The vast majority of these games football teams from nearby Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), the land-grant state institution located forty miles southeast of Roanoke in the small town of Blacksburg.<sup>128</sup> Much larger than VPI’s on-campus facility of Miles Stadium, Victory was an ideal second home field for the team to play its higher profile games. Between 1942 and 1963, the VPI ‘Gobblers’ played their home games versus their in-state rivals from University of Virginia and William & Mary at their second home-field of Victory Stadium. As noted by former UVA football player Bob “Rock” Weir, a defensive end for the ‘Wahoos’ from 1947-51, “We always played (VPI) down in Victory Stadium in Roanoke back then, which fit in with their farmer image. They never cut the grass; they let cows graze all over that field. There was cow flop everywhere.

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<sup>128</sup> I refer to the school as VPI throughout this section, though the school is now more popularly referred to as Virginia Tech.

It was amazing” (Doughty and Lazenby 1995, 62). Beginning in 1958 and ending in 1969, Virginia Tech played an annual October game versus rotating opponents called the “Harvest Bowl” at Victory. The weekend of the game included a number of outside activities and events staged around the city, including a visit from Miss America Mary Ann Mobley in the first game and a Ladies’ Garden Club Exposition which attracted crowds as large as 75,000 to the pre-game affair (Doughty 1992).

Of all the college football games played at Victory, the best attended and most fondly remembered by Roanoke citizens were the annual encounters between VPI and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). Lying fifty miles to the northwest of Roanoke in the town of Lexington, the all-male military institution shared much in common with its fellow state school to the south. Both schools, for example, have their founding roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period when Virginia began to open new opportunities in higher education for its white working class citizens. VMI, as noted in Chapter Five, modeled its curriculum on the prestigious state technical and engineering academy L’Ecole Polytechnique, located in Paris, France.<sup>129</sup> VPI opened in 1872 as a land-grant institution called the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College under the provisions of the Morrill Act of 1861. The curriculum of both schools emphasized engineering and the “practical sciences” of physics, mathematics, and agricultural management over the traditional liberal arts model practiced at older state schools such as William and Mary and the University of Virginia. Indeed, both schools directed their program primarily at the new industrial working class rather than simply educating the affluent young gentlemen of the planter Virginia elite.

In addition to their similar curricula and educational missions, these two schools also emphasized a military-style, masculine educational experience for their students. Cadets at both schools drilled incessantly, trained in military maneuvers, and exercised constantly as part of a program designed to discipline their young male bodies. As at VMI, all students at VPI received a military style education in addition to their regular coursework. VPI established a military Corps of Cadets on campus upon its opening in 1872. The corps was initially under the command of former Confederate general James H. Lane, a member of General Robert E. Lee’s staff in the Army of Northern Virginia and was a former professor of civil engineering at VMI. When discussion of making the corps optional took place in the

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<sup>129</sup> One of the founding fathers of VMI was Claudius Crozet, himself a graduate of L’Ecole Polytechnique. The school continues to send gifted students to the school as part of a long-standing exchange program.

late 1870's, it was Lane who strongly defended maintaining the corps as a mandatory requirement for all students. According to university legend, Lane actually got into a fistfight with President Charles L.C. Minor in an 1878 faculty meeting where the issue was being discussed (Wallenstein 1997, 64).

The Board of Visitors eventually fired Minor in 1870 and the entire university was organized for a time along military lines. All students moved into military style barracks and faced days filled with military drilling and body-sculpting disciplinary exercises. Many of the early faculty members at this time were former alumni of faculty members of VMI, fostering an early link between the two schools. With this shift towards a more direct military style academy, the university's enrollment dropped substantially to only fifty students in the spring of 1880. As a response to this falling enrollment, the General Assembly replaced the entire Board of Visitors and the military aspect became a secondary mission of the school which now began to emphasize agriculture and mechanical engineering. In response to this shift, Lane resigned from the university in disgust. He remains a legend at the university among the Corps of Cadets and the former Confederate's name now adorns the main dormitory of the current corps of cadets, an everyday reminder of the tie between the group and the Southern Confederate military tradition. Despite its secondary status on campus, the corps of cadets program remained mandatory for all male students for all four years on campus until 1923, when it was reduced to a two-year mandatory program (Wallenstein 1997, 146).<sup>130</sup> The program eventually became voluntary in 1964 and Virginia Tech remains one of only two state schools, along with Texas A&M, that maintains a Corps of Cadets program on campus.

Given their geographic proximity, similar curricula, and links to military masculinity, it is perhaps not surprising that VPI and VMI became fierce athletic rivals. Known as the "Military Classic of the South," the football series between the two institutions began in 1894 with a game in Staunton and became an annual affair by 1913. That same year the game was moved to Roanoke and was played every Thanksgiving Weekend as part of a three day festival in the city. In noting the lavish affairs that accompanied the annual "big game," a Roanoke newspaper reporter wrote in on the eve of the 1934 game that, "The hotel

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<sup>130</sup> VPI began to admit women as day students in 1921, though women could not join the Corps of Cadets until 1973. VMI, on the other hand, had a rather public and protracted battle over the admission of women during the 1990's, culminating in the 1996 Supreme Court decision *United States v Virginia*, which forced the school to admit women the following year.

lobbies were jammed. Orchestras played. Couples glided over the ballroom floors (Lazenby 1986, 61). Arriving in town by train, cadets from both institutions marched past large crowds from the downtown railroad station to their Roanoke hotels, VPI cadets at the Patrick Henry Hotel and their VMI counterparts at the Hotel Roanoke. Once arriving at the hotels, the cadets were treated to formal tea and dancing put on by the young ladies of nearby Hollins College. The next day, cadets from both schools marched as part of the annual Thanksgiving parade on their way to watching the “Military Classic of the South.” In his remembrances of the pre-World War II games between VMI and VPI archived online on the Virginia Tech library website, Col. Harry D. Temple (1994), VPI Class of 1934, describes the weekend events:

The buildup for the Thanksgiving fete commenced far in advance of that autumnal holiday. Alumni, family, and “best girls” were alerted into preparation. For the “best girl,” it meant at least a half dozen distinctive changes of costume. Trains and automobiles full of alumni descended on the Magic City the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and the city was filled to capacity by beribboned celebrants. Parties and dances permeated the wee hours of that sparkling night as old-timers once again reunited in the common bond of fellowship. One huge alumni ball was always held that evening... V.P.I. and V.M.I. cadets were accorded free transportation on all streetcars and buses; their uniforms were their fares. Open houses, luncheons, and cordiality were everywhere as the whole city burst into one great party. Roanoke was in a Mardi Gras spirit.

Considered the most important game of the year by both schools, the winner of the annual game took home the Chamber of Commerce Trophy and had bragging rights for the entire year. The rivalry became so fierce that even the match-up, also held in Roanoke, between the two schools freshman “rat” squads attracted crowds of over 10,000 to the city. The game itself operated as an annual celebration of Southern military masculinity, a weekend long festival dedicated to the Old South virtues propagated by the original tenets of the Lost Cause. The game amounted to a testing ground for the young boys of Virginia in the Lost Cause values of honor, strength, obedience, and brotherhood. Noting the gentlemanly honor and hyper-nationalist military bonds on display in the games between the two schools, Lazenby (1986, 61) contends that:

The VMI/VPI game, for all its intensity, was tempered by a sense of *brotherhood*. The cadets understood each other. Both colleges were small, state supported military schools, charged with

upholding the Old Dominion's image of *gentlemanly honor*. At the same time, that kinship didn't stop them from trying to bloody each other's noses, either on the playing field or during a halftime fight on the sidelines. For VPI's Old Corps, the real success of the season was always measured on Thanksgiving Day in Roanoke against the Keydets (my emphasis).

With the opening of Victory Stadium in 1943, the game began to attract crowds of 25,000 or more each year. It was referred to by in the local press as the battle between "Brother Rats vs. Blue-Gray Tech" and "The South's Army-Navy Game," as cadets in full uniform from both schools sat opposite from each other in the stadium, simultaneously cheering their own team while playfully taunting the other. The games, according to *Roanoke Times* reporter Ben Beagle, usually included "the faint odor of a good bourbon floating down the wind and the usual amount of girl watching" (Doughty 1992, 2). A whole range of traditions and pranks accompanied the game, including the firing of the cannons "Little John" for VMI and "Skipper" for VPI after each touchdown by their team which began in the 1960's. According to VPI lore, "Skipper" was so loud that on its first firing during the 1965 game, it blew the hats off of the VMI cadets in attendance and nearly shattered the glass in the Victory Stadium press box. Two years earlier and despite the somber mood in the stadium following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, drunken cadets from both schools began to fight over the possession of a Confederate battle flag, a relic coveted by the Southern military boys of both schools (Doughty 1992, 2).

Beginning in the 1970's, the glamour and prestige associated with both the VMI-VPI game and Victory Stadium began to fade. The 1971 game, the last played between the two schools at Victory, the game only attracted 4,000 fans to the once proud affair. After taking a year off of the rivalry, in 1973 the two schools agreed to play the game on-campus, as VPI (now known primarily as Virginia Tech) could make more money playing all of its home games at its new 35,000 seat on-campus facility Lane Stadium. Additionally, Virginia Tech had started to outgrow VMI, as it now played in the higher classification of I-A football while VMI dropped to I-AA status.<sup>131</sup> By 1984, the series between the schools had stopped altogether and Virginia Tech began a steady climb towards becoming an elite college football program. In his written eulogy for the waging of the "Military Classic of the South," one

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<sup>131</sup> The main difference in the two classifications is attendance, as I-A schools must have an average attendance of 15,000 at their home games. I-AA schools, like VMI, have no average attendance requirements and usually have much smaller stadiums and facilities for their student athletes.

ripe with nostalgia for the good old days of Victory Stadium, *Roanoke Times* reporter Ben Beagle wrote (quoted in Lazenby 1986, 62):

What the game used to be was an almost breathless socio-economic event that had little to do with football...It was the kind of game that sold fur coats to women for the occasion. And for Roanokers and other western Virginians, it was a curious but successful mixture of old home week, Mardi Gras and Christmas five weeks early...it was a game of flasks and chasers in the rumble seat; all the girls were beautiful, all the fans were loyal, and the Army-Navy [game] wasn't a bit better.

With the loss of the VMI-VPI game, Victory Stadium was no longer the site for any major college football games. Though it remained the site for city high school football games, failed minor league sporting ventures, and the city of Roanoke's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, city officials failed to replace the VMI-VPI game with an event of a similar stature. They were rebuffed, for example, in their attempt in 1993 to bring the annual Division III title game the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl to Victory Stadium. To make matters worse, the city ultimately lost its bid for the prestigious game to the neighboring city of Salem, a small suburban community which border Roanoke that had opened a brand-new 8,500 seat-stadium for its high school football team at the cost of \$2.2 million dollars in 1985. City officials also attempted unsuccessfully with a less glamorous annual match-up between Division III western Virginia schools Ferrum College and Emory and Henry, but officials from both schools ultimately chose to keep the game on campus after playing it three times at Victory during the 1980's. In commenting on the decision, Ferrum coach Hank Norton commented to the *Roanoke Times* about Victory Stadium that, "Even with all of the wear and tear, it's a great place to play...Back in the good Ol' days, I used to go to the Thanksgiving Day game all the time" (quoted in Doughty 1992, 3).

Coach Norton's comments reflect a strong sense of nostalgia for the glory days of Victory Stadium within a particular segment of the greater Roanoke population. In this case, it is older Roanokers, particularly from the "baby boomer" demographic that most fondly recall what Victory stadium used to be in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This group of local boomers, born between 1943 and 1965, attended many of the college football games and 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations held at Victory with their family and friends. Additionally, some local boomers associated Victory Stadium with American military patriotism, as a result of being the site of the VMI-VPI games and its name that "honors" the American War dead. According to Thrift (1989), it is the baby boomer population throughout North America and Western

Europe that has been both the main consumers and proponents of heritage development. For many of boomers in Roanoke, now in their fifties and sixties and in positions of power on city council and local government, it is this hyper-nostalgic remembrance of what Victory used to be influences their opinion on what should be done with this supposed heritage site once it began deteriorating.

By the beginning of the 1980's, the "wear and tear" on Victory Stadium became a major problem and the stadium required extensive renovations if it was to return it to its once glorious state. The city invested very little money into upkeep and renovation of Victory since its opening in 1943 and the stadium infrastructure began to rapidly deteriorate. Additionally, the "Flood of '85," a combination of a local rain system and the remnants of Hurricane Juan, brought unprecedented rainfall to the area resulting in the Roanoke River cresting at a record twenty-three feet. Victory was totally submerged in the flood waters of the Roanoke River, causing major structural damage to the facility and requiring months of clean-up to remove the mud and filth from the facility. The event highlighted the need for a flood control project to accompany any future stadium renovation plan, as pictures of the flooded Victory Stadium were shown on television and printed in local newspapers throughout the area. These images of a once-glorious facility decimated by natural forces became part of Roanoke consciousness, as the photo became both the visual symbol of what remains the most devastating flood in the recorded history of the Roanoke Valley. Indeed, during a weeklong twenty year retrospective on the Flood of '85, local television news station re-aired images of a flooded Ol' Vic in its promotional shot for the entire series.

As a result of the obvious deterioration of the facility and the aftermath of the Flood of '85, Victory became a political issue as local leaders and officials began to debate its fate. As part of a 1992 fifty-year retrospective piece on Victory in the *Roanoke Times* entitled "Memories of Victory Stadium," city parks and recreation director Gary Fenton notes that, "The locker rooms are terrible...only half the wood seats have been replaced with aluminum...the turf is fine. The capacity is fine. But there is a lot of work that needs to be done" (quoted on Doughty 1992, FB1). Fenton further estimated the cost of the renovations in 1992 at \$1 million dollars if the stadium was to return to its former glory and remain a viable facility into the future. The money for this project, however, was never allocated and Victory began to deteriorate further as elected officials discussed what to do with the aging facility. Without major events to stage on a regular basis, the stadium was too

large for the community, as the majority of events still held at Victory failed to bring in crowds approaching its seating capacity of 25,000.

In 1993 in the midst of this noticeable deterioration of Victory the annual football game between the two city high schools included a disturbing and violent series of incidents.<sup>132</sup> During game, a fight broke out in the stands among members of both student bodies. According to local police reports, the “mob scene” involved over 400 people from both schools (Hammack 1993, B1). Spectators gathered to watch the fight and to taunt the police attempting to break up the brawl. According to the *Roanoke Times* story on the fight, the on-lookers yelled “L.A.” and “Rodney King” at the scenes of the police grabbing and arresting young African-American men at Victory (Hammack 1993, B1).

Soon after this affair, Victory Stadium re-entered public discourse and captured the interest of local Roanokers, but this time it was not the events of the gridiron which dominated local press concerning the stadium. Instead, local citizens and politicians debated what to do with this once proud Roanoke landmark. Though the 1993 “riot” had nothing to do with the actual physical deterioration of the stadium itself, the melee somehow came to symbolize the moral and physical decay of a once proud facility. The once-proud stadium that had hosted young white cadets sporting their finest uniforms in the southern version of Army-Navy game was now the site of young, African-American “hoodlums” engaged in “urban combat” within the confines of “Ol’ Vic.” By 1994, one year after the racially-tinged brawl, editorials began to appear in the *Roanoke Times* calling for the demolition of the stadium and the erection of an entirely new facility somewhere else in the city. One letter to the editor that year voiced the opinion that, “I think Roanoke should demolish Victory Stadium, fill the hole with dirt, plant some shrubs and flowers and watch the crowds roll in for Sunday afternoons. Obviously, this plan would draw bigger crowds to the area than the plan now in place-[which is] no plan” (May 15, 1994 op-ed).

After three years of infighting and protracted debate within Roanoke City Council over what to do with Victory Stadium, an alternate stadium plan emerged in June of 2000 that called for a brand new sports complex and amphitheatre to be constructed downtown

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<sup>132</sup> According to statistics from *Public School Review* (2006) from the years 2001-03, the student body of Patrick Henry High School is nearly 30% African-American while William Fleming High School is 57% African-American. By comparison, the African-American population in neighboring suburban high schools Cave Spring and Salem are 2% and 7% respectively. These statistics have remained fairly consistent since the early 1990’s when the brawl occurred.

near the Roanoke Civic Center and Auditorium. The stadium plan, revealed to the council in a closed-door meeting with city manager, was unique in that it included a permanent theatre stage to be placed in the West Stands that could be used to stage concerts, outdoor plays, and other cultural events. The downtown facility was planned to be much smaller than Victory, with only 8,000 permanent seats for football and soccer games and expandable to 12,000 for concerts and cultural events. The fate of Victory had seemingly been determined, for as part of this master plan endorsed by a citizens' advisory council in January of 2000, Victory was to be torn down and the land used to support a proposed biomedical center adjacent to Roanoke Memorial Hospital. By the end of that same year, a majority of city council members voted in December of 2000 to endorse both the razing of Victory Stadium and to begin to finance the development of the new downtown stadium-amphitheatre complex. Indeed, by 2001 the city council authorized the purchase of the twenty-one acre site by a 6-0 vote to be used for the stadium for \$275,000. The rest of the money to finance the facility came from the sale of a \$56.2 million dollar tax payer bond in January 2002. Additionally, the city council rezoned the area around the proposed stadium site to allow for stadium construction, seemingly clearing the final procedural impediment facing the new stadium project. It seemed that after ten years of stalling and procrastination, the city government was moving towards a possible conclusion of a long standing stadium problem.

It was at this time that Victory Stadium and Old South nostalgia for the VMI-VPI games of old entered public discourse throughout the Roanoke Valley. Claiming that the proposal had been forced through the council in a secretive and undemocratic fashion, a new coalition of Save Victory Stadium activists emerged within the Roanoke metropolitan region. As a result of the council's inability to move on the new stadium proposal due to complicated legal entanglements, the preservationist opposition had time to organize into a more collective and unified force. A new non-profit group named Citizens for a Sensible Stadium Decision (CSSD), led by former council-member and school board member formed in 2003 in order to put public pressure on city council to adopt a stadium plan that saved and restored Victory. The group, opened a public office on First Street in downtown Roanoke, held a news conference in 2003, and began to circulate a petition asking the city council to hold a citywide referendum on the issue. CSSD also urged its members to write editorials advocating the referendum plan and calling for Victory Stadium to be saved.

The power of CSSD's public relations assault came from a hyper-nostalgia appeal which highlighted the stadium's role as a heritage and memorial site for the citizens of Roanoke. Beginning in 2003, pro stadium forces sent numerous editorials and op-eds to the *Roanoke Times* arguing the historic virtues and value of saving Victory. Wishneff himself noted to the paper that, "No structure in Roanoke has created more memories for more Roanokers, from more diverse backgrounds, over the years than Victory Stadium" (Adams 2003). To CCSD and their supporters, Victory Stadium is a historic landmark worthy of preservation similar to a battlefield, monument, or historic building. As argued by William Baker, Sr. (2005, B11) in his editorial defense entitled "Preserve Ol' Vic" he states that:

There is a solid spirit in this valley of patriots who recognize the value of restoring significant places we love rather than tearing them down. For more than 60 years, Victory Stadium has been home to thousands of loyal Roanokers who have played and cheered their hearts out. Past heritage is one thing, but the legacy we leave to our young people will be the most valuable thing we can provide.

Such discourse illustrates the importance of particular geographic sites in the construction of collective memory. As noted throughout this dissertation, heritage is never beyond geography. A space such as Victory Stadium possesses incredible symbolic value and becomes a heritage sites for particular groups to rally around (Misztal 2003). As Nora (1996, 7) further contends, places like Victory Stadium are semiotic sites where the traces of the past are "no longer alive but not yet entirely dead, like shells left on the shore when the sea of living history has receded." The heritage nostalgia utilized by stadium supporters implies the existence of a "golden age" of the past when life was simpler, more traditional, religious, and less decadent and corrupted than the present period (Landy 2001, 3). In this case, it is the era of the late 1940's and 1950's which are idealized by pro-Victory discourse. This is the ideal of "Leave it to Beaver" America, a simpler time when the national economy boomed and white Christian family values were circulated throughout the nation through mass tele-visual media outlets and taught daily in America's public schools. Within the American South, this period marked an era of white hegemony, when African-Americans "knew their place" within a racially segregated society. It is the period prior to the Civil Rights Movement where cadets from both sides at the "Military Classic of the South" could still wave Confederate battle flags in the stands without criticism and fear of public condemnation from the forces of political correctness. Such hyper-nostalgic longing for the Fifties, a time when the city of Roanoke was segregated by law, trivializes the reality of life

for African-Americans in Roanoke during that same time period. The same college football teams that waged their epic and romantic militaristic battles on the gridiron did so with all-white teams in front of segregated crowds.

In his editorial to the *Roanoke Times*, Richard Harman (2003, A13) taps into memories of the “good old days” in the 1950’s when Victory staged epic college football battles:

Fifty-five years ago this fall, I had one of the thrills of my lifetime, and I have had many in my 74 years. I was a freshman “rat” with the Virginia Tech (then known as VPI) Corps of Cadets Regimental Band, the Highty Tighties. Along with the entire Corps of Cadets of 2,500, we departed the Huckleberry train from Blacksburg, and with the entire corps from Virginia Military Institute, we marched down Jefferson Street with thousands of spectators lining our route toward Victory Stadium for the annual Military Classic of the South football game on Thanksgiving Day....Our sons [also] played for Bob McLelland in the city sandlot games at the stadium when they won the city championship. For 46 years, he coached football to thousands of area youths, but, maybe more important, he also taught these young people Christian beliefs and leadership principles that later helped many become leaders in the community, in education and in business.

In his extended call for Victory renovation, Harman’s editorial invokes powerful semiotic images. His article equates Victory Stadium with traditional Christian family values and American traditions often missing within a contemporary globalized society including the marches and parades down Jefferson Street, coaches unafraid to teach Christian values and morals to their players, and Thanksgiving Day celebrations celebrating America’s military greatness. In such discourse, Victory emerges as a family friendly geographic site, a place where Roanokers of all ages shared memories and wonderful experiences. Victory Stadium is imagined as a historical point of reference where men of three different generations bond on the same gridiron “field of honor.” As is typical in heritage discourse, this sort of rhetoric is hyper-masculine, claiming Victory as a sacred site where young and strong male bodies performed in timeless acts of honor, teamwork and sacrifice united across a generational divide (Graham, Ashworth, and Turnbridge 2000). Like the VMI and VPI cadets of old, Victory is a timeless masculine proving ground for the young men of Western Virginia to prove their worth.

The possibility of individuals actually having painful and negative memories associated with the same place is rendered invisible by a hyper-nostalgic discourse which only remembers the “good times” and “hard fought contests” waged at Victory. Indeed, as French Historian Ernst Renan (1990) famously argues, forgetting is a crucial part of the remembering process in heritage development. Unpleasant events such as the 1992 race riot and the massive flooding of the stadium in 1985 and again in 2004 conveniently disappear from pro-stadium nostalgic discourse. It plays on the power of family, noting Victory as a geographic site where families throughout the Roanoke Valley came together to support their sons on the field. As argued by Lowenthal (1996, 10), “Preserving our past helps us pass on our cherished values to future generations.” In this case, Roanoke is (re)imagined as a community once governed by family values and Christian morals. The idyllic past replaces the uncertainty and dislocation of the present, a period where the city of Roanoke, once the headquarters of the Norfolk and Western railroad, struggles to find its economic niche in a globalized, post-industrial economy. As argued by Harvey (2001), local heritage development acts an attempt to freeze time, fixing the city in a particular traditional moment of the past fast disappearing in the uncertainty associated with postmodernity and advanced capitalism.



Figure 7.11

A Condemned Victory Stadium

In the last days before it was finally demolished in June 2006. In an extreme example of how the stadium captured the public imagination, the city gave away bricks from the stadium to residents that same month. Hundreds of people waited in their cars for hours to get a “Vic’ Brick” for their homes or gardens (Bohland).

In addition to arguing the stadium as a memorial site that honors Roanoke's association with Old South military masculinity, pro-stadium supporters employed nationalist discourse in their efforts to save the stadium. In doing so, they followed the late 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition of fusing the powerful masculine elements of the Lost Cause together with new American nationalism in a spirit of American renewal and independent strength. In another section in his same extended editorial, Richard Harman (2003, A13) called on Roanokers to:

Help city residents preserve the only memorial to World War II in Roanoke City. The Memorial Avenue Bridge is in honor of World War I. Lee Plaza is a memorial for all wars. We had the opportunity to have the D-Day Memorial located in Roanoke, but it did not have the proper support by the previous mayor and his administration. But the D-Day Memorial is properly located in Bedford. We need the present stadium where it stands. We lost 250,000 Americans in World War II. Victory Stadium is our monument to these brave men and women, and we need it as our constant reminder of their supreme sacrifice....please do not try to appease us by naming the new facility Victory Stadium. It would not be appropriate. World War II ended 58 years ago, and it simply would not have the same meaning.

In perhaps the most blatant and powerful example of connecting Victory to American war nationalism, a group calling themselves the "Salute Victory Committee" organized in 2003 and held a rally at the armory located next to the stadium. One of the main organizers of the group was Bob Slaughter, a World War II veteran instrumental in the fundraising campaign for the building of the national D-Day Memorial in nearby Bedford. At the rally, Slaughter and a number of area World War II veterans and then mayor Ralph Smith spoke out in favor of stadium renovation, claiming that any other possible decision would be disrespectful to the "last vestige" of World War II memory in the Valley. Mayor Smith, playing to the crowd of veterans in the audience, remarked that, "The stadium was dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, 1942, for the cause of humanity and for the Glory of God and named for what everyone hoped at the time would be an Allied victory in World War II. Those words still hold true today" (Jackson 2003, B5). Such rhetoric symbolically attaches the stadium structure to the collective memory of World War II, despite the fact that the stadium itself, unlike other civic stadiums named Memorial Stadium or arena, is not a true war memorial structure. Instead, its association to World War II was merely one of

coincidence and chance, as it just happened to have opened during the first year of America's involvement in World War II. City leaders named it Victory Stadium to symbolically tie the structure to the conflict overseas, a war that was going quite badly for the United States throughout much of 1942. Indeed, the plan was to possibly rename the stadium after the war to Maher Stadium, the name attached to the old facility that Victory replaced.

Despite this tenuous link to World War II, Victory is imagined as an epic and lasting memorial to America's triumph in the last truly just war. In evoking World War II imagery in their discourse, pro-stadium supporters deliberately tap into the public power of America's "best ever war" (Adams 1993). In contrast to the confusion and dislocation surrounding the conflict in Vietnam, World War II is widely remembered in American collective memory as a righteous and just war, a battle of good versus evil where America acted as a liberating force against the demonic and genocidal fascist forces enslaving the world (Luke 1990). It is a war that highlighted the heroic contributions of what Tom Brokaw famously dubbed "The Greatest Generation" in his 2004 book of the same name. Brokaw's book is but one of a whole range of books, films, television shows, and other mass media texts released in the last fifteen years praising the contributions of this generation of American's and highlighting the courage and brilliance of America's fighting men during the war. From the film *Saving Private Ryan*, to the HBO series *Band of Brothers* based on the hyper-nostalgic books of historian Stephen J. Ambrose, a whole cottage industry of World War II worship has reappeared in recent American popular culture as the last veterans of the just war have begun to rapidly vanish.

This hyper-glorification of the World War II era and the American soldiers from the "Greatest Generation" who fought in it, simplifies the real horrors of war and the tragedy associated with actual conflict. It reduces war into a nationalist meta-narrative script designed to highlight America's position as the "greatest nation on Earth." This script ignores possible negative memories of the war for some Americans, including the forced interning of Japanese-Americans, the use of atomic weapons, the beginning of Cold War division, and the compliancy of the American government in the rise of Nazism. It does so in favor of nostalgic, feel good memories from the period. As argued by Adams (1993, 90), "When nostalgia drives us to depict war as a golden age in our cultural development a time of unending cheerful production, prosperity, and patriotism, we trivialize the event by

slighting the real suffering that took place. And we lose sight of the fact that war is inherently destructive-wasteful of human and natural resources, disruptive of social development.”

Adams’ quote could also be applied to Victory Stadium nostalgia as a salient metaphoric warning of what can happen when discourses of collective memory infect and paralyze an entire community. Before finally demolishing the stadium in June 2006, the city of Roanoke spent over fifteen years and tens of millions of dollars on the Victory Stadium issue to the detriment of much more pressing urban issues facing the community. Like most cities, Roanoke faced dozens of other serious urban problems including rising unemployment rates, poor public school testing scores, declining funding for the local arts and city museums, endemic poverty, gang violence, and unsettled race relations. The city school system, for example, is the seventh-worst performing division in the entire state out of 132 divisions, with twelve of its twenty nine schools failing to achieve full accreditation from the state. Additionally, two-thirds of the students at these twelve schools live in households below the national poverty line (Chittum 2006). In a similar vein, a study released in 2005 by Morgan Quinto Press ranked Roanoke as having the second highest violent crime rate among Virginia’s urban areas (Williams 2006). The city’s violent crime rate was eclipsed only by that of the city of Richmond, an urban area which had once earned the distinction of the Murder Capital of the United States during the 1990’s. Such more serious urban problems received little political and media focus in comparison to the dominance of the stadium issue within public discourse.

This case study of Victory Stadium ultimately illustrates how heritage and nostalgia discourse, typically viewed in this country in only positive terms, can in fact paralyze a city from moving forward and addressing more pressing urban problems. Though many projects cited for historical preservation and redevelopment are in the best interest of the public and the local community, a city simply cannot save every building or structure deemed by some to have some sort of historical significance. Indeed, for every positive and nostalgic example of collective memory in Victory Stadium, there are other less glorious events silenced by this type of discourse. Nostalgia and heritage always involves what Billig (1995) refers to as “collective amnesia” and Dwyer (2004) calls “symbolic accretion.” They both suggest that all remembering, particular positive and nationalist forms, simultaneously involve a forgetting of other memories. For the nostalgia peddlers of CCSD, Victory is only

to be remembered as a memorial site of Southern military masculinity and for the fallen soldiers of World War II. It is the ultimate landscape monument to 1950's America, a space where the masculine cadets of VMI-VPI waged gridiron war, a proving ground where the young boys of Fleming and PH became good Christian men, and a sacred nationalist site where the glory of the nation was celebrated with Independence Day fireworks and stock car races. Conversely, memories of floods, race riots, drunken cadet brawls, and segregated crowds are forgotten in the nostalgic haze of collective memory.

### *Simulating the Civil War in Bedford*

On Saturday July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005, the Bedford, Virginia Main Street Association held the majority of the events for its annual “Hunter’s Retreat” celebration, a three day festival where, as advertised in a mock newspaper distributed at the event: “Centertown Bedford will come alive with the sights and sounds of the 1860’s. The town, which was called Liberty during the war, was the one of the only towns in the West-Central part of the state with site of much activity during the Civil War, both military and civilian.”<sup>133</sup> The three-day festival is one of the largest annual Civil War themed events in Central and Western Virginia and draws hundreds of re-enactors from across the country to the area for the weekend. It serves as a financial generator for downtown merchants, as many of the events over the three days require admission for entrance including: lantern ghost tours of Centertown on Friday and Saturday evenings (\$5), a period dance and concert by the Sons of Dixie Band (\$10), guided tours of the Avenel Plantation (\$3), and a ladies tea “with the generals” also at the Avenel Plantation home (\$10). In addition to these events, the Hunters Raid weekend also included book signings, period lectures, living history displays, museum visitations, a period church service, and two separate battle reenactments held on the grounds of the National Home for the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks and in the streets of downtown Bedford.

My wife and I attended three of these events on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and also engaged in extended interviews and conversations with two female re-enactors in the “General’s Camp” outside of the Avenel Plantation. My critical observation of the day’s heritage events and the record of our conversations with Confederate female re-enactors centers on performative and material practices of culture at the festival. These practices serve to transmit and reinforce elements of Lost Cause and neo-Confederate ideology both within their own traveling heritage community and to the general public attending the event. Based on our observations and conversations with re-enactors, it was clear that the participants in the Hunters Raid weekend took their role as heritage educators very seriously, preferring to be addressed by scholars and the general public as living history educators rather than as Civil

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<sup>133</sup> From Page One of “The Bedford Sentential,” mock newspaper and newsletter distributed on June 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of the Hunter’s Raid Weekend. Though the town was the site of a battle during Hunter’s Raid, it was hardly a major center for military activity during the war. Such text is another example of how many towns in Virginia seek to claim their communities as vital Civil War landscapes. In doing so, they can legitimize attempts to capitalize on heritage tourism or heritage festivals focused on the Civil War era.

War re-enactors. They believe themselves to be amateur historians with a duty to report “the truth” regarding the Civil War to anyone that will listen to them. In an article in the *Roanoke Times* focused on a regiment of re-enactors from Southwest Virginia, a former teacher named Frank Moseley claims that, “What we try to do in this hobby is bring history to life. With living history, you don’t have to create images in your head. You can actually see it” (Alvis-Banks 2006, 7). Other re-enactors, including some of those we interviewed during our visit to Bedford, actually engage in their own independent research projects on the Civil War. They do so hoping to write their own books on the Civil War and add to the myriad of books already written on those particular four years in American history

The day’s events also illustrated, if only briefly, the collective bonding that takes place at such festivals among the community of “living historians” at the event. Quite simply, the re-enactors and performers participate in these events not only because of their love of Civil War history. They also do so out of a desire to belong to a community of like-minded individuals. The men interviewed by the *Roanoke Times* claimed that camaraderie with their fellow “soldiers” was what they enjoyed most about the experience (Alvis-Banks 2006, 8). Like a theatre cast bonding during the course of a new production, re-enactors traveling from one heritage event to another across the country tend to form tight attachments and connections within their collective group. Additionally, the reenactment itself provides the soldiers with a simulated “thrill of battle,” allowing the participants to feel the chilling rush of combat without the nasty death and destruction associated with real battlefield experiences (Alvis-Banks 2006, 6). The simulated Civil War camp also serves as a mnemonic flashback for some of the re-enactors who served at some point in their lives in the United States military. Unlike Vietnam and Iraq, however, the men form bonds and friendships with “their enemies” on the battlefield and only rarely does a soldier leave the weekend with an injury worse than a knee scrape or twisted ankle.

The main event of the Bedford weekend was the Saturday reenactment of the Battle of Liberty on the grounds of the Elks Meeting House. Members from the local chapters of Confederate heritage organizations appeared at the entrance to the simulated battle to pass out literature and greet the battle-viewers. These women, from the Bedford Chapter of the UDC, were dressed in period costumes and used the event to collect donations in jars for their own organization and the Hunter’s Retreat organizing committee. Similarly, the local SCV set up a table outside of the battle grounds in order to sell raffle tickets as a fund raiser

for their chapter. The winner of the raffle was to receive a period gun, a Confederate colt revolver worn as a sidearm by some Confederate officers. As is the case with many of these reenactments, the battle featured far fewer men than actually fought that day on both sides. The day's play by play announcer was a SCV member who made sure to let the audience know that we were witnessing a simulated battle from the "War of Northern Aggression." The actions of the Confederate army were in full view of the majority of spectators, as the onrushing Union army was kept "off-stage" and out of the view of the audience members. Illustrating the rather bizarre nature of the event, as part of an effort to explain the events on the battlefield, the announcer informed the crowd that each re-enactor on both sides represented thirty to forty actual soldiers who served at the real historical battle.

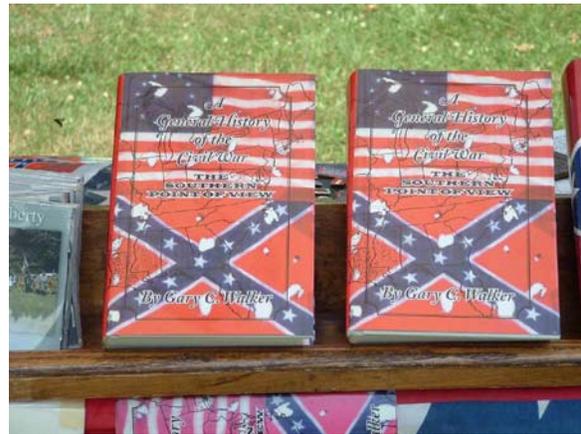


Figure 7.12  
 Battle of Liberty Reenactment  
 The crowd gathers at the Battle of Liberty reenactment, 23 July, 2005 (Bohland).

Figure 7.13  
 Book Selling at the Reenactment  
 One of the neo-Confederate books on sale at the reenactment, Gary Walker's *A General History of the Civil War: A Southern Point of View* (Bohland).

The reenactment consisted of less than a hundred men on both sides marching in small units of less than ten firing simulated rifles and cannons into each other. As is typical at most reenactments, the Southern army outnumbered the Union forces on the field. Indeed, it is common within the re-enacting culture that soldiers bring both Confederate and Union gear to the battlefields, as many Confederate units are told to "switch sides" on the day of the battle in order to even up the sides (Horowitz 1996). Some re-enactor units go so far as to have an "alter-ego" on the Union side. The 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia, for example, often is

forced to play the role of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania at re-enactor events (Alvis-Banks 2006). The play by play announcer kept the crowd abreast of the action in the field, noting particular tactical decisions and formations practiced by the well-drilled faux soldiers. Leading the Confederate army in the background, each in splendid uniforms and on horseback, were a who's who of Lost Cause heroes including Lee, Jackson, Longstreet, and Pickett. The presence of these iconic figures at the reenactment symbolized the absurdity of the event, as none of these great men of the South served in the actual Battle of Liberty. Indeed, Jackson died nearly a year before the battle actually took place. The crowd at the battle was almost entirely white, though we saw one African-American family situated on the hill above the battlefield. This family amused themselves by riding their bikes through the crowd, bored perhaps by the relative lack of action in the field.

A number of merchants selling Civil War related items set up impromptu tent shops in the parking lot of the elementary school located across the street from the Elks Meeting House. The Civil War is big business in the United States, as more books and films have been written about the war than any other period in American history and the interest in period reenacting invariably led to the establishment of hundreds of companies producing and selling authentic re-enactor garb. Like the hardcore re-enactors, Civil War merchants travel the country peddling their wares at the myriad of heritage events held throughout the Southern United States. The neo-Confederate author Gary Walker, for example, set up a table to sell autographed copies of his various books on the Civil War and the Old South including his titles *The Truth About Slavery* and *A General History of the Civil War: The Southern Point of View*. Other tents included period dresses, flags, rifles, soaps, teas, shirts, antiques, and other examples of Civil War bric-a-brac all on sale throughout the weekend. Visitors could even obtain an old time framed picture taken by a photographer designed to appear faded like the lithographs taken during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 7.14

Confederate Military Heroes

A cavalcade of Confederate military heroes, including Lee and Jackson, overlook the reenactment in Bedford. None of these generals were actually present at the real battle in 1864 (Bohland).



Figure 7.15

Time for a Smoke Break

A female re-enactor enjoys a smoke break and a break from her character, a proper Old South Victorian woman (Bohland).

Our visit to the Confederate Officer Camp, located at nearby Avenel Plantation, included an interesting series of conversations with period re-enactors. The camp featured around twenty tents and a communal cooking and fire-pit for use by all of the campers stationed there. This particular camp was only for re-enactors portraying generals and their family members. The men portraying “common soldiers” set up their tents a half-mile away from the plantation, just outside of the Elks Meeting House where the battle simulation took place later that afternoon. As is standard for most re-enactor camps, there is a concerted effort made to ensure that every element of the camp life seem as authentic to the period as possible. In the officer camp, this quest for authenticity led the participants to decorate each of their tents with period antiques and memorabilia that a general and his family might have carried with them when on a campaign. In order to portray a general, a sizable investment was required to purchase these antiques, suggesting that only re-enactors with financial means could afford to portray these Confederate heroes. Wooden signs hung outside of the tents signified exactly what character each re-enactor was portraying over the course of the weekend. At this particular weekend, men portraying Generals Lee, Jackson, Pickett, and Longstreet each made an appearance, again despite the fact that none of them were actually at the Battle of Bedford in 1864. Conversely, no major Union generals made an appearance

at the event and there was no corresponding Union officer camp set up anywhere within Centertown.

After walking through the camp, we conversed with two female re-enactors engaged in sewing projects while seated on wooden chairs in a General's tent. This particular bivouac was one of the most elaborate set up in the camp and featured a full-queen sized bed placed in the living area adorned with quilts and period pillows. Under the second tent, set up as an outside sitting area, was a large antique wooden table, two period lanterns, a dozen or so clay pots and pans, and an antique mirror and shaving kit. When asked to speculate on how much money all of these items cost, one of the women replied, "I can't even speculate or remember, tens of thousands of dollars or so. We've slowly collected these items over the years and now have a great collection." This particular woman was from Virginia and portrayed the wife of a Confederate general. She and her husband attend reenactments throughout the country and have so for more than a decade. She commented to me that she is gone to events nearly every weekend in the summertime and the fall they often bring their children with them since these were "family events."<sup>134</sup>

Sitting with this woman in her tent was another woman portraying the wife of a lower-ranking Confederate general. A recent convert to reenacting, the woman only began participating full-time in the Civil War living history circuit this year. When I asked her to explain the new attraction to Confederate reenacting for her and her husband when both of them were from a Midwestern state that fought for the Union during the war, she noted that:

The general has always been my husband's hero every since he was a young boy. He's just always felt a personal connection to him and what happened to him during the war. We just really love to study the Civil War and I used to do amateur theatre so I love to act. It's also a lot like Cowboys and Indians that you used to play as kids...Really, we do this because of the three E's: Entertainment, Education and Enlightenment. You all in Virginia do not know how good you've got it here, there is just history all around you in this state. We're planning on moving here full time when we can and hope to send our daughter to college here. We want to be surrounded by history full time.

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<sup>134</sup> In an effort to ensure the anonymity of both respondents in this section, I will use their reenactor names when referring to these women in this study.



Figure 7.16  
Officers' Tents

The rows of tents in the Confederate officers camp at Avenel Plantation in Bedford, VA (Bohland).



Figure 7.17

Officer Tent and Female Re-enactor

One of the female re-enactors we spoke to while attending the Battle of Liberty heritage festival. Note the elaborate antiques and furnishings in the tent (Bohland).

Her response notes the role and attraction that amusement and theatrics play in attracting many to Civil War reenactment. The entire weekend is in essence one giant amateur production, a “kids’ game” where adults can fire fake guns, dress up in period costumes and generally step outside of their own lives and portray individuals that lived in an exciting and simpler time. It allows this woman to utilize her amateur theatre skills for the cause of Civil War education at events throughout the country. Her response also reveals a certain privileging of what counts as legitimate and interesting history for many Americans. A Midwestern state is considered barren of “real history” simply because it lacks battlefields from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and because no American presidents came from the state.

Conversely, just as in Lost Cause scholarship that privileges the role of Virginia and its citizens played during the war, the Commonwealth of Virginia emerges in her comments as a center for this “real history.” She and her husband view Virginia as a promised land for Civil War and history buffs, a place perhaps where their full-time hobby as living historians would be more appreciated and understood. Additionally, her response is also intriguing for what it did not include: a real critical and personal analysis of why she and her Northern family seemed to align themselves with the goals and causes of the Confederacy. Her sympathy

with the South became more apparent throughout our conversations with both women, as she noted that, “I wish that woman had never seen that slave auction and written that book about slavery.” When I asked what book she was referring to, she stated “You know that Harriet Tubman woman.” I realized she was speaking, of course, about *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a book written by a quite different Harriet from the period- Harriet Beecher Stowe. I found it quite intriguing and sobering that a self-proclaimed educator and living historian did not recall the name of one of the most influential authors of the period.

The immediacy of the Civil War for these women was striking, as both spoke about the war in the present tense and their comments often drifted into dreamy and metaphysical remembrances of events that took place some one-hundred and forty years ago. Both women noted that most of the veteran re-enactors were members of either the SCV or the UDC and the Northern woman regretted that she won’t be able to join the UDC because of her Yankee heritage. In discussing a recent visit to Gettysburg, the Virginia woman noted that when she was at Gettysburg, “I felt like I had been there before, in a past life. I saw Confederate dead walking across the battlefield at night. They are so many of those boys walking around the field at night that fell there.” Perhaps influenced by Whoopi Goldberg’s character in the Hollywood film *Ghost*, this woman’s experience with Civil War memory seemed to be mediated by a televisual expectation of how the living can experience contact with the specters of history. The other woman agreed that she too had seen ghosts on the fields of battle, stating that, “I can’t go to Gettysburg anymore. It makes me cry every time I think about all those boys dying at Pickett’s Charge. I get tears just thinking about it and I can’t imagine seeing the ghosts as well.” According to both women, “though it might sound crazy,” most re-enactors believe they have seen spirits walking upon battlefields at night

The conversation with the two general’s wives eventually turned to the ever-present topic of African-American slavery and the continued public display of the Confederate flag throughout the southern states. The brief mention of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* provoked an angry reaction from the Virginian and she stated that, “I am sure there were some bad situations [with slavery]. But most of them were just like servants and were members of the family. They were happy.” Like me, she too was engaged in an extended research project on the Civil War that occupied much of her time, though her motivation for her work was due to “the misrepresentation of the Confederate flag by the media and some groups. That gets me so mad, I wanted to do something to prove [them] wrong.” She then brought me a book

that she was currently examining as part of her research that she felt I would find “fascinating.” As was the case throughout much of my fieldwork in this dissertation, the woman assumed that since I was a native Virginian studying the Civil War at Virginia Tech—home of James Robertson and the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies— I must be sympathetic to the Confederate cause. The book she presented to me was a collection of her own independent research project documenting particular cases when African-Americans appeared on the muster roll of particular Confederate units throughout the war. She pointed to one of these census documents and said, “See...see what that letter is. It’s an M for mulatto. That’s a Confederate muster roll and that is a black soldier that fought for the Confederacy.” She then revealed to me that her project involved examining hundreds of Confederate documents for instances where African-Americans showed up on these sheets. She did this to find “proof” that there were actually thousands of African-Americans loyal to the Confederacy during the war and, if they did so, slavery must not be nearly as brutal and oppressive an institution as often portrayed in scholarship and the media.

Her particular interest in detailing Black Confederates is one shared by a number of other neo-Confederates throughout the region and present at the same Bedford heritage festival. One of the guest speakers invited to the event by the merchants of Centertown was Jack Maples, a re-enactor and author of the book *Reconstructed Yankee*. Maples, originally scheduled at the event only for a book signing, was given time for an addition lecture on the Sunday session to deliver “new evidence” regarding the issue of Black Confederates serving in the army. He also appeared as part of a “Meet the Generals” session, a mock Q&A session where members of the audience could quiz re-enactors dressed as Confederate generals on the war and their own particular beliefs. During this session, Maples stepped out of character for a moment and noted to the crowd that “most people don’t realize just how many Blacks fought for the Confederacy. It is a number close to 75,000.” When asked by a small girl in the audience dressed in period dress why Black people fought for the Confederacy, Maples response was that it was, “for the same reasons the white soldiers fought. It was to protect their homeland against Northern invasion and aggression.”

Maples’ lecture espoused many of the same views regarding Black Confederates as Jerry Huff (2005, B8), a member of the Botetourt Artillery camp of the SCV who wrote a letter on this same topic of Black Confederates to the editor of the *Roanoke Times*. His letter was in response to a letter earlier in the month from Edward Heidbrink which noted the

existence of few monuments honoring the contributions of African-American soldiers during the Civil War. Huff writes:

I'll bet he [Heidbrink] was surprised to learn that more than 100,000 blacks served the Confederacy during the war. No wonder he didn't know, because correct history of that period isn't taught "up North" or almost anywhere else. I don't know how they assign statues up North, but down here we erect our statues to heroes or to men and women who have contributed something of great importance and value to their country...we have many black members in the Sons of Confederate Veterans camps. Perhaps the closest black SCV member to Heidbrink would be at our camp...we could also take Heidbrink to Fairview Cemetery and show him where a black Confederate soldier is buried.

The letter operates as a public attempt by the SCV to again prove to the public that they are both anti-racist and that they serve a legitimate educational purpose-to repudiate and refute the dominant Northern heritage discourses of reconciliation. It also reveals many of the same generalized assumptions made by Maples regarding the issue of African-American service in the Confederate Army. There are a number of questions that such mythologized discourse fails to address. Are both men making the ludicrous claim that between 75,000 and 100,000 black men in the South joined the regular army and fought in units in the same capacity as their white counterparts? Such an assertion is easily disputed by the historical record which holds that the Confederate Army never allowed African-American conscription into the official army until the very end of the war. It was only in 1865, when the South faced acute shortages of men due to desertion and battlefield losses, that the Confederacy began to conscript African-American slaves (Jordan 1995). Additionally, how many of these African-Americans cited by Maples and other neo-Confederates served willingly or simply joined as cooks and laborers simply because it meant they could obtain special privileges not usually afforded to slaves within an oppressive system (Jordan 1995)? Is it even possible to define volunteer black service within a Confederate state hierarchy that reified white power and privilege constitutionally and within all facets of everyday life? In his neo-Confederate study of Black Confederates, based largely on research conducted by members of the SCV across the South, even Segars (2001, 3) admits that:

Perhaps the greatest debate is whether the term "soldier" can be properly applied to black men (and women) who served for students, bodyguards, nurses, cooks, barbers, teamsters, and construction laborers, and who in many cases "joined the fight" without official government sanction. This point

could be argued either way...if proper enlistment is a definitive criterion, then thousands of white men who served in state and local militias would not qualify as soldiers either.

It is only then under the most liberal definition of military “service” that neo-Confederates arrive at a figure in the tens of thousands in regards to the number of so-called Black Confederates. Jack Maples, as part of his effort to spread such neo-Confederate ideology regarding Black Confederates, also dabbles in neo-Confederate war fiction. Like Robert Craighead, Maples uses the medium of the novel to explore fantastic (re) imaginings of the time period that suit his own right-wing understanding of the Civil War era.<sup>135</sup> His book *Reconstructed Yankee*, published in 2002 by Corinthian Books and publicly autographed by Maples during the Bedford weekend, is a fictional account detailing the adventures of a free African-American boy named Caleb and his best friend during the war. As a way of establishing the supposed bonds of friendship between blacks and white before the war, Caleb’s best friend Tom Parker’s father once owned Caleb’s father before freeing him years before the war. Like Charles Frazier’s Inman in the book and film *Cold Mountain*, Caleb was from the mountains of Western North Carolina, a haven for Unionist sympathizers during the war.

Unlike Inman, who joins a Confederate unit before eventually deserting after becoming disgusted by the horrors of war, Caleb and his friend volunteer originally as soldiers in the Union Army. After “experiencing Yankee horrors and atrocities at home,” including the death of Caleb’s father at the hand of Yankee marauders, the two boys change sides and fight the rest of the war on the side of the Confederacy. Years after the end of the war, Caleb has a conversation with a man from Massachusetts on a train as both were on their way to the annual reenactment of veterans at Gettysburg. When asked by the Northerner how an African-American could have fought for a country that defended slavery, Caleb responds that, “I fought with the Confederacy ‘cause it was my home...they destroyed everything I knew. They killed my best friend-and he was white” (Maples 2002, 157-58).

Maples’ obsession with Black Confederates can be understood as part of a larger-scale textual defense of slavery by contemporary neo-Confederates, a thinly-veiled attempt to revive early Lost Cause mythology which claimed that if some African-Americans served as

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<sup>135</sup> See the final section of this chapter for a discussion of Robert Craighead and his neo-Confederate fiction focused on Stonewall Jackson.

Confederate soldiers then the institution of slavery must not have been nearly as bad as it is commonly portrayed by “liberal, abolitionist historians” and Hollywood films. Contemporary neo-Confederate scholarship further contends that liberal academics and African-American historians falsely portray all Southern slave owners as brutal Simon Legree’s and fail to recognize the more “beneficial” aspects of the institution. The seminal text for contemporary slavery apologists is the short booklet *Slavery as it Was*, written by neo-Confederate authors Douglas Wilson and Steve Wilkins. The pamphlet, commonly distributed at League of the South meetings and heritage conventions, revives the Lost Cause argument that slavery was a benevolent institution that served to disseminate Christian values to godless slaves. Wilson and Wilkins attempt to prove their claim empirically, citing a number of former slaves interviewed by the WPA during the Great Depression who supposedly looked back fondly on their days as chattel field-hands. Not surprisingly, the dubious claims in the work have been widely condemned by mainstream academics as an example of neo-Confederate racist propaganda and a battle over multiculturalism within the contemporary American culture wars (Ramsey 2004).<sup>136</sup>



Figure 7.18

General Lee Gives an Address

General Lee (right) and a man portraying a Confederate Baptist chaplain speak to the audience in downtown Bedford at the Meet the Generals session (Bohland).



Figure 7.19

General Lee Signing Autographs

The General Lee re-enactor signs autographs for admiring children after a rousing neo-Confederate speech (Bohland).

<sup>136</sup> When Wilson and Wilkins organized a public neo-Confederate conference to be held at the University of Idaho, some members of the faculty to publicly condemn their work and the neo-Confederate movement.

Returning to the Liberty weekend, Maples was one of a number of re-enactors at the Hunter's Raid event to use the downtown "Meet the Generals" session as a way of spreading their own neo-Confederate and right wing Christian ideology. Once again, all of the Generals in attendance were Confederate ones, as the organizers of the event seemed to believe that nobody in the town would care to hear an alternative perspective regarding the war. Before speaking, the Confederate generals made it clear to the group of around thirty persons in attendance that when their "hats were on," they would be in their 1864 character and would not answer any modern questions. Each of the re-enactors was then given a few minutes to speak to the crowd in character and to discuss their own views on the current situation in the Civil War. Despite these claims, the re-enactors slipped in and out of character and time whenever they saw fit. Maples, portraying a Confederate advisor to Lee, used his speech to promote his book and his lecture on Black Confederates the next day. Similarly, the man portraying famed photographer Matthew Brady bragged to the audience the impressive list of American presidents whom he had photographed. In his comments, however, he forgot to omit the names of presidents such as Garfield and McKinley elected in the years following the end of the war.

As seems to be typical at these amateur events, the majority of the remarks from the re-enactors focused around military issues and tactics. Al Stone, a veteran re-enactor who has portrayed General Robert E. Lee on television documentaries, noted how the Confederate army would never stoop to the type of civilian-based destruction currently being perpetrated by the Union forces throughout the South. Using typical binary arguments presenting the North as evil and aggressive and the South as pious and without sin, the comments made by Stone and the other generals reinforced elements of classic Lost Cause mythology. Among the various remarks were: "We are fighting against all odds," "God is on our side," and "Lincoln and the Yankees caused this war by invading the sacred soil of Virginia."

The link between the Southern cause and Christianity emerged discursively throughout the comments of the various re-enactors. Stone, for example, made sure to note his own pious Christian beliefs and noted to the audience that, "There are even people in the industrial factories of the North that believe in God. This is a Christian nation and we are a Christian people." Stone's comments received support from the man portraying his chaplain at the event and throughout the weekend. Before the event started, the chaplain

noted to the audience that he traveled to reenactments throughout the United States “as a Christian missionary spreading God’s word.” Like many Southern Baptist preachers from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, his comments to the group focused around the Christian beliefs of the Southern people and their righteous cause of defense and honor. The chaplain noted that there would be a period church service held outside on the next day and invited all in attendance to participate in an evangelical service in the spirit of the Old South. In doing so, attendees could celebrate the ultimate Southern victory in the culture wars of the present.

Completing what was already a strange and surreal day complete with warfare simulation and forms of neo-Confederate heritage orthodoxy was an autograph session with the reenactor Generals following their speeches. The men, approached by a number of children wearing pro-Confederate t-shirts or hats no doubt supplied to them by their parents, swamped Stone in particular after the session. He signed his autograph as General Lee, the ultimate moment of simulation in a day of fantasy and reenactment that would later be topped by a reenactment later that summer in Bath County. That event featured a “dying contest,” where contestants were to be judged on how well they simulated falling in battle. The event was held simultaneously with an event for women where they could learn to mourn their fallen dead like true Victorian ladies.

In reflecting upon our visit to Bedford, it is clear to me that there was nothing particularly strange or different about this heritage festival from the others held throughout the region every year. It was an example of true symbolic interactionism, with docile re-enactor bodies participating in simulated games of amateur theatrics. Each event is dominated by pro-Confederate re-enactors who attend the events to both entertain themselves and as a vehicle for the spread of their own neo-Confederate heritage views. Beyond the prerequisite battle reenactment, each has its own particular additional events designed to make the event an all day festival: period balls, meet the generals sessions and even Civil War beauty contests. Most importantly, each event serves as a crucial site for the (re)distribution of Lost Cause ideology to the public. This pro-Confederate mythology gains power and resonance at these events through the performance, action and public discourse of its participants. In the case of the Hunter’s Raid festival, it is important to note that the downtown association and city government sponsored this heritage festival. The city of Bedford provided the finances and institutional structure necessary to stage what was a celebration of neo-Confederate beliefs and Lost Cause ideology.

### *Aarolyn's Journey*

During the Spring Semester of 2005, I taught a graduate level cultural geography course at Hollins University. The course involved the standard modus operandi for a graduate level course: the examination and discussion of a number of readings broadly related to culture and cultural theory and a required term paper and presentation at the end of the course. One of the course units focused on issues of neo-Confederate memory and Old South heritage, with assigned readings from key chapters in both Goldfield's *Still Fighting the Civil War* and Horowitz's *Confederates in the Attic*. More so than any other unit in the course, my students seemed very engaged in the readings and our discussions sparked heated opinions and queries, even from the normally silent and most reluctant of students. One student shared her belief that her younger brother flies a Confederate flag on his truck as a symbol of defiance against authority, not because he was a racist or really understood the politics involved with the flag's usage. Another student discussed his days as a brother in the Roanoke College chapter of the Kappa Alpha Order, arguing that the organization's various celebrations of Old South memory as nothing more than the harmless fun of a number of 18 to 22 year-old men.

Another one of the course participants, a young twenty-four year old African-American woman from Franklin County named Aarolyn Cobbs, found the material provocative enough to propose exploring these issues in further detail for both her course paper and her master's thesis project. She became particularly interested in the topic of the Civil War due to oral histories within her family suggesting that she had a white relative fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Given my ongoing research in this area, she approached me to act as her advisor for the project and to consult her regarding how best to examine this issue in a scholarly way. After I agreed to become her thesis advisor, Cobbs began researching issues of Civil War memory throughout the Roanoke Valley for both her term paper and as part of a larger documentary film project that would serve as her graduate masters' project. She made contacts with the leaders of the local chapters of the UDC and the SCV and obtained interviews with high-ranking officials in local and regional heritage organizations.

For a period of two months in the spring of 2005, Cobbs made herself a fixture at local SCV and UDC events and developed a friendly and amicable relationship with the leaders of heritage groups throughout the Roanoke Valley. She attended many of these events with her son and her fiancée and filmed many of these events with her digital camera. As her graduate thesis advisor, I viewed all of Cobbs' footage for the film and discussed the project with her at length throughout the summer of 2005. Her project provided me with access to a rich pool of interview and qualitative data unlike any of my own more textual and discursive based research. Cobbs granted me use of her raw footage for my own project and agreed to an extensive personal interview focusing on her research experiences and the connections she made with local heritage organizations. Her comments from that interview appear throughout this section of the chapter.<sup>137</sup> The research provides a fascinating and revealing ethnographic window into the practices and texts of Confederate heritage organizations within the Roanoke Valley and illustrates how issues of race operate and gain power within these same discursive fields. As the key figures in the presentation also appeared in Cobbs' raw data and footage for her Masters project, I combine observations and discursive analysis from the Hollins class presentation with critical discussions of her field work and research experiences as a way of highlighting issues of Confederate collective memory and heritage ideology.

The extent of her personal connections with regional neo-Confederates became apparent to me during the graduate paper presentations held on the final session of my cultural geography course at Hollins University. Unbeknownst to me, Cobbs invited a number of the leaders of local heritage groups to speak on issues of Confederate heritage and identity during her allotted presentation time of fifteen minutes. The group comprised eight to ten individuals, some of whom showed up in full Confederate uniform or *Gone With the Wind* regalia evoking the plantation Old South. The presenters noted this it was particularly special for them to be on the campus of Hollins University in Confederate uniform, as the grounds served as a bivouac site for General Jubal Early's forces in 1864.

The two main speakers for the session were Robert "Red" Barber, Commander of the Fincastle Rifles Unit of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and Dolores Smith, the current president of the Virginia Chapter of the UDC. The presenters seemed unaware that

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<sup>137</sup> The personal interview with Aarolyn Cobbs took place on July 12, 2005 at the Wyndham Library on the campus of Hollins University.

they would have such a little time to speak to the class, though Barber told the group that he saw even the limited presentation as an “opportunity to discuss issues of the Confederate flag with an audience he would normally be isolated from.” Smith briefly opened the presentation by noting the organizational goals of the UDC as benevolent, patriotic and charitable. As for the common goals of the UDC and the SCV, she commented that, “We all simply enjoy honoring our Confederate ancestors.” Barber later echoed these same sentiments, stating that, “We respect all people that honor their own heritage, no matter where they are from or what their group is.”

Barber, a gray bearded man dressed in a Confederate uniform reminiscent of Robert E. Lee, focused the majority of his comments on the role that the SCV plays in presenting the “true history” of the South to local community organizations. Accordingly, the Fincastle Rifles Unit makes a number of similar presentations throughout the Roanoke Valley, though Barber notes that most of them are given to scout groups or for children that are home-schooled. He seemed ill at ease in front of a group of graduate students and academics and attempted to break the ice by relating that, “When General Early was here camping with his men, he wrote in his field notes about the homely women he came upon at Hollins finishing school. Looking out in the audience I can see that some things have changed.” He went on to explain that though he never went to college himself, he studied the Civil War on his own for over forty years. In noting this, he also challenged anyone in the room to claim they “knew more” about the Civil War than he did. During my subsequent interview with Cobbs, she later revealed to me that Barber directed that comment directly at me, as he apparently told her that he distrusts “liberal academics” who “know nothing about the true Civil War.”

This positioning of the chapters and units of the UDC and the SCV as guardians and protectors of an American heritage “under threat” from the forces of modernity and capitalist development is a common theme within the organization. It is used to frame their heritage operations and is present within much of the official literature distributed by both organizations. Barber and the Fincastle Rifles Unit, for example, recently gained some positive publicity for the organization by publicly supporting in a Franklin County newspaper a proposed moratorium on any development around the Booker T. Washington National Monument located within the county. The oddity of a Confederate heritage organization coming to the aid of a historic site honoring a famous African-American

provoked Mason Adams (2005) to write an article in the *Roanoke Times* entitled “Seemingly Unlikely Source Offers Aid.” For an organization that has so virulently opposed other expressions of African-American heritage in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including the placing of an Arthur Ashe statue on Monument Avenue in Richmond, to take the step of actually publicly defending African-American heritage is somewhat bold and surprising. In Adams’ (2005) article, Barber is quoted as stating:

It’s part of Virginia history, it is part of Franklin County’s history, it is part of Southern history. I’d heard Booker T. donated some money to the monument for Confederate soldiers. I said if he could that then we could support what they’re trying to do and protect his home.

The stand of the Fincastle Rifles Unit on this issue almost immediately generated positive press for an organization in dire need of it. In an Op-Ed article in the *Roanoke Times* (2005b) published on September 7<sup>th</sup>, the day after their article on their support of preservation at the Booker T. Washington site, the editorial notes that, “The Sons have earned the reputation as defenders of the Confederate battle flag that many today find racially offensive. The organization claims that it is motivated by heritage, not hatred. This alliance lends it credence.” Though I agree that the unit should be commended for taking this position, I do perhaps cynically wonder if the group would have supported preserving a site honoring a much more controversial and less conciliatory African-American historical figure than Washington. Indeed, this stand by the local Fincastle Rifles unit does not appear to herald a dramatic change within the larger national SCV regarding issues of race and African-American slavery. The national SCV continues to be an organization that perpetuates racist stereotypes and circulates divisive neo-Confederate mythology.

The national organization is currently in the midst of a bitter power struggle in which noted white supremacists and their racist allies gained control of much of the organizational leadership. As noted by Heidi Beinrich, a lawyer with the Southern Poverty Law Center who tracks neo-Confederate hate organizations, a white supremacist lawyer named Kirk Lyons drafted up a plan to take over the organization. Once successful, he began to appoint his racist confidants into positions of power throughout 2002. These new radical SCV leaders engaged in a purging of the organization of its moderates, including stripping the membership of outspoken anti-racist voices within the organization. During the 2004 national convention, this new extremist leadership of the SCV and their allies pushed

through an agenda that included a measure that “proclaim[ed] all SCV members to be "Confederate Southern Americans, an ethnic category dreamed up by Lyons in an attempt to protect white southerners with laws designed to prevent racial discrimination.” Additionally, the leadership continues to publicly attack homosexuality, godlessness, and abortion. It also allows members to circulate racist jokes on its message board Echo. The following is a sample of these postings compiled by Beinrich (2002):

*Look at the mess and the chaos that they have made of it, [referring to] blacks since the civil rights movement. Not to mention the wild upsurge of rape, murders, drugs ... dumbing down of schools since apes have no IQs ... not to mention the same apes have played Hell with Confederate symbols, flags, et cetera. Give them an inch and they take and destroy everything ... in their paths."* Another correspondent writes sarcastically of the Confederate battle flag: *A poor little darkie might see it and get shocked back into slavery which would force him to have to gather up three car loads of chimps and pull his stolen pistol to shoot an unarmed man and his wife going out to celebrate the birth of twins.* And a third tells a crude joke that ends with this punch line: *See, by the time you get done shakin' the shit out of a nigger, there's nothin' left but lips and shoes.* In other Echo postings, blacks are "nigs," "darkies" and “pickaninnies.” (my emphasis)

As illustrated in the above postings, the SCV as an organization positions itself as the contemporary defenders of the Confederate battle flag. Not surprisingly, the presentation of the local SCV group at Hollins University inevitably took a “cultural turn” and the presenters began to discuss of the usage of this Confederate symbol. Perhaps expecting a flag debate to erupt, Barber and his fellow SCV members came armed with a whole range of flags to display to the class. They told the group that most Americans do not actual know what the official flag of the Confederacy was. As is standard for most Confederate heritage activists, Barber and the other presenters followed the now ubiquitous “Heritage not Hate” storyline concerning the usage of the divisive symbol. According to Barber, “These flags have been misused by some. We [the SCV] thought about suing the KKK for their use of the flag but our lawyers advised us against it.”<sup>138</sup>

During his extended flag defense, Barber also claimed that that the Confederate flag was based upon the Scottish Saint Andrews flag. In doing so, they link the flag to a symbol of Christianity and “Celtic-ness”. In making this claim, it is clear that Barber and other

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<sup>138</sup> I have not found any evidence that the SCV has ever tried to sue the Ku Klux Klan. Considering many of its current national leaders have ties to that organization, I find this claim to be an extremely doubtful one.

Fincastle Rifle members have been disciplined by a whole range of neo-Confederate scholarship which links their ancestry and “cause” with that of the Scottish and Ulster Protestants, imagined to have fought a similar war of “resistance” against a dominant industrial power. Additionally, and as noted throughout this dissertation, the connection to Christianity follows the common Lost Cause and neo-Confederate script claiming the South as a moral, sanctified nation which has long espoused “Christian values” in opposition to the godless North.

The presentation ended with Barber and other Fincastle Rifles members encouraging the students in the course “go beyond what they learn in the classroom” to find out “the real truth” about the Civil War and the Old South. One particular moment at the end of the presentation captured this theme and illustrated the belief within neo-Confederate organizations that their “correct” versions of 19<sup>th</sup> century history are being subjugated and suppressed. One man that had been sitting quietly in the crowd throughout the entire presentation, not dressed in Confederate uniform like the other men, then stood up and spoke to the group. He identified himself as John and stated that he was a “forensic historian” that studies the Civil War in his free time. He held up a copy of the book *The Real Lincoln* and stated that, “You all should read this book; it will tell you the real truth about the Civil War that you won’t get here at Hollins.” *The Real Lincoln* is an unabashed criticism of Abraham Lincoln that claims Lincoln’s “real agenda” in the Civil War was to destroy civil rights, destroy states rights and to centralize American government under a powerful and hegemonic federal government. It has become a standard foundational text for neo-Confederate groups in their attempt to “revise the revisionists” and its author Thomas Dilorenzo now appears as a featured speaker at many Confederate heritage group meetings each year.<sup>139</sup>

Before leaving, Barber and other SCV members distributed multiple copies of the March and April issues of the Fincastle Rifles newsletter entitled *The Firing Line*. Within the highly-amateur layout of the newsletters are a whole range of articles on neo-Confederate heritage and conservative causes assembled by its membership. A discursive analysis of these two issues exposes many of the standard Lost Cause foundational scripts and myths present within neo-Confederate discourse since the Civil War ended in 1865. As in many cases of Lost Cause discourse, Lincoln emerges as a particular target of disdain for the

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<sup>139</sup> See Chapter Nine for a further discussion of Dilorenzo and his neo-Confederate writing on Lincoln.

Fincastle Rifles unit. The April issue (*Firing Line* 2005b) “Commanders Remarks” section notes that the unit recently participated in a mock trial of Abraham Lincoln at Liberty University in Lynchburg. Once there:

The tyrant Lincoln was tried for war crimes...Lincoln and his cabinet were ordered to resign their office and he was sentenced to prison until the South paid reparations for all property stolen, destroyed and damaged from the war [of] northern aggression.

The text illustrates the immediacy of the Civil War past for members of the organization, the sense that collective memories provide a way for individuals in the SCV to redress the injustices and grievances of the Civil War past (Lincoln and Yankee hegemony) if only in a simulated setting. The past also provides a “golden age” for the SCV, a mythical and idyllic time when, unlike the godlessness of modernity, Christian morality, traditionalism and genteelism were the rule of the day. As argued by Misztal (2003, 13), “collective memory not only reflects the past but shapes present reality” and provides a “symbolic framework that enables [them] to make sense of their world.” The *Firing Line* newsletter illustrates how the group continues to wage defensive war on two different fronts against its contemporary enemies. On one front, it battles against the forces of modernity and development that seek to destroy the sacred landscapes of the American South, land made holy through the sacrifices of their ancestors. A reprint of newspaper article from Tennessee in the March newsletter, for example, mourns the fact that a portion of the Franklin Battlefield site where a Confederate general fell to his death is now a parking lot for a pizza restaurant. The April issue includes a call to arms by one of Jubal Early’s ancestors to raise money for the purchase and restoration of Early’s birthplace in Franklin County.

On a second front, the SCV wages a pitched culture war against the forces of liberalism that seek to destroy traditional Christian values and eliminate Confederate symbols from Southern spaces. The April *Firing Line* (2005b) contains a long list of excerpts from the constitutional preambles of each of the fifty states, noting the inclusion of the word God in each of them. Above the list in bold print is the statement, “The liberals tell us that we weren’t established as a nation under GOD.” In this case, these preambles operate as documentary support for the SCV, “evidentiary proof” to use against liberals that seek to destroy all vestiges of Christianity from American life. The March issue of *Firing Line* (2005a) includes a reprint of a newspaper article from Columbia, Missouri discussing a plan among Republican senators in Missouri to restore the Confederate flag to two Missouri war

memorials and allow the Ten Commandments to be posted in public places. These two heritage “causes” become connected and naturalized, as their omission on public spaces is a result of the action of liberals seeking to destroy “real history” within the American South.

As is standard in much contemporary neo-Confederate discourse and scholarship, the Christian values of the South are linked to the Celtic ancestry of white Southerners. By affirming the Christian traditional values of their Civil War “Celtic” ancestors and denouncing those of contemporary liberals, the Fincastle Rifles leadership positions its organization as a defender of Christian morality and values within the culture wars of the present just as their ancestors fought a similar defensive military war on behalf of the pious Old South against the godless and aggressive Northern states. The March issue (Firing Line 2005a) contains a letter from an SCV member from Alabama is printed under the title “Our Celtic Ancestry!” In this letter, the author argues that:

It seems that in today’s world of political correctness, more & more of our traditional Southern Christian values are under constant attack by the media and the political leaders of today. One thing Nazi Germany, the Communist & Socialist parties, plus dictators we find under Islam in the Middle East is that if you tell a lie long enough, then that lie will be believed...Around 1900, the majority of Americans were of Celtic ancestry, people from Ireland, Scotland, Wales & England. They were the ones that built this great nation that everyone dreams of...It has been only since the 60’s that influx of other cultures & thoughts that have eroded the thinking of our media, schools, libraries, and now today’s youth...Few Americans know their real history- and could care less.

Finally, the newsletters provide a discursive space for the SCV to alert its members about particular heritage events worth attending throughout the Roanoke Valley. The newsletter highlights heritage events of importance to the organization in an effort to “rally the troops” to attend these celebrations. The front page of *The Firing Line* includes an upcoming events calendar, noting various grave marker dedications, reenactments and Confederate Memorial Day services held throughout the greater Roanoke Valley. These events, such as a mock trial of their “enemy” Abraham Lincoln, are performative cultural practices where collective ideologies take shape and gain meaning (Billig 1995). They provide indoctrinations into neo-Confederate ideology for prospective members of the UDC and the SCV as well as reaffirming the values and beliefs of current members.

The majority of Cobbs’ field research focused on capturing these various cultural practices throughout the Roanoke Valley on film as part of an effort to document how these

activities continue to shape the collective memories of the Civil War within the present. She filmed separate Confederate Memorial Day celebrations in Salem and Rocky Mount, as well as reenactments and “shooting events” in Winchester and Lexington. In contrast to the well-attended reenactments, her footage of the Memorial Day services reveals that, apart from neo-Confederate “die-hards,” almost no one else actually attended these public events. They are highly ritualized affairs where women dressed in hoop skirts read poetry lauding their Confederate ancestors and re-enactors fire simulated gun volleys in the air in recognition of their fallen heroes. Both Memorial Day rituals included recitations of the Confederate pledge of allegiance and a local band played “Dixie” and other Southern songs for those in attendance at Rocky Mount.

At the Salem celebration, held in a Confederate cemetery across from the Salem Museum, the keynote speaker was a local author named Robert Craighead. Craighead was invited to read a selection from his self-published book entitled *Jackson's Legacy*. I purchased a copy of this book from the gift-shop at the Salem Museum, where it is featured in the local authors section and is given its own separate display. The book is a piece of neo-Confederate fantasy, a fictional “what if” account of what would have happened to Stonewall Jackson and the Confederate cause if he had not died in 1863 as a result of his wounds received at the battle of Chancellorsville. Not surprisingly, Craighead’s fantastic re-imagining of the conflict positions the Confederacy as the ultimate victor in the war following their great victory at Gettysburg. Jackson eventually is elected president of the newly-independent Confederacy and is a leader in the movement to outlaw slavery after the war. As president, Jackson makes peace with all Indian peoples and diversifies the Southern economy to become a manufacturing giant that rivals their Northern neighbors. The book even notes that Jackson formulated plans to deal with illegal immigrants in Texas and the importation of drugs into the American South. In the ultimate conservative fantasy, Craighead makes the Confederacy of the future an anti-tax Eden where the central government had little to no power to tax its citizenry.

In addition to observing and filming heritage events throughout the Roanoke Valley, Cobbs quickly make strong personal contacts within local heritage organizations, including the leaders of the local UDC and SCV chapters. In doing so, she was able to both receive invitations to attend private meetings of the organization as well as film personal interviews with many of their members. Her relationship with the Jubal Early chapter of the UDC

became particularly strong after she revealed to members of the UDC leadership that she might have a relative that fought for the Confederacy. This made her eligible for membership in the UDC and led to some of the influential members of the chapter to express an interest in getting her to apply to join their group. Though their initial interest in signing her up came as a great surprise to Cobbs, she soon realized that the “recruitment” of an African-American to the muster roll of the UDC would be considered quite a coup for the organization in their attempt to portray their membership in a positive fashion. Cobbs remarked during her interview that she would have become useful “symbolic propaganda” for the local chapter and noted that she and her fiancée, who attended many of the heritage events with her, often felt as if they were the “token blacks” at the Confederate heritage celebrations and meetings that they attended. She noted:

We always stuck out at every event like a sore thumb. There were no other people of color at any events that we attended. Most of the time, we were treated very well. The word would spread at these things and people would come up to us and say, “We heard that you all were here.”

The need for the UDC to repair and resuscitate its public image is due in no small measure to its long association with the Lost Cause and the propagation of racist discourses from its own leaders throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most famous of these leaders was Georgian Mildred Rutherford, a woman still considered by the contemporary UDC to be the seminal figure in the organization’s development. Rutherford traveled throughout the United States delivering speeches opposing women’s suffrage and in defense of the Confederate Lost Cause, promoting the usage of pro-South textbooks for Southern schools and encouraging Southern women to dress in hoop skirts and other Old South regalia. She defended the institution of slavery, claiming that African-Americans in the pre-war South were “well-fed, well-clothed and well-housed” (Quoted in Blight 2001, 281). Rutherford remains today one of the most beloved of former UDC leaders, a highly respected and iconic figure whose entire collection of Old South scrapbooks are a featured component of the research collection at the Richmond, Va. based Museum of the Confederacy. By enlisting a young African-American woman to the ranks of the UDC, the organization could “prove” that it had become more progressive and that it was not the same racist organization promoted by Rutherford and other hard-liners nearly one-hundred years ago.

As part of their attempt to recruit Cobbs as a member, the Jubal Early #553 Chapter of the UDC-based near her hometown in Franklin County-invited her to attend a meeting of their local chapter in the drawing room of General Early's ancestral home. Cobbs notes that she and her two-year old son were, for the most part, treated kindly by the predominately aged ladies of the Jubal Early Chapter. They served her lunch and seemed genuinely interested in getting her involved in the organization. There were, however, a number of moments during her research when Cobbs was made to feel like an interloper infiltrating secret societies. She was never allowed, for reasons never explained to her, to take a picture of the entire UDC chapter together. Similarly, she was not actually allowed in Jubal Early's plantation house while the group engaged in their secretive "official" meeting. She and her son were actually locked out by the chapter president and sat on the porch while the meeting took place. As she noted during her interview:

I could hear everything they were saying anyway. It's not like they were doing anything too important. They were mostly talking about whether or not they should admit a new woman to the group, as some in the group seemed to think she was too young to join.

She faced similar obstacles when attending reenactments, shooting contests and other more masculine-centered heritage events. While attending a reenactment in Winchester with her fiancée, also an African-American, they were initially not allowed into the soldier camp to interview and film re-enactors. In order to gain access, Cobbs told the gate-guard that she was a friend of Red Barbour's. According to Cobbs, "He looked at me like I was a liar or something and was very suspicious of us being there. It seemed impossible for him to believe that a black woman and man with a film camera would know a leader of the SCV." After sending someone in to check with Barber, they were eventually let in to conduct the interviews. At the same reenactment, Cobbs noted that people continually stared at the two of them until word got around "among the men" that Barber approved of their presence.

Some of the Confederate re-enactors tried to recruit Cobbs' fiancée to join their unit as a black Confederate soldier, while others dressed in uniform (though they were from the state of Virginia) noted that he should "see if he could get up a unit of Negro soldiers" to participate in local reenactments. Another Confederate soldier remarked to them that it "was good to see colored people at one of these things." This was not the only time that the

two of them heard offensive racial terms being used in camp among the soldiers. Cobbs noted that:

It is as though it became okay for them to use those terms since they were acting like they were in 1864. They all acted like they were transformed in time or something. It was very strange and [the language] bothered my fiancée a great deal. He thought they were all just plain crazy.

As in the above example, the majority of individuals Cobbs interviewed for her film were quite eager to discuss issues of Confederate memory with her and her fiancée as well as discuss the reasons for their participation in Confederate heritage celebrations and organizations. Barber in particular, she noted, saw her film as an opportunity to tell the message of the SCV in their own words without “the media” and others misrepresenting the organization and its causes. These particular interviews reveal many of the same discursive trends present within all neo-Confederate ideology including a preoccupation with defending the Confederate flag and disputing claims that their organizations have racist tendencies or pasts. Throughout her research program, she filmed over twenty personal interviews with re-enactors and heritage advocates throughout Virginia. During her interviews at reenactment camps, many of the participants commented positively on their roles as living historians for the public. Each of the re-enactors, for example, knew extensive details regarding the particular unit from the war that they were portraying as well as being versed in marching and drilling techniques. As in the hardcore re-enactors documented by Horowitz (1999), a desire for authenticity motivated the re-enactors to spend thousands of dollars buying “real” gear for their military fantasy weekends. One man from Illinois, part of a unit of re-enactors that chooses to portray the men from a Southern Illinois town that fought for the Confederacy in the 15<sup>th</sup> Tennessee, proudly displayed his Robert Miller Award that he received from the North South Skirmish Association for being the “most authentic” re-enactor that year.

A few of them admitted, however, that they participated in these engagements primarily for entertainment and for social reasons. Indeed, reenacting is a form of intense, military-like male bonding and a large number of re-enactors once served in the military (Cullen 1995). During the evening “camp life” sessions, men from all over the country live outside together for the weekend in an atmosphere akin to a Boy Scout retreat. When asked

why he chose to participate in a shooting event that required him to dress in period costuming, one man dressed in Confederate naval uniform actually stated that:

It's the shooting, it's fun. I'm also Southern, so that puts a lot of heritage into it. But it's also a big, huge social event. It's not just about wearing big funny hats...It's really just a shooting event and one of the requirements is getting all dressed up.

One of the more fascinating personal interviews conducted by Cobbs was with John Holland, the African-American Confederate re-enactor and SCV member who came to my class as part of the heritage presentation. Holland was the first man of color to become a member of the SCV in Virginia and one of only a handful of black members nationwide. The interview revealed Holland as a man refusing to acknowledge the obvious issues of race facing a black re-enactor or address whether or not he was used as the “token black” by these groups as part of a greater political project. Instead, he chose to frame his decision to join the SCV and participate in reenactments out of a desire to honor his ancestor who had “fought for the Confederacy” just like other white soldiers. During the interview, Holland revealed that his great-grandfather served as a teamster during the war, a wagon-master responsible for tending to horses and supply-trains. He never discussed whether or not his great-grandfather did this willingly or was forced into doing so as a result of enslavement. Instead, he offered to pull out a copy of a letter from the Confederate government that proved his ancestor had served the Confederacy “with honor” during the war.

Holland focused his comments on how much he had learned during his time as a re-enactor and SCV member. He stated that, “You really don't know how much you don't know until you start to study. I'm only just learning right now, it is a real learning experience. You begin to learn the truth.” The truth according to Holland followed the typical Lost Cause/SCV script of the war and its aftermath, that the South participated in a just defensive war and that the continued usage of the Confederate flag was justified and appropriate. Additionally, Holland's comments suggested that he reveled in his celebrity-like status within the organization, as he gleefully recounted how his marker dedication brought out the newspapers and the local news and that he kept all of the various things written and printed about him. Holland also revealed that his sister is a member of the UDC, though she quit attending their meetings some time ago. Without revealing what drove her to stop

celebrating her “Confederate heritage,” Holland cryptically replied that “the rest of family just looks at things differently than I do.”

As in the classroom presentation, a preoccupation of neo-Confederate groups with the Confederate flag led some respondents to discuss the symbol at length while on camera. As part of her extended defense of the usage of the Confederate flag, UDC member Gail Brown noted that, “If we had known what these people were going to do with it, someone certainly would have done something to stop them.” Additionally, many of the respondents discussed what motivated the men of the Confederacy to fight for the army. Brown commented that:

My ancestor was from the mountains of Patrick County...I doubt that he'd ever seen a black person before the war. He joined because men from the government came by and got the boys fired up to fight. He actually was eventually drafted into the war and wrote letters home about hating the war. He was a prisoner of war during much of it. He was not fighting for slavery. They all fought for what they believed in.

This response reveals an interesting and problematic economic and historical issue that few members of Confederate heritage organizations ever address and process adequately: If an ancestor had to be drafted or convinced to fight in a war that he likely did not support and did not enjoy participating in, why then continue to honor the government and the cause of slavery and states rights that led the Confederacy to conscript a poor mountain boy to fight against his will? Was her ancestor not a victim of his own poverty, a poor white farmer forced by wealthy members of the planter class to fight a war to protect a slave system for which he received little to no economic benefit? Though I am certainly not disputing the fact that the majority of Confederate soldiers joined the army willingly, it still can be argued that many of these conscripts were equally duped by their own government(s) into believing that they were primarily fighting a defensive war against Yankee invaders. They were most certainly not sold the defense of slavery as a motivating cause for battle and that their military service was required as a result of an ill-advised secessionist movement motivated by the economic interests of the powerful planter-class. Perhaps a more appropriate way for Brown to “honor her ancestor” would be for her to repudiate the government that forced her relative to fight an unjust war, not to claim that he fought for “what he believed in.” According to her own narrative, what her ancestor thought was the right thing to do was to not fight at all.

Not surprisingly, this particular critical reading of the Civil War past is not a popular one within neo-Confederate heritage organizations. During the same interview, Brown included the following remarks regarding what actually caused the war:

It was secession that caused the war. All the generals, from both the North and the South, learned at West Point that secession was okay and legal. Their ancestors had just fought a war of secession from Great Britain. What caused the war was when Lincoln realized all of the tax money that he would lose and he illegally invaded the South with 75,000 men.

This response from Brown deviates little from the approved neo-Confederate script regarding the Civil War past, a mythology that has changed little from the beginning of the Lost Cause movement in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also illustrates the extent to which members of these various heritage organizations become disciplined by these same heritage discourses over time. The responses from individuals like Holland, Brown, Barber and others throughout the film are eerily similar to each other, as if they were reading from the same heritage cue cards when asked to respond. Controversial issues like slavery, for example, are dismissed or deflected throughout the film either by refusing to address the issue critically or by claiming that slavery was not the real cause of the war. Instead, Lincoln emerges as the true villain for neo-Confederates, a tyrant that used slavery as an excuse for the destruction of a sovereign nation.

During my interview with her following the completion of the film, Cobbs reflected upon her experiences in the field and her relationship with members of these heritage groups. In doing so, she recognized the power of these neo-Confederate heritage discourses and practices to shape the minds of its members, as she found herself at times buying into their arguments and version of the “truth”. In this case, the UDC and SCV nearly “converted” an African-American graduate student to their particular viewpoint regarding heritage issues. This is despite the fact that Cobbs entered the project well-versed in these issues and fully expecting much of the pressure that she would eventually receive. Following reflection on her first edit, she chose to add a section in the film entitled “Another View” which included comments from her family members regarding Confederate heritage and the issues raised in the film.

At times I really found myself buying into it, especially since some of them were very nice to me. Because they had given me so much access, there was a kind of pressure to go along with what they were saying. There would have been no film without them. It took some reality checks for me to

think about why I as an African-American I was making this film. My dad and fiancée both wanted to make sure that I did not just glorify these guys...that the film did not just become a propaganda film for the UDC and the SCV. The final product now won't be what they [the SCV and UDC] wanted and were hoping for."

## **Chapter Eight: Mennonite and Brethren Memory of the Civil War Past**

### *Traces of Unionism and Resistance: Civil War Counter-Memory in Rockingham County*

The county of Rockingham, originally founded in 1778 from portions of Northern Augusta County, lies in the central portion of the Shenandoah Valley between the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains. Named for a British Lord who sympathized with the American Revolution, it is the third largest county by area in the entire state and contains seven incorporated towns (Bridgewater, Dayton, Mt. Crawford, Elkton, Grottoes, Broadway, and Timberville) as well as one large independent city (Harrisonburg). According to 2000 census data, the combined population of Rockingham County and Harrisonburg was 108,193, an increase of just over 10,000 persons from the 1990 census (Rockingham County, Virginia 2005). The area is home to three colleges and universities: James Madison University, Bridgewater College, and Eastern Mennonite, combining to provide employment to thousands of locals and with enrollments now exceeding well over 30,000 undergraduates. As a result of having a constant influx of young college students into the area, 36.2% of the 2000 population of Rockingham County and the city of Harrisonburg is under the age of 24 (Rockingham County, Virginia 2005).

Despite the presence of so many young people in the county, Harrisonburg and Bridgewater are not typical college towns. Rockingham County continues to have a primarily rural identity, one associated with the farming, dairy, and poultry industries. Like the rest of the Shenandoah Valley, the county historically served as an agricultural hearth region for the United States and later the Confederacy. Before the advent of winter resistant strains that allowed large-scale wheat and corn farming in the Midwest and Plain States, the area of Rockingham and Augusta once led the nation in wheat production during the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though less than 2% of the county's population listed farming as their primary occupation in the 2000 census, agriculture is still of critical importance to the area's cultural identity (Rockingham County, Virginia 2005). A drive around the by-ways of rural Rockingham County reveals an area still tied to its agricultural past. Pristine agricultural farms as well as dairy and poultry production sites dominate the rural landscape. Though suburban sprawl is beginning to be a problem in the suburbs outside of Harrisonburg, the majority of the county's rural land remains relatively untouched by development.

As noted by Hofstra (204, 330), the Shenandoah Valley never developed a major industrial base and the economy has remained largely agricultural. The cultural landscape of

the region, however, continues to change as a result of globalization and the accompanying Hispanic emigration into the county. The Hispanic population, which was a miniscule 512 in 1980, rose to 1,027 by 1990 and reached 5,801 by 2000 (Rockingham County, Virginia 2005). Given the fact that many of these individuals are transient migrant workers who are often difficult to tabulate during census takings, it can also be assumed that this number might actually be much lower than the actual Hispanic population in the area. The majority of these Hispanic immigrants take up jobs within the largest and most important industry within the county: poultry processing. As is the case with Hispanic communities throughout the rural South, this new group of migrant laborers faces hostility and opposition from hostile local racist anti-immigrant organizations. Neo-Nazis, for example, protested the 2006 Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester with an anti-immigrant rally (Winchester Star 2006). Similarly, the neo-Confederate hate group the League of the South- which has an active chapter in Harrisonburg and held its state convention in 2004 in Lexington- describes its view on Hispanic immigration in the South in the following way: “The League of the South stands against illegal immigration and the liberal-socialist nightmare of multiculturalism. We believe that most Southerners do also” (League of the South 2002). The main topic at the 2004 convention of Lexington was the Hispanic presence in the Shenandoah Valley, particularly how Hispanic gangs have supposedly infiltrated the once peaceful white region. The group circulated the following advertisement for the conference (Little Geneva 2004):

This year our topic will be illegal immigration, its impact on Virginia and the rest of the South. Illegal immigration is drastically changing western Virginia. Harrisonburg’s public schools are now over 30% Hispanic. This number is increasing exponentially. As reported in the August 15, 2004, New York Times Magazine, “Hillbangers” have arrived in the Shenandoah Valley. “Hillbangers” are members of Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, a large street gang of El Salvadorans. An MS-13, 17-year-old female gang member was found murdered, gang style, in Shenandoah County, in July 2003. Local law enforcement agencies throughout the Valley have officers investigating alien gang activities.

Is immigration a force of nature or a political force? Can a world wide war on terrorism be fought with a border open to massive illegal immigration?

Come join the Virginia League of the South as we discuss these issues. Featured speakers will include a former INS Special Agent, an immigration control group director, and Dr. Michael Hill, President, League of the South. [And Harry Seabrook, world-famous raconteur and gadfly, renowned in poetry and legend, etc.]

It is this same “hillbanger” labor that now toils daily on the assembly lines of the Valley’s most profitable industry- poultry processing. Rockingham County claims to be the “Poultry Capital of the United States” and located along Rte. 11 at the northern and southern portions of the county line are bronze statues of turkeys claiming this distinction. Locally-based Pilgrim’s Pride, which includes the Wampler Foods poultry division, employs between 1,500 and 2,500 people in its processing plants. Similarly, both Perdue Farms and the giant Arkansas based Tyson Foods operate significant poultry processing plants in the area. As a college student at James Madison University, one of my earliest and most distinct memories of the area was the smell that seems to pervade all parts of the county. The smell, a strong and distinct odor that is reminiscent of dog food, is actually the ever-present odor of corn-based poultry feed emanating out from the giant silos used to store food for regional poultry plants and dairy farms.

The importance of agriculture, dairy, and poultry in the region is not a recent development. Indeed, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Shenandoah Valley’s prosperous farms made it one of the most important agricultural areas in the United States. Before the advent of winter wheat would shift the wheat belt into the interior states of the country during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Valley region was the most important wheat producing area in the United States (Hofstra 2004, 330). It owed much of this development as a “wheat heartland” to technology invented by a native son of the Valley, Rockbridge County resident Cyrus McCormick. McCormick’s mechanical reaper, which was invented in 1831, made manual wheat harvesters obsolete and allowed farmers in the Valley to grow thousands of acres more of grain than previously possible. As the primary commodity of the Valley region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a whole range of ancillary economic activities emerged which supported the wheat-based economy including milling centers, transportation workers, and artisan bakers. As a result, the regional dependence on wheat at the time of the Civil War was such that, according to Hofstra (2004, 329), “The world of wheat touched virtually every aspect of life in the region.”

Following the secession of Virginia in 1861, the Shenandoah Valley became the major agricultural supplier for the Southern Army, making the region highly contested military terrain. The Valley faced a near constant threat of invasion from Union forces intent on destroying a significant portion of the so-called “Breadbasket of the Confederacy.” Confederate forces under Stonewall Jackson, as part of his famed and mythologized Valley

Campaign, defeated Union forces in June of 1862 at two separate battlefields within the county- Cross Keys and Port Republic. After years of neglect, portions of these two battlefields are now preserved under the auspices of the Virginia Civil War Trails project and the non-profit Shenandoah Battlefields National Historic District. Additionally, a smaller battle waged as part of the same campaign at Harrisonburg resulted in the death of Confederate General Turner Ashby. Ashby, sometimes referred to as the Black Knight of the Confederacy as a result of his daring raids against Union forces, gained prestige as perhaps the most feared Confederate partisan leader in the central Shenandoah Valley. He remains a highly mythologized and commemorated figure within Rockingham County. A small monument, located at the site where he received his mortal wound in Harrisonburg, continues to be tended by local UDC women. Additionally, a county high school bears his name.



Figure 8.1  
 Site of Meigs' Killing  
 A site in Rockingham County near the spot where a Union officer and favorite confidant of General Sheridan, Lt. John Rogers Meigs, was killed by marauding Confederate forces in 1864 (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).

Figure 8.2  
 John Heatwole  
 John Heatwole, the local historian who led the 2004 Valley Burning Tour sponsored by the Civil War Education Association, a heritage tourism company based in Winchester, VA (Crossroads Heritage Center).

Two years after Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign and the death of Ashby, Union General Philip Sheridan's army began an extended campaign in the autumn of 1864 to

destroy the agricultural capacity of the Shenandoah Valley. I attended a heritage tour focused on this campaign in the fall of 2004, sponsored by the Winchester based Civil War Education Association. Led by local amateur historian John Heatwole, whose book *The Burning* (1998) documents the destruction of the region at the hands of Sheridan's forces, the two-day tour included bus trips throughout rural Rockingham County to visit specific farms and mills destroyed by Union forces. Though nowhere near as publicized or discussed as Sherman's legendary March through Georgia, Sheridan's destruction of portions of the Valley may actually have been more significant in terms of civilian destruction than that fabled raid. Heatwole notes that because of the concentrated civilian population of the Valley that, "[the destruction] was far more intense in the Valley...Sheridan had burned a swath in the Valley that had no peer in any other area of civilian population during the war" (Heatwole 1998, XI). According to Heatwole's archival research (1998, 192), during a period lasting from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 11<sup>th</sup> Union forces burned, carried off, or destroyed the following goods and structures within Rockingham County alone: 30 houses, 450 barns, 31 mills, 100,000 bushels of wheat, 50,000 bushels of corn, 1,750 cattle, and 3,350 hogs.



Figure 8.3

Shenandoah Farm Landscape

A contemporary landscape shot of the Johannas Garber farm in southern Shenandoah County. Garber was an elder in the early Mennonite Church during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and his farm is typical of the Mennonite farms in the area (Crossroads Heritage Center).

Of the many civilians who lost almost everything as a result of Sheridan's Burning, a large percentage of them came from the county's original minority communities: the Mennonites and Brethren. Like the present day Hispanic community, much of the agricultural labor within the Valley during the 19<sup>th</sup> century came from a group of "foreigners" located outside of mainstream, Anglo-Virginia culture. I was certainly well aware of the presence of a still sizable Mennonite and Brethren presence in the county

during my time as an undergraduate at JMU, as you could not help but notice a group of people dressed in very traditional clothing and the presence of the occasional horse-drawn buggy along rural roads in the region. Their tragic history during the Civil War, however, was completely unknown to me until the Burning Tour. As part of the tour, we visited a number of the Mennonite and Brethren farms completely destroyed by the Union army during the burning campaign. These highly-religious people of German descent, most of them farmers and committed pacifists, suffered incredible property losses estimated at over \$2 million as a result of burning campaigns.<sup>140</sup>

Following the conclusion of the campaign, a large number of the Mennonites and Brethren still remaining in the area became refugees and subsequently fled North with the Union army. Sheridan himself reported over 400 wagonloads of Mennonite/Brethren refugees, most of them from Rockingham County, followed his army seeking aid and protection in October and November of 1864. Despite the fact that Mennonite and Brethren communities suffered greatly during the war, I soon learned that, apart from Heatwole's study, very little scholarship existed regarding their history of suffering during the Civil War. Indeed, it seemed curious why these particular stories of civilian suffering remained relatively unknown within popular historical discourse, particularly when both fictional and narrative accounts of the civilian destruction caused by the "villainous" Sherman while on the March to Sea remain such a part of Confederate lore and mythology to this day.

This chapter is a critical and archival examination of this relatively unknown and understudied portion of regional Civil War history, the story of the resistance and suffering of Valley Mennonites and Brethren Unionists. The chapter focuses specifically on the Anabaptist communities in Rockingham County which during the Civil War era contained the largest number of Brethren and Mennonite families within the Shenandoah Valley and the entire Southern states. Unlike the other chapters in this dissertation, this discrete intervention does not attempt to uncover, critically engage, and ultimately oppose Lost Cause discourse. Instead, this chapter is an attempt to expose discursive and material examples of counter-memory, of particular heterogeneous Civil War narratives that complicate and undermine the long-standing prevalence of Lost Cause orthodoxy in this

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<sup>140</sup> Data comes from the Rockingham County Heritage Center exhibit on the impact of the Civil War within the area. 6 October, 2005.

part of Virginia. In doing so, I rely upon the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault and his Nietzschean influenced commentaries on counter-memory and popular memory. Foucault's work in this area provides a way of understanding both how counter-memory should be understood, as well as suggesting how researchers might employ stories of counter-memory as opposition to dominant and powerful modes of remembering.

Since first learning the story of Mennonite/Brethren suffering during the Burning of 1864, I subsequently discovered that as a result of their pacifism and anti-slavery beliefs, members of the community experienced years of torment, intimidation, and derision prior to Sheridan's raid at the hands of state and local Confederate sympathizers. These stories of Unionist civilian suffering in Rockingham County began to surface outside of local oral history only recently, mainly through the efforts of two local amateur historians David Rodes and Norman Wenger. These two Mennonite men, with the support of the local Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, began an extensive archival project in the autumn of 1998 to document Mennonite and Brethren suffering during the Civil War. This chapter contains interviews with both men, as well as with the director of the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Center, regarding their project and their particular motivations for undertaking it.<sup>141</sup> Additionally, I reference archival histories uncovered by Rodes and Wenger during their research, some of which is now published by Penobscot Press as part of a two (soon to be three) volume series entitled *Unionists and The Civil War Experience In the Shenandoah Valley*.

The analysis in this chapter relies upon the extensive archival work undertaken by individuals other than myself, particularly the research of Heatwole, Wenger, and Rodes. These three men have spent massive amounts of time in historical archives, organized conferences and tours on local history, spoken at local heritage groups, and generally given up countless hours with little to no financial benefit in an effort to publicize these hidden and repressed Civil War histories of Rockingham County. It is my goal in this chapter to make their efforts known on a wider scale and to provide a Foucauldian derived theoretical framework that might be useful as a way of framing their work as conscious and meaningful acts of counter-memory and resistance. Ultimately, these individuals deserve credit for their willingness to both oppose Lost Cause mythology and to provide a more complete and diverse understanding of how the Civil War affected local citizens then previously existed.

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<sup>141</sup> My personal interview with Rodes and Wenger took place on 6 October, 2005.

They also provide examples of how particular individuals, often operating outside of traditional academic knowledge production, can through their family and folk stories sustain and circulate local counter-memories over a long period of time.

We should not be deceived into thinking that this heritage is an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath...the search for descent is not the erecting of foundations; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself (Foucault 1977, 146-147).

The above quote from Michel Foucault comes from his essay entitled “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” contained within the collection *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. In this essay, Foucault introduces the concept of counter or popular memory to his earlier work focused on archival and genealogical approaches to historical research. Consistent with his other work, Foucault’s writings on memory highlight his skepticism regarding disciplinary and moralizing concepts, such truth and tradition, which he traces to the Enlightenment era. To Foucault, no one group or person possesses a claim on history. He instead stresses the plurality of the past and the often random, disperse, and chaotic assemblages of events that combine to form the multi-layered memories of past acts of domination and power (Foucault 1977, 150). He also recognized the importance of collective memory in establishing resistance movements against practices of domination and power, arguing that “memory is actually a very important factor in struggle...really, in fact, struggles develop in a kind of conscious moving forward of history” (Foucault 1989, 124).

In an interview entitled “Popular Memory and Film,” Foucault (1989, 123) describes popular memory as a type of localized, communal knowledge from individuals previously “barred from writing, from producing their books themselves, from drawing up their own historical accounts. According to Foucault, “these people nevertheless do have a way of recording history, of remembering or of keeping it fresh and using it” (Foucault 1989, 123). More often than not, these accounts describe “histories of struggle” which have been purposefully excluded by bourgeois society in an effort to deny the existence of struggles throughout history (Foucault 1989, 126). According to this methodological approach, scholars of collective memory and history should attempt to uncover “subjugated histories” of struggle and exclusion as part of their research program. Once revealed, these long

suppressed and marginalized histories can serve to oppose the frequently deployed dominant, nationalist discursive memories. Counter-memories also offer a vision into the traces of the past stressing its complexity, nuance, and the heterogeneity of opinions and ideas present in past eras. In doing so, history as counter-memory rejects Enlightenment truths and nationalist dogma in favor of stories of oppression and resistance to power.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the white supremacist and pro-Confederate discourses of Lost Cause mythology continue to strongly influence Civil War remembrance throughout the Shenandoah Valley. Though much of the more virulent strains of the Lost Cause disappeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of nationalist fueled reconciliation, powerful elements of Lost Cause mythology continue to be disseminated and perpetuated by heritage discourses present in museums, material texts, Hollywood films, heritage organizations, and regional performative practices such as theatrical productions and Civil War reenactments. This Lost Cause version of the Civil War stresses the virtues of the noble Southern soldiers engaged in a national defensive war against the presence of Yankee invaders from the Northern states. Any individual or group from the time period who might have been against secession and the practice of slavery is excluded from this Confederate nationalist version of the Civil War. In a Foucauldian sense, a good deal of the archival histories regarding the anti-Confederate and anti-secession communities in the South remain hidden to public memory.

The majority of scholarship that is engaged in serious explorations into traces of Unionism and anti-secession within the American South during the Civil War has taken place within the last decade. Though Lost Cause advocates often used the division of the South as an excuse to explain why the South lost the war, relatively little research into those actual divisions took place until fairly recently. Neo-Confederate historians, for example, have not been particularly interested in promoting the actions of “traitors” to the Southern cause during the war. Much of the new scholarship into Southern Unionism and anti-secession communities analyzes divisions caused by the Civil War within the mountainous regions of Southern Appalachia, isolated areas where pre-war tensions regarding slavery and secession led to protracted acts of violence and bitterness stretching throughout the war years. Recent works such as *The Secret of War* (2004) and *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia* (2000), for example, explore the divisive internal debates concerning secession and

subsequent home-front violence between Unionists and Confederates within the mountains of Western Northern Carolina.

This fledgling academic research in the divisive Civil War years within Southern Appalachia can somewhat be explained by the popularity of Charles Frazier's best selling and award winning novel *Cold Mountain* (1997).<sup>142</sup> The book, set in the mountains of Western North Carolina near Asheville, is a tragic love story involving the return of a Confederate deserter named Inman. He flees a Confederate field hospital on foot, fed up with war and fighting for a Southern cause to which he never fully subscribed. Inman eventually returns home, following a series of Homeric style adventures and tribulations, to the Cold Mountain in an attempt to find his long-lost pre-war love. In the tradition of epic tragic heroes, he dies protecting his love Ada from the evil home guard Confederates who tracked down and kill Confederate deserters. Though the massive popularity of the book and the later Hollywood film adaptation is no doubt due to its usage of time honored plot themes of tragic love and romantic heroism, it did succeed in bringing issues of Southern Unionism and pre-war division regarding secession into popular discourse. Both the book and the film, however, received criticism from some African-American reviewers for its refusal to directly confront issues of slavery and racism in the Southern states (Katz 2004; Dellums 2004).

Despite this recent interest in the exploration of Civil War Unionism in Appalachia, the topic remains relatively unexplored in regards to the particular regions of Virginia that remained loyal to the Confederacy during the war. Apart from Chase, Lee, and Mahon's (2002) compilation of Confederate and Unionist diaries in Winchester and Edward Ayers (2001) analysis of pre-war tensions and factions within Augusta County, very little scholarship exists regarding Unionism and anti-secessionist voices in the Shenandoah Valley.<sup>143</sup> This may in part be due to the overwhelming numbers of pro-secession votes cast during the referendum on secession in May of 1861, a result which might suggest that little to no opposition to secession actually existed within this part of Virginia. The vote in Augusta County, for example, was 3,130 for secession and only 10 casting votes against secession. Citizens of Page County similarly voted 1,099 to 4 for secession, with Greene

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<sup>142</sup> Frazier received the National Book Award for *Cold Mountain* in November of 1997. According to Minzesheimer (2004), the book spent 45 weeks on the *New York Times* best seller list and ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the USA Today's list of the best selling books of the decade from 1994-2004.

<sup>143</sup> By this, I am referring to studies not focused on Unionism in the counties of West Virginia, which seceded from the state of Virginia in 1863 after two years of Union military occupation. For a provocative study on West Virginia during the Civil War, see Shaffer (2003).

County voting 604 to 0 for leaving the Union. As dramatically featured in Lost Cause film *Gods and Generals*, voters in Rockbridge County, home to VMI and Professor Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, went to the polls and voted 1,728 to 1 for secession. Finally, within Rockingham County the vote for secession resulted in 3,012 votes for secession and only 22 against (Virginia Civil War Home Page 2005). With such overwhelming numbers favoring secession throughout the Shenandoah Valley, the area seems statistically to have been a stalwart haven of Confederate support and nationalism.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 8.4 Turner's Grain Mill</p> <p>Turner's Grain Mill, built in 1804 by Mennonite Abraham Brenneman. The building has been recently restored and is part of the Crossroads Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 8.5 Working the Fields</p> <p>Mennonite women working in the fields as they have for over 200 years in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>
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As is often the case, however, statistics alone do not tell the entire story of Unionism and anti-secessionism within the Shenandoah Valley. Prior to the onset of the conflict, elders and lay people within the Mennonite and Brethren Communities of the Shenandoah Valley spoke out in their churches and meeting halls against slavery and secessionism (Rodes and Wenger 2003). At the time of secession, these two communities had been in Rockingham County and the Central Shenandoah Valley for almost one-hundred years, following a large scale exodus out of overcrowded communities in Eastern Pennsylvania and Northern Maryland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (MacMaster 1985, 132). They originally came to the United States from Germany seeking religious freedom and attracted by the promise of cheap, arable land. The vast majority of Mennonites and Brethren in Rockingham County

were farmers, operating a few of the largest and most prosperous wheat and dairy farms in the area.

Like other Germanic settlers in the Valley, many Mennonite and Brethren families Anglicized their surnames in an attempt to avoid discrimination from their English speaking Brethren, many of whom mistrusted German immigrants as a result of their abolitionist tendencies and because thousands of German mercenary soldiers (the so-called Hessians) served in the British army during the Revolutionary War (Wayland 1907). Mueller families, for example, commonly became Millers in an effort to hide Germanic ancestry. Despite these attempts by some German Anabaptists to hide their German roots, the communities did not completely abandon their German cultural heritage. According to John Wayland, a prominent early historian of the Shenandoah Valley, “the preaching and singing” at church services was almost exclusively in German until the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wayland 1907, 120).

Like the Amish, the Mennonite and Brethren faiths had roots in German forms of Anabaptism, a Protestant sect opposed to all forms of war and the practice of slavery. In describing the abolitionist beliefs within both communities, Wayland (1907, 181) states that, “They looked upon the owning and trading of slaves as a breach upon their creed and discipline; and even the hiring of a slave was forbidden by their general conference.” As a result of these particular religious and political stances, both communities of the Southern Shenandoah Valley stood well outside of the mainstream of Southern cultural and political life at the time of the Civil War (Rodes and Wenger 2003, 11). Additionally, their German cultural heritage also marked them as different from their Anglophile neighbors. Despite their long history in the Valley, the Mennonite and Brethren became “foreigners” who were not to be completely trusted. By the onset of the Civil War, they made up the largest community of anti-slavery Anabaptists located anywhere within the Confederate States of America (Rodes and Wenger, 11).

Given the strong Unionist and anti-slavery beliefs of the Mennonites and Brethren, the overwhelming vote for secession within the counties of the southern Shenandoah Valley is somewhat surprising. The population of Anabaptists in the region, for example, was certainly large enough at the time of the Civil War to have influenced the anti-secession vote totals in both Rockingham and Augusta Counties. It is important to note, however, that Mennonites and Brethren did not actively participate in local, state, or federal governance

and generally refrained from voting in most elections (Rodes and Wenger 2003, 9). Anabaptist doctrine considered engaging in government activities to be a “worldly” endeavor, something which had little to do with doing God’s prescribed work on earth. Though thousands of Mennonites and Brethren throughout the region opposed secession on religious grounds, many of them did not actually cast votes opposing it during the 1861 referendum due to these same Anabaptist principles.

The unwillingness of Mennonites and Brethren to vote cannot, however, be simply explained by religious opposition to the practices of governance. According to oral history within both communities, a large percentage of local Anabaptist men felt that it was their religious duty to oppose slavery and support the Union as actively as possible.<sup>144</sup> This new activism included going against religious tradition by casting votes in the referendum against secession in the 1861 referendum. In doing so, they would out themselves publicly as Unionists within a state clearly on the brink of joining the Confederacy. The relatively few numbers of “no” votes in Rockingham and Augusta counties suggests that only a few local Anabaptists actually went to the polls and cast votes against secession. The necessary empirical evidence to prove widespread Unionism before and after the war within the Anabaptists of the southern Valley did not seem to exist. The history of anti-secessionism in this part of Virginia remained almost exclusively the domain of oral history, stories passed on by elders to new generations of Mennonites and Brethren.

Oral histories of civilian suffering within these communities, much of it as a result of Sheridan’s Burning Campaign in 1864, similarly remained somewhat unexplored by Civil War historians and scholars more interested in writing additional volumes on the military heroes and epic battles of the war. As previously mentioned in this chapter, local amateur historian John Heatwole began the first serious research project into stories of the civilian suffering as a result of Sheridan’s 1864 campaign during the late 1990’s. I first learned of Heatwole’s knowledge of local oral history as a result of attending the Valley Burning Tour, sponsored by the Winchester based tour company the Civil War Education Association, which he led in October of 2004. A sculptor and woodcarver by trade, Heatwole became interested in the Civil War as a result of growing up in the Shenandoah Valley and from the stories told within his own family regarding his ancestral ties to the conflict. He served as

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<sup>144</sup> Personal Interview with Rodes and Wenger, 6 October, 2005.

past president of the Shenandoah Valley Civil War Roundtable and also served as the major historian for the Shenandoah Battlefields Commission.

As part of the tour, Heatwole presented a slide-show to the group in an effort to provide background information to the group before we began our bus tour of important sites in the Burning of the Valley the next morning. His presentation, which drew largely on work presented in his book *The Burning*, combined empirical data acquired from local county records and unpublished family archives with oral histories of the Valley still told within some Mennonite and Brethren families. In his preface to *The Burning*, Heatwole (1998, xi-xii) discusses his use of oral history as research in the study:

Some of the oral history passed down by Shenandoah Valley civilians most properly belongs in the realm of folklore because of embellishments that may have been added through the years, yet it is included here because it retains the echoes of the original emotions experienced by those who first related it. I suggest that oral history has its place in this setting, since there are few contemporary or first person accounts from the civilians who were burned out...to rely too heavily on the dusty tomes that have been used traditionally as references for the accounts of this campaign would have resulted in another book told mainly from the point of view of the military.

Though he clearly recognizes the limits of oral history for scholarly work, Heatwole also recognizes the value of such accounts in creating a more diverse and heterogeneous account of the Civil War history in the region. His use of oral accounts in the study can be seen as a beginning in the process of a retelling of Shenandoah Valley Civil War history from the 'bottom-up'. As noted by Pearson (1999) in his Foucauldian analysis of memories of Little Bighorn, the "recording" of a whole range of popular histories of resistance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century often took place in non-written form such as songs, extended anecdotes, and family lore (Misztal 2003, 62). Unlike the official military accounts of Sheridan's campaign, which detailed all of the military engagements occurring during his raid, these oral histories within the local Anabaptist communities detailing civilian suffering became marginalized by professional historians and relegated to the status of legend and myth. Like most examples of counter-memory, these stories of Mennonite and Brethren suffering during the Civil War would likely have remained Rockingham County oral history if not for Heatwole's textual account.

During a conversation with Heatwole while at a lunch break during the tour, he placed himself firmly in the reconciliationist tradition of Civil War memory. Following this

tradition, a fusion between Lost Cause mythology and the Northern Cause Victorious, he believes men of both sides deserve honor and respect as American heroes. He does not, however, support the divisive strain of the Lost Cause prevalent within contemporary neo-Confederate groups. He noted to me that, "I would not dishonor my eleven ancestors that fought for the Confederacy by suggesting that they did not know that the war involved supporting the institution of slavery." As a result of his status as one of the preeminent Civil War scholars in the Central Shenandoah Valley, Heatwole receives a number of invitations to organize tours for heritage tourists and to speak at local Civil War groups and events. Because of their rabid interest in Civil War heritage, many of these events involve members of local neo-Confederate heritage groups including the SCV and Nathan Bedford Forrest Society. This has resulted in the need for what he calls "a truce" between Lost Causers and reconciliation types within the Valley so that both sides can attend to their common interests in heritage tourism, Civil War history, and battlefield preservation.

This truce, however, occasionally breaks down and results in conflict between the moderates and more radical neo-Confederate groups. On the bus, he offered to the group that, "Unlike most people interested in the Civil War in this area, I don't care for George Bush. I'm also sure most SCV types also don't appreciate that I think Lincoln is the greatest ever American president." He also later recollected to me that before one meeting of local neo-Confederates in which he was to give a talk, "A group actually gave Nazi salutes before speaking. I no longer speak before any SCV groups and I once refused to sign books at a local Civil War bookstore because they had a speaker associated with the League of the South."<sup>145</sup> During his local radio show on Civil War history, Heatwole occasionally receives calls from radical neo-Confederates, including the local Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, critical of his moderate positions on the Civil War and for his research into the "community of Unionist traitors."

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<sup>145</sup> I further discuss this particular store in the conclusion.

*The Archives of Mennonite and Brethren Memory*

Similar to John Heatwole, Norman R. Wenger and David Rodes grew up in Rockingham County during the 1960's and heard many of the stories of their ancestors suffering during the Civil War later as children. Like many young boys in the Valley, they became particularly interested in Civil War history. Their interest in the Civil War, however, deviated from the usual script regarding male adolescent interest in histories of warfare. Unlike most men interested primarily in accounts detailing epic battles, devastating weapons, and mythologized heroes, Rodes and Wenger's interest in the Civil War was personally connected to their own Mennonite identity. As Mennonites, they felt like outsiders in a region that, despite their relatively large numbers and a long local history, still viewed them with a mix of suspicion and curiosity. They became particularly interested in the local Mennonite oral histories which detailed the repression faced by their Mennonite ancestors as a result of their Unionist beliefs.

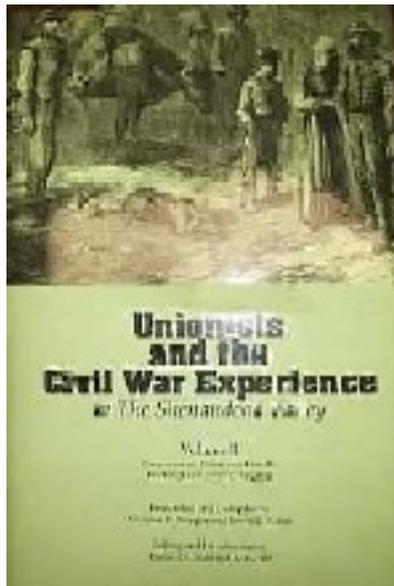
During my interview in October 2005 with both men, which took place over lunch in a family-restaurant in the small Rockingham County farm town of Dayton, they reflected upon their Mennonite upbringing and interest in the Civil War. Rodes recounted a story told to him by his grandmother illustrating the "hard feelings" still present in the area decades after the end of the Civil War as a result of Anabaptist Unionism and anti-slavery during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He noted that, "My grandmother was told growing up by some locals that the Mennonites were lower than *niggers* as far as they were concerned. We were trash to them, all of which traces to the Civil War period."<sup>146</sup> Indeed, Wenger noted that, because of the painful and divisive nature of the Civil War era, "Many Mennonite families refused to talk about their ancestors experiences during the war at all. Many of the stories of our community were lost in this part of Virginia and Rockingham County."

Their original adolescent interest in these forgotten Anabaptist stories of the Civil War era led to a life-long archival project undertaken by both men. Reflecting upon their research project, Wenger stated that, "We wanted to know about how pervasive Unionism actually was in Rockingham County. Personally, it was important to me to explore these connections with Unionism in my family as well. It became important for us to find the history that was not being told." With help from local historian and retired Bridgewater

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<sup>146</sup> Wenger noted during his personal interview that this was the word that was used to humiliate and degrade his grandmother, not his own choice of offensive terminology regarding local African-Americans.

Professor Dr. Emmert Bittinger and funding from the Mennonite/Brethren Heritage Center, the two men began an ongoing archival research project in 1998. Both men hold full-time jobs in the Rockingham County area and participated in the project during their own free time. Though Wenger went to college and graduate school, Rodes only finished high school and had no training in formal academic research or writing. The research, which culminated in the publication of their three volume book *Unionists and the Civil War Experience*, recounts the experience of Unionists in the southern portion of the Shenandoah Valley and Rockingham County.



<p>Figure 8.6</p> <p>Cover of Rodes' and Wenger Study</p> <p>The front cover of Volume II of Wenger and Rodes' book <i>Unionists and the Civil War Experience</i> (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>	<p>Figure 8.7</p> <p>Wenger and Rodes Lecture</p> <p>Authors Norman Wenger (foreground) and David Rodes speak to tour participants about their research on Mennonite and Unionist memory (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>
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The majority of information published in their books are unedited transcriptions of previously unpublished archival data found buried within the stacks of the National Archives in Washington D.C. This archival data, which was nearly destroyed by decades of decay and neglect, recorded the testimony of southern Shenandoah Valley Unionists at the 1871 Southern Claims Commission. The commission collected testimonies from Unionists throughout the Southern states, all of whom came before Congress seeking redress for the destruction of their property during the Civil War. In doing so, they attempted to prove

their loyalty to the Union to a commission skeptical of their motivations and hesitant to dole out money to what could be ex-Confederates seeking compensation despite their acts of traitorous secession. The testimonies reveal multiple tales of Rockingham County families, the majority of whom came from the Anabaptist community, attempting to prove their loyalty to the commission by recounting incidents of suffering and intimidation during the Civil War era. They provide a rich and revealing pool of research data documenting incidents of Civil War era suffering, resistance, and intimidation faced by a historically marginalized group of people.

Within the thousands of pages of testimony before the commission transcribed in their books, Wenger and Rodes highlighted two important new empirical discoveries uncovered in their research not previously accounted for by local historians. The first was the widespread irregularity in regards to the pre-war vote for secession throughout Rockingham County. As previously mentioned, Anabaptists at the time of the Civil War generally abstained from voting and in participating in acts of governance due to religious reasons.<sup>147</sup> The threat of Civil War and secession, however, influenced many Mennonites and Brethren throughout the Valley to reconsider this stance and possibly cast votes against secession. As related to me during their interview, they discovered in their research that local pro-Confederate politicians and activists actively attempted to persuade the Anabaptist community that not voting would actually be in their best interests as pacifists. In other words, the argument made by local secessionists was that secession would actually prevent civil war from actually occurring. According to Rodes, “They were told that you need that either not voting or voting for secession would be in their best interests, as Lincoln would never invade Virginia if there was strong support for the Confederacy throughout the state.” According to their research, such logic helps explain why some 1,500 Mennonite and Brethren men casting votes for secession in the referendum within Rockingham County alone.

Additionally, the testimony discovered by Wenger and Rodes suggests that widespread acts of intimidation against prospective Mennonite and Brethren voters also kept the vote total against secession low in Rockingham County. One simple way voters faced intimidation at the polls centered on the practice of voting at that time. Local voters cast

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<sup>147</sup> This tenet ended soon after the Civil War and now Mennonites, Quakers and Brethren are very active politically, particularly in regards to issues of human rights and conflict resolution.

their decision in the referendum by means of an oral vote in front of local officials. There were no secret ballots and however a man voted in the election was soon known throughout the community. Since acts of violence and vandalism were already occurring throughout the Shenandoah Valley and the entire South against Unionists and anti-slavery activists, it took a great deal of courage to even consider voting against secession when your vote was, in essence, publicly offered and recorded. The testimony offered by some Unionist claimants before the 1871 suggests that many men actually changed their votes at the ballot box as a result of the intense peer pressure for secession and fear for the safety of their families. Because of this, Wenger noted to me his belief that had a fair and secret vote actually taken place in Rockingham County, the vote in the area would have been “very close. It certainly would not have been the slam dunk for secession that it turned out to be.”



Figure 8.8

Conscription Reenactment

A reenactment during the 2005 Ashes and Tears Tour of Confederate officers arriving at local Mennonite and Brethren churches demanding conscription (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006)

Figure 8.9

Gabe and Heatwole House

The Dr. Gabe and Margaret Heatwole House, one of the many local houses used to hide draft resisters from the Mennonite and Brethren communities during the Civil War (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).

The issue of how each claimant voted in the secession referendum proved to be of critical importance to commission officials in many of the accounts included in Wenger and Rodes’ collection. As each claimant had to prove their loyalty to the Union to the commission, the easiest way for presiding officials to measure their commitment to Unionism was through assessing how they voted in the referendum. A person that voted against secession, for example, could almost immediately prove their loyalty to the

commission and their subsequent claims for compensation usually received favorable consideration by the committee. However, respondents who chose not to vote or, as a result of intimidation, actually cast votes for secession faced almost impossible odds in their quest to prove their Unionism to the commission.

The only chance many claimants had to prove their loyalty and gain financial compensation was by offering compelling evidence of voter intimidation or threats of violence issued by pro-Confederate supporters. The testimony of Anthony Rhodes, a farmer from outside of Mt. Crawford, is one example from the Rodes and Wenger's published transcripts of how local Mennonites and Brethren attempted to prove their loyalty to the Union before the commission. In testifying before Commissioner Ferris, he noted that, "I didn't think it was safe not to vote. I did not intend to vote at all, but all the people around there threatened me, and said I had better vote" (quoted in Wenger and Rodes 2004, 575). Mr. Rhodes' claim was ultimately rejected by the commission, doomed as a result of the fact that he could not offer compelling evidence that he truly was loyal to the Union and had once sold wheat and a horse to the Confederate Army during the war. His fate was a typical one, as the vast majority of Mennonite and Brethren claimants ultimately failed to obtain financial compensation from the United States Government.

In addition to the testimonial support for long-standing anecdotal claims of Mennonite and Brethren voter intimidation, Wenger highlighted another significant finding from their research. The testimony of many claimants revealed the existence of an organized and effective Underground Railroad within these communities, designed to transport draft resisters to Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Similar to the system used to transport thousands of runaway slaves from the South to Northern towns, the "railroad" relied upon safe-houses which sheltered individuals wanted by local authorities. The existence of the railroad, organized in a manner similar to the model used to free thousands of enslaved African-American from the South in the years prior to the Civil War, was something of a legend within the Mennonite-Brethren community that had never been empirically supported prior to the uncovering of the 1871 commission testimony.

The need for an Underground Railroad resulted from a change in Confederate law during the last two years of the war. In April of 1862, the Confederate States of America passed their first Conscription Act in an effort to bolster the ranks of their army. The legislation did not include any provision for conscientious objectors opposed to the war for

moral and religious reasons. Men from the Mennonite and Brethren communities faced conscription despite their widespread objects to the war and Southern slaveholding. A Confederate Home Guard unit actually imprisoned local Brethren elder John Kline and other local Anabaptists in both Harrisonburg and Richmond’s infamous Libby Prison for six weeks for refusing military service. Local religious leaders went to Richmond to argue against this provision and eventually persuaded the Confederate Congress in October of 1862 to amend the law to allow conscientious objects to pay \$500 for substitutes to take their place on the conscription rolls. Mennonite and Brethren churches throughout the Valley collected money for two years to help pay for these substitutes and also appeased Confederate officials by allowing some of their young men to serve in the Confederate army as non-combatants.



<p>Figure 8.10</p> <p>John Kline Gravestone</p> <p>The grave of the Elder John Kline, assassinated by Confederate home guard for his outspoken pacifist and anti-conscription beliefs (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>	<p>Figure 8.11</p> <p>John Kline Murder Marker</p> <p>A marker just south of Broadway, VA near route Route 42 noting the spot of Kline’s murder (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>
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Two years later and facing an acute manpower shortage, the Confederate Congress revoked the conscientious objector clause in their 1864 Conscription Act. Local home guards and bushwhackers again targeted Valley Brethren and Mennonites for imprisonment and forced military service. They targeted the outspoken Kline and assassinated him outside of the town of Broadway in the northern part of Rockingham County on June 15, 1864. Kline became a martyr for conscientious objectors in the region and his death, along with other incidents of brutality against local pacifists, led to the organization of the Underground

Railroad. Descriptions of the railroad appear throughout the testimonies of the 1871 claimants. A deposition from Unionist Henry L. Rodes, a farmer from the Muddy Creek area of Rockingham County, attempted to prove the loyalty to the Union of a neighbor claimant as a result of his participation in the shielding of runaway pacifists from Confederate forces (Rodes and Wenger 2003, 171):

I have known the claimant from boyhood...he was what I regarded as an uncompromising union man, and always spoke warmly in its favor and against the confederacy...he did a great deal in harboring and feeding refugees and conscripts and helping them to escape the Confederacy. His house was a sort of headquarters for them and he had some there a great deal of the time. I have seen persons who were kept there, who made their escape through the mountains at different times during the war.

Rodes and Wenger's research uncovered dozens of similar testimonies before the commission, many of whom operated the "stations" housing refugee draft resisters from home guard units. Though it is difficult to know exactly how many local draft resisters evaded the Confederate authorities as a result of the Underground Railroad in the Valley, local Mennonite activist and station operator Abraham D. Heatwole testified before the commission that the number was in the "several thousands" (Rodes and Wenger 2003, 162). Following Sheridan's burning of the Valley, an ever larger exodus of the Anabaptist community occurred, as residents fled as a result of both the Confederate draft and the widespread destruction of their property during the campaign. Sheridan estimated over 400 wagonloads of Mennonites and Brethren left the Valley with his army in 1864, many of whom never returned to the area following the end of the war.

In reflecting upon their motivation in undertaking such a massive and time consuming archival project, it is important to note that neither man participated in the project out a desire to glorify acts of Anabaptist Unionism and resistance during the Civil War era. During their interview, they both noted to me that they wanted to tell the entire story of local Anabaptist history "warts and all." Rodes made it clear during the interview that he was not interested in a one-sided project that included only stories of heroism and resistance of local Mennonites and Brethren during the conflict. Some Mennonite and Brethren men did go against church doctrine by aiding the Confederate cause or militarily serving in the Confederate army throughout the war. In commenting on the work of these two men, Steve Shenk, the staff director of the Crossroads Valley Brethren-Mennonite

Heritage Center in Rockingham County which partially funded Rodes and Wenger's project, stated to me in a phone interview that:

They tried to be honest in their research. There was inconsistency within our own community during the War. It is important that the project not be a self-righteous one. Not all Mennonites were loyal Unionists- some even chose to join the Confederate Army and joined as cooks and medics if they could. There are accounts, however, of some joining the actual army. Some Mennonite soldiers were supposedly chided by Stonewall Jackson for refusing to fire on the enemy.

Similarly, both men stated that they did not see their project as an attempt to disparage groups or individuals espousing Southern or Confederate forms of heritage. During our interview, Rodes noted that he is not a "Yankee" and considers himself culturally and socially to be rural and Southern. After he related to me a story involving a "Yankee journalist" who had rubbed some locals the wrong way with a story in the local paper on their research, it occurred to me that he might actually be similarly suspicious of me and my own motives. Indeed, he took a while to warm up to my questions and repeatedly asked me to explain exactly why I was interested in their work. As for Wenger, he noted that, though he had many ancestors that were committed Unionists and pacifists, he had other relatives that actually served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. "I am not ashamed of their service either," though he believes that his great-grandfather might have ended up deserting the Confederate Army at some point. He did, however, find it somewhat amusing when I asked him whether or not he would ever consider joining the SCV, responding that:

I'm not sure they would let me because of my Mennonite ancestors. I do think a bit differently about the war than they do. I know a lot of the guys in that group, they are actually a lot like me and most of them grew up around here like I did. They are not bad people and lots are just interested in heritage. Some of the SCV types, though, claim that Mennonites were not really Unionists. They only tended to be anti-Confederate because of their religion. I'm not sure I quite understand that [logic].<sup>148</sup>

Despite their lack of personal animus towards Confederate heritage groups and their practices, both men continue to receive some criticism and anger from neo-Confederates critical and suspicious of their project. When discussing their work at local lectures and Civil War interest groups, for example, members of local SCV and neo-Confederate organizations

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<sup>148</sup> If Wenger's Confederate ancestor did actually desert from the army he would, of course, not actually be eligible for SCV membership.

labeled them as “damn Yankees” and “traitors” to their state. Like John Heatwole, an appearance on a local radio program resulted in some callers from local neo-Confederates offering negative opinions on-air of Wenger and Rodes. One caller from nearby West Virginia, sounding eerily similar to Rodes’ story of his grandmother, said that Mennonites are “not real people, they are lower than that.” As related to me during my conversation with Steve Shenk, many of these bitter feelings are vestiges of the Civil War era as Mennonites and Brethren continue to be resented and despised as traitors by local neo-Confederates.

Indeed, some of the local neo-Confederate resentment may be as a result of a recent surge in interest within the Valley Mennonite-Brethren community in exploring their own history and Civil War heritage. Inspired somewhat by the stories uncovered by Wenger, Rodes and Heatwole, counter-memories of resistance and suffering- once almost exclusively the domain of oral history and family legend- are now increasingly explored and celebrated in a variety of discursive and textual forms. Wenger and Rodes, for example, served as tour guides for a new Civil War heritage tour called the “Ashes and Tears Tour.” Sponsored by the Crossroads Heritage Center, the tour covered many of the sites included in their books and offered visitors an alternative form of Civil War heritage tourism than previously offered in the region. Now an annual event, the 2005 tour organizers actually had to hire a second bus to meet the registration demand from local Mennonites and Brethren eager to learn more about Civil War era heritage within their communities.



Figure 8.12

Crossroads Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center  
 The grand opening of the new building housing the Crossroads Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, Spring 2006 (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).

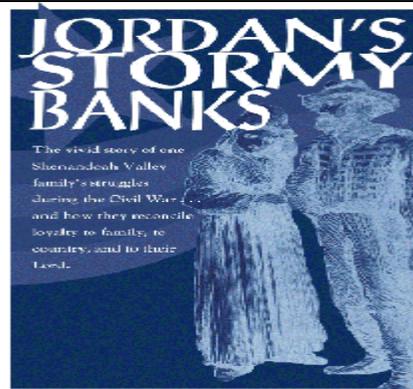


Figure 8.13

Jordan's Stormy Banks Program  
 The program cover distributed at the opening of the new play *Jordan's Stormy Banks* (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).

Similarly, in 2002 a new play entitled *Jordan's Stormy Banks*, written by former Eastern Mennonite student Elizabeth Beachy, debuted at the downtown Court Square Theatre in Harrisonburg. Like the Ashes tour, the funding for the event came primarily from the Cross Roads Heritage Center as part of their effort to encourage awareness of Mennonite/Brethren heritage within their own local communities and to bring these stories to a larger audience throughout the Valley. The play portrays the struggle of a fictional Anabaptist family during the Civil War as they are torn apart by the Civil War. In mining the Mennonite/Brethren story for dramatic effect, the play sticks to the familiar "brother against brother" script so omnipresent in Civil War theatre and cinema. One member of the family, for example, chooses to fight for the Confederacy while others in the family object to secession and favor the Union. The family faces constant suspicious and surveillance from their neighbors who believe Mennonites and Brethren to be disloyal and traitorous to the Confederate Cause. According to a review in *Mennonite Life* written by EMC professor Mary Sprunger (2005), the play served to remind viewers of the threat to ideological pacifism in a post-9/11 world and:

The gray areas that arise when one's own farm and home is being attacked; the community tensions that result when some opt out of the typical patriotic response; and the bravery and steadfastness of Mennonites and Brethren who remained true to their understanding of Christian pacifism.

The Cross Roads Heritage Center itself promises to tell many of these Civil War era stories within its museum section when it opens next year. The Harrisonburg based center, which is still in the process of gathering enough funding to open, will be an interpretive center focused on the all facets of Mennonite/Brethren history throughout the region. According to director Steve Shenk, a major portion of the center's museum displays will be centered on the Civil War era and the stories of suffering and resistance uncovered by Rodes and Wenger's work. Because the area already draws in heritage tourists interested in Civil War history, "We plan on the Civil War history to be our hook to draw in outside visitors." Because Cross Roads developed strong ties to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields group and other Civil War heritage organizations in the Valley, their events are now publicized on websites and local newsletters along with the reenactments and "save the battlefield" meetings constantly held throughout the Valley.

Despite this new renaissance of interest in Mennonite/Brethren Civil War heritage, it still remains a relatively obscure and underappreciated portion of a broader Civil War history in the Shenandoah Valley. Indeed, without the efforts of Heatwole, Wenger and Rodes, very little archival data regarding the oral histories of Unionism, Anabaptist suffering, and resistance to Confederate hegemony in the Valley would exist. According to Foucault, it is important for scholars to reveal and publish examples of such counter histories, especially ones that highlight stories of “the positive political meaning (of) noncompliance with the demands of national armed struggles” (Foucault 1989, 126). Such stories illustrate the complexity of history at any given time and discredit traditional nationalist histories which emphasize the supposed unity and homogeneity during past eras.

In the case of the Shenandoah Valley, the experience of the Mennonite and Brethren communities during the war suggests a diversity of opinion regarding secession and slavery both prior to and during the waging of the Civil War. Though the overwhelming percentage of votes cast in Rockingham County in the 1861 were for secession, the work of Wenger and Rodes suggests a large percentage of the Anabaptist community, as a result of widespread intimidation, either did not participate in the election or cast “yes” votes out of fear of retribution from pro-Confederate forces. Though some members of the community ultimately served the Confederacy mostly in non-military capacities during the war, the archival research of Wenger and Rodes reveals an organized system of resistance to the Confederacy within Rockingham County. Fleeing the new provisions of the 1864 draft and fearing their safety after the killing of John Kline, the Anabaptist version of the Underground Railroad transported Valley Brethren and Mennonites north to Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The majority of Anabaptist Unionists, however, remained in the Valley at the time of General Sheridan’s 1864 Valley Campaign. As a result, their farms and mills suffered the same destructive fate as their pro-Confederate neighbors. Indeed, the civilian destruction caused as a result of the “Burning Campaign” proved to be one of the great humanitarian tragedies of the war, as the monetary devastation from the campaign actually exceeded the far more infamous march of General Sherman to the Georgia Coast. The fact that many of the hundreds of farms and homes destroyed in the campaign belonged to a group of people that remained loyal to the Union before and during the war only added to the misery and suffering of the area’s Anabaptists. After the war, some of those Unionists that lost their

property and livelihood as a result of Sheridan's campaign sought financial compensation from the United States government in 1871. It is both from records of these testimonies, later rescued and reprinted by Wenger and Rodes from the National Archives, and from oral histories passed on over the decades within the Anabaptist community that Anabaptist counter-memory from the Civil War era survived to the present day.

This collection of counter-memory within the Shenandoah Valley suggests a positive history of resistance and working class revolution present in the Civil War past, even as those in power attempt to conceal such memories. The story of Rockingham County Mennonites and Brethren does not easily fit into the discourses of Lost Cause orthodoxy, which have long propagated a myth of Southern national unit before and during the Civil War period. In a state so obsessed with Civil War history, these stories remained conspicuously absent the dominant master narrative of Civil War Virginia, a Lost Cause influenced set of discourses emphasizing the key role of Virginia and Virginians in fighting for the honor of the their state and Confederate nation during the Civil War. As Foucault argues, despite attempts to repress such alternative histories, people within these traditionally marginalized communities have their own ways of keeping their histories alive. In the case of the Mennonite and Brethren of Rockingham County, the contemporary re-emergence of these long-silenced popular histories of resistance in the face of local intimidation and violence suggests the complexity of Civil War history in the Shenandoah Valley. Far from just a unified, pro-Confederate "Stonewall Country," as suggested in the title of the Lexington play, the Civil War opened rifts within the diverse communities of the Shenandoah Valley that continue to resonate even today.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

### *Reflections on Lincoln and the Lost Cause*

Throughout the chapters in this dissertation, I examine how particular discursive traces of the Lost Cause myth continue to influence, discipline, and shape Civil War remembrance throughout the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Despite the lasting power of this myth, it is not the grand master narrative by which the majority of Americans understand the meaning of the Civil War (Blight 2001). The emergence of a dominant version of Civil War memory involved a fusion of Northern and Southern narratives in the decades following the end of the Civil War. The “Cause Victorious” meta-narrative, a victorious nationalist epic version of the war forged at the end of the war in the North, emerged after the end of the war as the dominant way that most Americans in the Northern states framed and understood the meaning of the Civil War. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Cause Victorious meta-narrative eventually absorbed elements of the Lost Cause myth during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in an effort to heal sectional divisions and engender Southern support for American imperial exploits.

Under the united banner of white supremacy, it is this reconciliationist version of the Civil War that became the true master narrative of American Civil War memory to the present day. Following the social upheaval of the Civil Rights movement, the post-1960’s addendum to the master narrative suggests that the nation finally “lived up” to its promises of freedom and opportunity to all with the destruction of the slave system and freeing of over three million former African-American slaves. As told by contemporary historians and filmmakers such as James McPherson, Bruce Catton, and Ken Burns, the Civil War forged a new and more progressive nation from the horrible suffering of its people. As Edward Ayers (2005, 118) suggests, within the Reconciliation meta-narrative “the Civil War appears as the origin of our better selves, of the time when we threw off the slavery of our inheritance and became truly American.”

Within this epic and nationalist storyline of war and reunion, it is not a military leader who emerges as the dominant iconic hero of the war. Following the end of the war and his subsequent assassination, historians began to assign near God-like status to President Abraham Lincoln, a man whose own lack of popularity in the North during the Civil War almost led to his defeat in the 1864 presidential election to former General George McClellan. The post-war Lincoln proved to be much more popular with the American

people, a martyr whose leadership during a time of chaos saved the Union and reunited a once-divided nation. To many African-Americans, Lincoln was the Great Emancipator. He brought them out of slavery with the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation and he heroically led the Union in their subsequent defeat of the slave-holding Southern aristocracy. Lincoln was also held up by some Americans as the epitome of the American dream, a man who rose to power and prominence in the United States from humble and destitute beginnings in a Kentucky log cabin (Schwartz 2000, 267). He became the most beloved and canonized of all American presidents, a subject of hundreds of biographies and histories and a quasi-religious symbol for all Americans to invoke in times of trial and discord. As Peterson (1994, 314) remarks, “What would Lincoln do?” soon became a staple question asked within American political and cultural discourse.

Despite Lincoln’s glorified status as an American historical icon and defender of American democracy, he remains a controversial figure to neo-Confederate activists within the American South. As discussed in Chapter Seven, neo-Confederates such as Thomas Dilorenzo propagate the old antagonisms present in the original version of the Lost Cause myth. These “scholars” vilify Lincoln as a scoundrel and enemy of the Old South and present him as the devil incarnate. Within this Lost Cause Lincoln revisionism, it is Lincoln who failed to end the slave system peacefully resulting in an illegal invasion of the South designed to placate hawkish and abolitionist voices within his administration. According to neo-Confederates, the Civil War allowed Lincoln and greedy Northern industrialists to further expand American industrial capitalism to the agrarian Old South. Additionally, Lincoln is presented as a nothing more than a brutal tyrant, a man who trampled on the Constitution through his suspension of habeas corpus and intimidation of the Maryland legislature.<sup>149</sup> In Dilorenzo’s (2002, 6) own words, Lincoln was a “dictator” who broke with the code of civilized military conflict by advocating his generals wage total war on the citizens of the South. In an interview with the *Weekly Standard* regarding his book, Dilorenzo comments (Ferguson 2003):

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<sup>149</sup> Of all of the neo-Confederate attacks on Lincoln, this one perhaps has the most historical merit. Lincoln did abolish habeas corpus and even threatened to jail members of the Supreme Court who did not side with him on the war. It is ironic, however, that neo-Confederates are not nearly as vehemently against President George W. Bush for his similar anti-Constitutional activities during the “terror war” present.

This man [Lincoln] was not the saint I was taught about when I was going to public school in western Pennsylvania. And it started to dawn on me, the whole Whig platform, all these centralized policies that they hadn't been able to implement by democratic means in the first 70 years of our history--they were all implemented within the first six months of the war. And then, once the war began, it was about consolidating and using that power. Lincoln shut down hundreds of newspapers that dared to criticize him. He suspended habeas corpus. He had at least 18,000 Americans--the estimates vary--he had them thrown into jail on the flimsiest pretexts, or with no pretext at all.

Given the continued resentment and antagonism held by neo-Confederates towards Lincoln, it is perhaps not too surprising that the plan to dedicate a Lincoln sculpture in 2003 within the city of Richmond, Virginia- the former capital of the Confederate States of America- generated a great deal of publicity and passionate protest. The bronze sculpture features Mr. Lincoln seated on a park bench with his arm around his son Tad while visiting the city of Richmond in 1865 after the city fell to Union forces. The monument was a \$250,000 gift to the National Parks Service from the non-profit organization the United States Historical Society to help bind up the nation's wounds in a spirit of "peace, reunion and reconciliation" (Hochburg 2003). The city of Richmond added another \$45,000 of taxpayer money to the project, money noted by the city's African-American Mayor Rudolph C. McCollum to be "the best \$45,000 this city has ever spent." Unlike the controversial statue to Arthur Ashe, the Lincoln monument was not placed Confederate military and political heroes along Monument Avenue in the Center of the City. Instead, it sits in a park outside of the Civil War Visitor Center in the city at the former site of a Confederate iron and munitions factory.

In the weeks before the dedication, the Sons of Confederate Veterans engaged in a public relations "resistance campaign" to stop the monument from being erected. On its weeknight *All Things Considered* news program, National Public Radio (Hochburg 2003) ran a story on Lincoln's Birthday focused on the Lincoln monument controversy. The piece included an interview with local SCV activist Bragdon Bowling, the leader of the anti-Lincoln opposition, who stated that, "The monument is a slap in the face to the 40,000 Confederate soldiers that lay buried in Richmond. He is a person who invaded Virginia and destroyed the state. I have a long memory and so do many others" (Hochburg 2003). Bowling and other anti-Lincoln zealots started an on-line petition against the monument, engaged in a letter writing campaign to state and federal politicians, and even organized a

Lincoln revisionist conference featuring Dilorenzo and other noted neo-Confederate scholars including Clyde Wilson and Donald Livingston held at the John Marshall Hotel in Richmond (Ferguson 2003). The conference featured presentations damning Lincoln from all angles possible. It included lectures presenting him as a terrible father, a neglectful husband, a closeted homosexual, and a possible carrier of syphilis. In his story on the conference for the *Weekly Standard*, Andrew Ferguson quotes an SCV activist named Robert as stating, “You know who's a big Lincoln buff? Mario Cuomo. All the left-wingers are. Tells you all you need to know” (Ferguson 2003).

Though they did manage to get a few Virginia politicians- including ultra-conservative federal Congressman Virgil Goode- to support their efforts to reconsider dedicating the monument, the NPS and the city of Richmond ultimately rejected the claims and went ahead with the dedication ceremony. The anti-Lincoln campaign did, however, engender national publicity and media outlets including the Associated Press, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* published stories on the statue noting how Lincoln's negative image to many people within the contemporary American South. At the dedication of the statue in April 5<sup>th</sup> of 2003, the 138<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln and his son's visit to the city, many of the same vocal group of neo-Confederate protesters engaged in final acts of defiance against Lincoln and the monument. A plane flew above the ceremony dragging a banner reading “Sic Semper Tyrannis,” the state motto of Virginia that was supposedly uttered by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre after assassinating Lincoln. SCV members dressed in Confederate uniforms and sporting Confederate battle flags booed each of the days' speakers and held banners with slogans such as “Long Live John Wilkes Booth” and “Lincoln was a Murderer.”

Among those in also in attendance at the monument dedication was Dr. Philip Stone, president of Bridgewater College, a small liberal-arts school affiliated with the Church of the Brethren and located in Rockingham County. A seventh generation Virginian and resident of the Shenandoah Valley, Stone remembers being shocked by the anti-Lincoln vitriol on display at the dedication, remarking that: “It never occurred to me that there would anything that day that would be unattractive. I was aware that some people were critical of the statue, but I did not think these people were to be taken seriously” (Garrera 2005). I met and interviewed Dr. Stone, a life-long admirer of Lincoln and collector of Lincoln memorabilia, at his Bridgewater office on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005. During the interview,

he commented to me about his understanding of how Virginians remembered the Civil War and how the events of the Lincoln Statue display affected him personally. “I really was taken aback by the protests. I had always thought of these heritage types as a novelty. As I looked out upon the African-Americans in the audience, it struck me that many of them could remember a time when similar people showed up at such things dressed in sheets. The protestors acted with a mentality in the Lost Cause tradition.”

The day’s events spurred Stone to organize a formal chapter of the Lincoln Society in the state of Virginia. Though similar Lincoln organizations exist in almost every Northern states, and in a number of foreign counties including Japan and Albania, the Virginia Chapter is the first and so far only chapter to open in a former Confederate state. These chapters serve not only as organizing sites for people interested in Lincoln related history and heritage. They also seek open discussions and debates on the legacy of Lincoln, admitting that the powerful and epic myth of Lincoln often presents him as an infallible, larger than life character. According to the mission statement of the Virginia Chapter, one of their main goals is “to support efforts to interpret Abraham Lincoln, his life, work, and legacy, particularly in Virginia.”<sup>150</sup> Like any historical figure, Lincoln and his presidential legacy should not be categorized or analyzed using simple binary constructions such as “great” or “evil.” To that end, the Virginia Lincoln Society organized the first in an annual series of symposia entitled “How Should Virginia View Abraham Lincoln,” held on the campus of Bridgewater College in May of 2005, featuring lectures from historian Dr. Edward Steers and leaders from other Lincoln Societies. Though no neo-Confederates were invited to speak at the symposium, Stone commented to me that, “I don’t rule out a thoughtful discussion with the SCV over Lincoln’s legacy. We need to interpret history and its characters from a variety of perspectives, so that we can live with the legacies of the past, warts and all.”<sup>151</sup>

In addition to advocating and supporting new research into Lincoln and his legacy, the Virginia Lincoln Society also seeks to bring the connections between Abraham Lincoln and the Rockingham County area to the attention of local citizens. I first became aware of Lincoln’s ties to the Shenandoah Valley while taking part in the Burning Tour of the Shenandoah Valley organized by the Civil War Education Association. John Heatwole, the

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<sup>150</sup> Cover letter, Lincoln Society of Virginia. This was presented to me in a packet by Dr. Phillip Stone on 6 October, 2005.

<sup>151</sup> Personal Interview, 6 October, 2005.

historian and tour guide for the weekend, took our group to a rundown farm in the Northern part of Shenandoah Valley. The farm, located in a rural section of the county still free from extension of Harrisonburg suburban development, included a decaying farmhouse located on the front section of the property in dire need of renovation and repair. We walked past the house and into the fields of corn located up a hill from Route 42, the thoroughfare which runs directly in front of the property. After the brief walk, we came upon a small family cemetery with approximately ten to fifteen gravestones bordered by an iron fence and underneath a large oak tree. Like the house, the cemetery was in desperate need of attention, as weeds covered nearly every gravestone in the site.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 9.1 Lincoln Homestead The Lincoln Homestead in Rockingham County, Virginia in the early 1990's. (Crossroads Heritage Center 2006).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 9.2 Cemetery at Lincoln Homestead The cemetery at the Lincoln Homestead in the fall of 2004, overgrown at the time with weeds and underbrush (Bohland).</p>
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Having already visited a number of Confederate cemeteries and memorial sites that day, I expected this to be yet another resting place for a dead Southern soldier from the area. Instead, Heatwole explained to the group that this property and the family cemetery once belonged to the family of Abraham Lincoln. Five generations of Lincoln lie buried within the cemetery, as well as two former family slaves named Ned and Queen. Among the family members buried there is President Lincoln's great-grandfather Captain John Lincoln, the man who moved his family from Pennsylvania to this property in Rockingham County in 1768. John Lincoln and his wife, also buried within the family plot, eventually gave birth to

nine children on the property. Among this burgeoning Lincoln family was a son Jacob Lincoln, the man who would later build the now-decaying Lincoln Homestead.

Another son known as Captain Abraham Lincoln, the paternal grandfather of the president, was also born on the site. This less-well known Abraham Lincoln and his wife, the former Mary Graves, lived much of his early life in the Shenandoah Valley. Mary Lincoln gave birth to five children in Virginia including Lincoln's father Thomas. Abraham and Mary eventually moved with the children to Kentucky, the state where the more famous Abraham was famously born in a log cabin, when President Lincoln's father Thomas was three years old. A number of Lincoln's remained on the property and farmed wheat and corn using slave labor up until the beginning of the Civil War. Though President Lincoln himself never visited his cousins at the farm, his son Tad supposedly visited the property after the war. While there, he allegedly met a number of relatives who actually fought for the Confederacy during the conflict

Prior to our group visit to the site, we spent a few hours as a group browsing a Civil War store located in the southern end of Rockingham County inside the Shenandoah Heritage Market on Rte. 11. In what amounted to a somewhat bizarre coincidence, the two experiences that day reflected themes of the two original oppositional binary meta-narratives of the Civil War past: the Lost Cause and Northern Cause Victorious. Though the Crossroads Country Store is only about ten miles from the Lincoln Homestead within Rockingham County, the differences between the two experiences symbolizes the continued dissonance in the Shenandoah Valley regarding the meaning of the Civil War. At the store, which is run by a local neo-Confederate member of the League of the South named Rex Miller, the original Jubal Version of the Lost Cause seemed immediate and alive.

Among the items on sale at the store are a whole range of Dixie-related apparel including T-shirts with a picture of a gun above a caption reading "Smile When You Say Dixie," a bumper-sticker reading "Shenandoah Valley Is Confederate Country," and a baby's bib reading "I Won't Be Reconstructed and I Don't Give a Damn!" In an attempt to link the neo-Confederate cause to the terror war present, one bumper-sticker on sale read "The South: Fighting Terror since 1861." The book collection at the store includes a whole range of slavery apologist texts and neo-Confederate staples, including Gary Walker's *The Truth about Slavery* and *Myths of American Slavery* by William Kennedy. Customers can also buy purchase back issues of *Southern Partisan*, the official journal of the League of the South and

the neo-Confederate movement. At the front of the store, Miller keeps an updated heritage board on the front of the store with clippings from newspapers on various neo-Confederate issues. One clipping on display included a picture of a black Sudanese soldier standing next to a Confederate flag with a caption noting that this image was “proof that our flag is a rebel flag, a flag of freedom for Christians everywhere.”



Figure 9.3

Crossroads Country Store

The front door of the Crossroads Country Store in Harrisonburg, VA, the Rebel flags marking it as a neo-Confederate retail space (Bohland).

Since first visiting the store, I discovered that Miller operates a website allowing him to both sell his neo-Confederate wares throughout the country. He also uses the site to opine about a whole range of cultural and political issues. The site, ConfederateShop.com, is one of a rising number of such online stores as the neo-Confederate movement seeks to expand its base through the strategic use of cyberspace. In a folder entitled “My Two Cents” on the website, Miller includes his own personal musings on gay marriage (“How can a serious, educated, Christian Nation, dedicated to its posterity, condone such behavior” Miller 2004b), Yankees (“Most of you should know by now that the "Pilgrim Fathers" of Plymouth were about setting the seeds of socialism to sprout in the New World” Miller 2001), and the pre-requisite diatribe on the usage of the Confederate flag (“A Confederate Flag was never the authority under which troops raped, pillaged, murdered, and destroyed the property of non-combatant civilians” Miller 2000). Finally, Miller (2004a) takes on Lincoln, criticizing him for his waging of an “illegal Civil War” and his “false Christianity.”

In a rambling essay of well-over twenty pages in text which cites text from nearly every neo-Confederate and Lost Cause text on Lincoln, Miller notes that:

With regard to Mr. Lincoln's Christianity I would like to remind all that his stepmother said he had no religion, his wife clearly stated that he had no faith and no hope in the usual acceptance of those words, his first law partner called him an avowed atheist, and his professional lifelong associate clearly iterated that he was ever more anxious to do what was of good report among men. In his early political career he had ample opportunity to deny his atheism and never did. During his entire career and in spite of his flowery use of pious words he never once claimed that Jesus Christ was his personal Lord and Savior nor did he ever belong to a Bible believing Christian Church...As the instrument of evil, lustful, wealthy New England interests he permitted our union of Sovereign States to be crushed and replaced with what has become an imperial-like mobocracy.

Like most neo-Confederates, Miller's views on Lincoln deviate sharply from the towering and heroic image of Lincoln within dominant American memory. Similar to the neo-Confederate activists present at the dedication of the Lincoln monument in Richmond, Miller attempts to vilify Lincoln in order to justify both the slave system and the Confederate cause during the war. These claims amount to a re-articulation of the same divisive Lost Cause discourse which began in Virginia some one hundred and thirty years ago. As argued throughout the essays in this dissertation, the Lost Cause myth provides people like Miller, filmmaker Ron Maxwell, the members of the Warren Rifles UDC, Fincastle Rifles SCV leader Red Barbour, and the female re-enactors I met in Bedford a "usable truth" to process both the Civil War past, as well as issues in contemporary American society, culture, and politics (Gallagher 2000, 9). In their efforts to assert their own neo-Confederate identities, Confederate heritage activists continue to rely upon a racist meta-narrative script that glosses over or omits entirely the history of violence, racism, and exclusion within the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American South. As a result, African-American and Southern Unionist memories of the Civil War became subjugated histories within the region, narrative tales of the past that deviated from the racism of the Lost Cause and Reconciliationist meta-narrative. These counter memories, such as the resistance of Mennonite and Brethren people in the central Shenandoah Valley, tell stories of people resisting the racist power, violence, and repression present in the region.

I ultimately view this entire dissertation as an attempt to reveal such counter-memories and to oppose examples of neo-Confederate and Lost Cause mythology within the

Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The Lost Cause myth, present in either the reconciliationist version or the contemporary neo-Confederate divisive script, continue to make it difficult to candidly address contemporary issues of religion, racism, gender, and class difference in the American South. The Confederate flag, the ultimate symbol of Lost Cause division, remains a lightning rod issue within a broad cultural war waged over the meaning of American history. Just as it was used by white supremacist groups during the Civil Rights movement, the conservative religious discourse present in the myth of Lost Cause continues to be utilized by contemporary groups opposing progressive initiatives on a whole range of cultural and political issues including gay marriage, immigration, abortion rights, and the role of America in world politics.

Though I actively oppose Lost Cause mythology throughout this study, I do not suggest that Americans rely upon the contemporary Burns/McPherson Reconciliation meta-narrative as they attempt to understand and process “the meaning” of the Civil War. As Blight (2002) illustrates, this same master script has a dubious historical association with Lost Cause white supremacy and the violence of American imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines. As a result of the Civil Rights Movement and African-American resistance to white racist hegemony in the South, the contemporary version of this master story now includes a range of previously omitted stories of African-American history and resistance. Though this is certainly an improvement to the story, no nationalist meta-narrative can adequately contain the whole range of historical memories. As Blight (2005) reminds us, in quite a Foucauldian spirit, “History is messy, undetermined, and layered.”

Following Edward Ayers’ reflections in his recent collection of essays on the Civil War entitled *What Caused the Civil War*, I advocate a scholarly reassessment of Civil War memory designed to move historians and social scientists beyond the confines of the meta-narrative. Rather than continuing to churn out book after book focused on particular military commanders or battles, scholars should spurn such guaranteed “quick buck” studies and focus on the ever-changing meaning of the Civil War within contemporary life. The Civil War is already the most studied four year period in American history, analyzed by scholars from almost every imaginable perspective. Instead of rehashing military minutia, scholars should instead engage what Ayers (2005) terms “the usable Civil War” and reflect upon how we continue to be divided by disparate memories of the Civil War in the United States. The

understanding of the past is, after all, always open to change based on the politics of the present.

I further support Ayers (2005) suggestion that what is needed is a revival of a “tradition of skepticism” that brings to bear all of the hidden and repressed memories and meanings of the Civil War. Like Nolan’s critical reassessment of Robert E. Lee in *Lee Considered*, the previously unimpeachable heroes of the Confederacy deserve critical examination and interrogation. Unlike neo-Confederate scholarship on Abraham Lincoln, however, such work needs to be well-researched and not based simply on a desire to besmirch the reputation of “Southern enemies” from the Civil War era. Unlike contemporary conservatives such as Lynn Cheney, who support a return to the “good old days” of patriotic education, I advocate the teaching of American history and memory unencumbered by grandiose tales of larger than life figures from American historical memory. As the work of historian Howard Zinn (2003) so powerfully illustrates, American history is filled with incidents where our mythical heroes and founding fathers acted primarily out of support for a racist and capitalist form of hegemony. Foucault (1989) further suggests that broad epic versions of national history naturalize systems of dominations, marginalizing histories of rebellion and working class resistance which do not fit into progressive meta-narratives. To that end, I encourage scholars and historians engaged in Civil War history to avoid meta-narrative frames. The Civil War was not a “holy war” for either side. Like all military conflicts, it was a tragedy of massive proportions where hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives or livelihoods. It should not be exploited for present day culture war purposes by contemporary scholars, filmmakers, or heritage activists who choose to present the war as a simplistic and epic nationalist story.

While making my second visit to the Lincoln property in Rockingham County, I spent time alone at the cemetery reflecting upon what exactly this farm and its connection to Lincoln meant within the context of my study of the Lost Cause and Civil War memory in the region. Nearly one year after visiting the homestead with the CWEA group, I went to the site again, this time with Dr. Phillip Stone. While driving to the site from Bridgewater College, we discussed the meaning of the Civil War in the region and his reasons for organizing the Lincoln Society of Virginia. Like Wenger and Rodes, Stone receives emails from SCV and League of the South members calling him a “traitor to his home state.” He commented to me:

There is still a lot of bitterness in this Valley about the Civil War. My own great-grandfather told me to never say General Sheridan's name in front of him. I grew up though not caring about this division. As far as I am concerned, the war is over and we must move on. These [neo-Confederate] heritage folks use a perverse form of nostalgia. We know what the Confederacy did was wrong and what they stood for was wrong. If I lived in Germany, it would torment me what happened during the Second World War and we certainly would not celebrate it. How can we as Southerners continue to try and justify slavery and what happened then? We've got to put the war in the proper and honest context-as something abhorrent which should never have happened, a war which supported a system of hateful human bondage.



<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 9.4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Stone Addresses the Crowd</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The crowd assembled to hear Dr. Phillip Stone's annual address on Lincoln's Birthday, Winter 2006 (Virginia Lincoln Society 2006).<sup>152</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Figure 9.5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Stone at the Lincoln Homestead</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Phillip Stone at the Lincoln cemetery in Northern Rockingham County (Virginia Lincoln Society 2006).</p>
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To Dr. Stone, the links between Abraham Lincoln and the Shenandoah Valley offers a symbolic opportunity for area residents to reopen conversations about the Civil War and its contemporary meaning. He began holding an annual ceremony at the Lincoln cemetery plot, which was owned for a time by Stone's wife, to honor Lincoln's birthday every February 12th. According to Stone, the ceremony involves "reading something Lincoln wrote every year and I invite folks from all over the area to attend. Some years we've had 75 people up here, other times when the weather is particularly bad, it's just me and my dog." Though his family no longer owns the property, he continues to hold the ceremony every year with the permission of the new landowner. On the day I revisited the site with him, Dr.

<sup>152</sup> Photos from the Virginia Lincoln Society used by permission of Dr. Phillip Stone, 2006.

Stone gave a television interview with the local ABC affiliate about the history of the property, the connection to President Lincoln, and the annual ceremony. The local newspaper *The Daily News Record* now sends a reporter almost every year to Stone's ceremony, focusing their stories on how little is known by most Virginians of this connection between the Union president and their beloved Shenandoah Valley.

As I sat on a hill overlooking the pastoral landscapes of Rockingham County waiting for Dr. Stone to finish a television interview, it struck me that I was in a place I lived in for four years as a college student. I thought that day about how much this project had been about locating my own ghost in the Shenandoah Valley. After two years of field work into Confederate memory in the region, I thought a great deal about what I had seen during my research and its impact on me personally. As a young elementary school student in Virginia, I once idolized Lee and Jackson, the same men whose ghosts I now attempted to locate and reveal. My college roommate and I once hung a Confederate flag on the back of our door in our freshman dorm room as part of an effort to assert our "Southern heritage" in a hall occupied by "Yankees" from the Washington D.C. area. I have never talked or written about this in public and am still ashamed of this today. My roommate, my brother, and I also went on an extended spring break tour of the American South with a group of friends, visiting the Civil War battlefield sites and Southern landscapes that we viewed were intrinsically tied to our identity as good Southern men. Though I have tried to write off this period in my life as the result of youthful ignorance and naivety, I realize now that my beliefs and actions cannot be explained away so easily. They were in large part due to my personal acceptance of the Lost Cause mythology around me and I have spent the rest of my life trying to make up for that mistake. The Old South was a part of my past identity and this project has been very much about me coming to terms with that.

During my four years in Harrisonburg, I began to change and associated myself mainly with progressive groups and organizations directly the opposite of what that flag symbolizes. I became an environmentalist, a pro-choice activist, a founding member of the men against rape group on campus, and eventually the program director of an alternative radio station. My interests and experiences broadened to the extent that I began to challenge what it meant to be Southern and liberal. I spent two years as a graduate student in Syracuse, New York, a much more diverse and cosmopolitan city than anywhere I had previously lived. At Syracuse University, fellow graduate students actually asked me what it

was like to live in the South and expressed their belief regarding the backwards nature of Southerners. I distinctly remember having a conversation with a woman I was chatting up at a party who revealed to me that, “I am scared of going to the South. As a minority woman, I just think people would look at me funny and treat me poorly.” Following this conversation, it occurred to me just how insulting and ignorant those comments were. As I have written about in this dissertation, the South is a more heterogeneous place than I ever gave it credit for and I am just one example of the tens of thousands of people in the American South who now reject neo-Confederacy and the myths of the glorious Old South. The South is a region with a polyvocal sense of its past where people can and do actively resist Lost Cause orthodoxy. After returning to the region and beginning this research, it is clear to me now that this dissertation is a way of finally asserting my own unionism and progressivism in a region that I associate with another past version of myself. It has ultimately been a trip through both the Civil War past in the Valley and into locating and coming to terms with my own past in the region.

As I sat on the hill in front of the Lincoln ceremony contemplating this personal journey of mine while I waited to for Dr. Stone to return, it struck me as poignant that a homestead associated with the family of the most famous of all American presidents lay in such a state of disrepair and neglect. Additionally, only one small roadside marker along Rte. 42 even noted the historical significance of the site. A small tin sign reading “Lincoln Homestead,” which once had been placed in the ground in front of the house, was now a piece of scrap metal littering the lawn in front of the home. Gazing upon the rolling hills of the Shenandoah Valley, I reflected upon my first research trip attending the last performance of Stonewall Country at the now bankrupt Lime Kiln Theatre in Lexington. At the time, I wondered if the closing of that play, and eventually of the entire theatre, represented a symbolic shift in the region. Had the towns, fields, and people of the Valley finally begun to reject simplistic meta-narrative scripts as I clearly have and started to honestly assess the meaning of the Civil War past? Or, alternatively, were they still reliant upon Lost Cause mythology in framing their understandings of the Civil War?

In attempting to answer that question in this dissertation, my findings suggest that I could legitimately answer yes to both questions. Being in the presence of Dr. Stone and having spent the day with the Mennonite authors studying counter-memory, I could not help but recognize the presence of diverse voices in the Valley challenging the traditional pro-

Confederate regional memory of the Civil War. The Shenandoah Valley was certainly changing demographically, bringing new people with new ideas from Latin America and from the suburbs of Washington D.C. I also thought of the myriad of pristine Lost Cause monuments, cemeteries, and museums that I visited along the way. I remembered the role played by members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans in perpetuating neo-Confederate memory. These experiences similarly convinced me that mythologized memories of the Confederacy remain imminent in the landscapes and mnemonic spaces of the Shenandoah Valley for many individuals in the region. The Lost Cause myth does continue to live on in the Valley, in spite of a changing physical and cultural landscape which brings new development from the D.C. suburbs in the North, and changing demographics in formerly almost exclusively white rural towns. On our return to the Bridgewater College campus from the homestead, I asked Dr. Stone a question that had been in my mind since my first visit to the decaying farmscape nearly a year earlier: “If this property had links to close relatives of Davis, Lee, or Stonewall Jackson, do you think it would be in such a state?” His answer, reflecting my own thoughts on the matter, was a simple and telling one: “Not a chance.”

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