

“Swear this flag to live, for this flag to die”: Flag Imagery in Constructing the Narrative
of the Civil War and the Transformation of American Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

The Civil War transformed nationalism in American society and created a notion of national identity closely tied to flag iconography. Flag symbolism developed as the prominent visualization of nationalism in American culture during and after the Civil War. The flags of the Civil War - namely the American flag, the Confederate national flag, and the Confederate Battle Cross - grew into iconic images within American communities. Their status as symbols of nationalism, patriotism, and an American historical past often advocated by newspapers, individual citizens, and the soldiers of the war themselves, initiated an American tradition of flag iconography for the purpose of nationalism unforeseen in American culture before the war. After the war, the issues of reconciliation and of what context the war would be placed in American history also became influenced by flag imagery. With the potential for post-war bitterness and lengthened disunity, the American flag offered a symbol that allowed Americans to remember the war as the deeds of patriotic citizens and as part of a continuous American national narrative. In doing so, the American flag became the iconic symbol of American nationalism.

DEDICATION

To Mom-and all of my family who have been nothing less then perfect in their support and inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1:	14
Secession and the Formation of Confederate Nationality	23
Defiance in Virginia: The Elmer Ellsworth Affair	30
Chapter 2:	41
Deepening the Divide	41
Women and Minorities	44
Community and Individual Expressions	52
Americans Go To War: “Round the ensigns of red, white, and blue	57
Surrender: “We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vein”	63
Chapter 3:	67
Nationalism	68
Newspapers	74
The Civil War, the American Flag, and American Memory	81
Epilogue:	91
Images:	94
Bibliography:	97

Introduction

On April 14, 1865, crowds once again gathered around Charleston Harbor, where four years earlier Fort Sumter had surrendered, to witness the raising of the same American flag that had then been lowered in defeat. Four long and bloody years of conflict between North and South were coming to a close. General Robert E. Lee had surrendered the battered Army of Northern Virginia less than a week before and what remained of Confederate forces soon would follow. On this April morning the city of Charleston was a picture of the destruction of war. The shelling of the city had peppered the landscape with depressions and shattered man-made structures without regard. Those Charleston natives with the ability had fled the city, but still there was no shortage of spectators gathered for the anniversary ceremony.¹

The foremost event of the ceremony was the resurrection of the original flag that Major Robert Anderson saved from the 1861 surrender of the fort. Mary Cadwalader Jones, who had traveled from New York with her grandfather to witness the ceremony, described the symbolic event: “General Anderson stood up...began to hoist the flag. It went up slowly and hung limp against the staff, a weather-beaten, frayed, and shell torn old flag.” After the flag reached the top of the flagstaff, Jones recalled the reaction of the crowd, “...we stood up, somebody started ‘The Star-Spangled Banner,’ and we sang the first verse, which is all that most people know.”²

The ceremony at Fort Sumter was not the only one of its kind. In New Orleans’ Lafayette Square, two hundred cannons thundered the news of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the anniversary of the Fort Sumter’s capitulation. The “Old

¹ Henry Steel Commager, ed., The Civil War Archives: The History of the Civil War in Documents (New York, 2000), 785.

² Ibid., 786.

Flag” appeared all over the city. “The number of flags flung out to the breeze was remarkable,” a local newspaper article mentioned. One flag in particular stood out among the rest. It was an old and worn American flag unfurled outside the Cuthbert Bullitt Estate. The newspaper sentimentally told the story of this particular banner, “This flag, solitary and alone, was the only flag that waved on all the Southern States, on the 22nd of February, 1861.”

For the author, this flag represented reconciliation and renewal. “Whatsoever we may all think of this lamentable war, the love of the American Flag is something that cannot depart from an American bosom, excepting in annihilation.”³ Americans both North and South were no strangers to the word annihilation, for it had taken the near annihilation of the Confederacy and its grandest army to solidify and confirm the United States federal government as supreme power in a unified nation.

The ceremonies at Fort Sumter and Lafayette Square celebrated the end of the Civil War. As Jones’ and the *Daily Picayune*’s accounts of these events suggested, there existed a sense of a new beginning and a sincere hope for solidarity. The most prominent aspect of these was the regularity of which the flag was discussed as an iconic symbol newly embedded with a notion of American nationalism transformed by the Civil War and an America in the process of establishing a new national narrative. What was more apparent, however, was the fact that the flag meant something more and something new to many people across the reunited nation.

This thesis seeks to examine the transformation of American nationalism during the Civil War and the role of flag imagery in inspiring patriotism and nationalism among the individual and in the press. Before the war, the issue of nationality was a point of

³ The Daily Picayune, Apr. 16, 1865.

contention between the United States and the seceded states of the South. If secessionists no longer felt a shared identity with their northern neighbors, they felt it their right to form a new nation built upon the common bond of what it meant to be a southerner, in reality or illusion. With the onset of secession and the formation of the Confederacy, Southern partisans created new symbols of nationalism with their flags, songs, diaries, and letters. In the North, treason was the word of the day. Patriotic citizens from northern states united in outrage and determined to bring their rebellious sister-states back into the Union. As mothers, daughters, political officials, and others left behind waved their young men off to war hundreds of American flags were presented to the warriors of a troubled republic. On both sides of the coming conflict, “An unparalleled war ensued...both sides were fighting for the same thing: America, as each side envisioned what the young nation should be.”⁴ As men and boys enlisted in droves for both the North and South, many caught the first glimpse of the symbol under which most would fight: the national flag.

To demonstrate shifts in American nationalism and rhetoric, this project will focus on comparing individual and newspaper created narratives and their respective uses of flag imagery while examining the origins of flag iconography in the United States. Not only did the newspapers’ accounts of the dramatic split of the Union construct a narrative of events for the general population of the divided nation, but it also inspired a sense of nationalism among these respective citizens. In letters and correspondence between individuals (family, friends, acquaintances, and romantic relations), people identified their causes, separation, and futures with the image of flags. Thus, many individuals drew on the image of the flag when they constructed their own narratives of

⁴ James I. Robertson Jr., Soldiers Blue and Gray (Columbia, 1988), 5.

the conflict. These personal narratives of events during the war were the individual expressions of emerging collective identities for which flags were often the primary visual and symbolic component and inspired the dedication, partisanship, frustration and conflict that marked the country after the Civil War.

The social, economic, and political upheaval seen in the U.S. Civil War did not happen in isolation from broader trends of the Nineteenth Century west. In particular, it can be seen as an example of the transition to democratic liberal unification. In both America and Europe, industrialization and the expansion of the railroad system reshaped economic infrastructures. Population increase and immigration spurred rapid urban growth and discourse concerning political liberty and equality rallied around the notion of a constitutional government. Later, Social Darwinism justified racism and empire building. However, these forces of change were met with the “forces of continuity,” as author Peter Browning has described.⁵ State governments and land-owning aristocrats in the South and Europe used religion, economic and political power, and state government to oppose radical liberal change.

Greater calls for democracy and revisions of the institution of slavery along with mercantilism and industrialization threatened the *noblesse* agrarian tradition of the land-holding class and their social order.⁶ Sectionalism triumphed over nationalism and limited the capabilities of a multidimensional transformation of American national identity. The Civil War challenged these traditional ideologies and left a nation in need of building a common identity among its citizens. The accounts and images printed by newspapers during the war offered an answer. Constructed narratives of patriotism,

⁵ Peter Browning, Revolutions and Nationalities: Europe 1825-1890 (New York, 2000), 9.

⁶ Ibid., 1-13.

heroism, loss, and hardships that all Americans could relate to flourished in newspapers influencing a society and its practice of and perspective on identity and nationalism. The American flag, with its new role as the symbol of American determinism and newly established relationship with the individual, flourished in a society embracing the rise of new American identity.

In a more modern definition of a “nation”, George E. White argued that, “Nationhood is a human construct. Derived from cultural characteristics, it is fluid and highly malleable, overlapping other layers of human identities.” He defined “state” as a “politically organized territory” and concluded that the interchangeability of the two words “shows that human identity is closely tied to place and territory.”⁷ Though Americans shared many cultural characteristics in 1861, Hamiltonian ideas of nationalism had failed with the Whig Party in 1858. Until the secession crisis initiated by South Carolina in 1860, many Americans took for granted the idea of nationhood. The national autonomy of the United States had never been so decisively contested from within United States territory. The wars with Great Britain and Mexico inspired a national cohesiveness but among most American citizens, political and communal identity regionalized within the individual states.

The idea of visual culture is an important aspect of the transformation in American nationalism and the rise of flag iconography. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski defined visual culture studies to comprise “the study of image/objects and also reached beyond them to include the history of vision, visual experience, and its historical construction.” By the 1860s, American culture had been

⁷ George W. White, Nation, State, and Territory: Origins, Evolutions, and Relationships, Vol. 1. (Lanham MD, 2004), 3.

introduced to “image production,” especially through newspapers. During the war, the lives of Americans began to be influenced by “objects produced and consumed primarily...as images and their associated institutions and practices as culturally significant vectors of visual experience.” The Civil War spurred the mass production of images and an explosion of stories about the war. Newspapers such as *Harper’s Weekly* sought to meet the rising demand for visual representation of the conflict of a curious public. The flag became a focal point in these images and the narratives accompanied them.⁸

As secession turned into violent conflict in 1861, both the Union and the Confederacy sought ways to win the hearts and minds of the people who did not necessarily support the politics of union or secession. People on both sides of the conflict wrote personal and public accounts of the events and causes that carried loved ones and neighbors off to war. At least in the beginning, many justified their absence by calling on the symbolism of their respective flags; those who had gone to war did so under a banner that “focused a sense of shared identity and imbued it with political significance.”⁹ Thus, the flag manifested the image of community struggle and in the context of that struggle; individual narratives of the Civil War were created. But these individuals were not left alone to muster all of their patriotism and nationalism. Newspapers, both North and South, took up their own causes and voiced them to the divided country.

To inspire nationalism and support for a cause, the newspapers turned to the images of flags in written word and illustration. In a broad study concerning the significance of the flags in American culture, Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle

⁸ Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, “Visual Culture’s History” in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (New York, 2004), 7.

⁹ Lisa Tickner, “Banner and Banner-Making” in *Ibid.*, 341.

determined that the “sacralization” of the flag, and also of a cause or of national identity, during times of community struggle, most always “required...the enthusiastic assistance of the mass media.”¹⁰ In the case of the Civil War, the “mass media,” consisting of newspapers in Nineteenth Century America, crafted accounts of the events of the war to inspire partisanship by incorporating flag imagery. Their attempts at inspiration, however, had another effect on the history of the Civil War. In the news accounts, politically charged stories, and opinion editorials, newspapers generated narratives of the war for the individuals on the homefront, the soldiers, and for generations to come.

Unlike other conflicts in American history (the Alamo, the Mexican American War, the Spanish American War, or the bombing of Pearl Harbor), the enemy created by the press consisted of other Americans, a people with a similar history, traditions, and language. The press had to find ways to demonize those with which their audiences shared a sense of connectedness. With the imagery of flags embodying patriotism and nationalism, the newspapers on both sides referred to the opposition with words such as disrespect, betrayal, aggression, and invasion. The actions of one tarnished the heritage, tradition, and sovereignty of the other, no matter how many of those aspects they shared. In the case of the Civil War, “righteous revenge”¹¹ exploded from a feeling of brotherly betrayal. Easily produced and distributed reports, narratives, and images of war flooded northern and southern societies like never before.

¹⁰ Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag, (Cambridge, 1999), 5. Marvin and Ingle argue that nationalism and patriotism in American society hold a cult like religious status based on blood sacrifice of new generations. The authors take a sociological and philosophical approach to looking at the American flag and its role in society. For this thesis, the value of their argument lies in the importance of the metaphorical relationship between the flag, blood-sacrifice and group unity, rather than totem taboo rituals.

¹¹ Ibid., 14.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the Civil War had secured a particular place in American history and memory. Sectional tensions and emotional rifts between the defeated South and the victorious North remained fresh in the minds of politicians, veterans, and the general public for decades to come. For the South, the future held notions lionizing the Old South and its heroic bid for independence while the nation as a whole faced creating a new national identity, one in which the power of the federal government had been unquestionably confirmed. Historian Eric Foner described the post-war political economy as an “activist state.” Further, he argued, the war and Reconstruction spawned “a national state possessing vastly expanded authority and a new set of purposes, including an unprecedented commitment to the ideal of a national citizenship.”¹²

American nationalism has its origins in the commonalities between transplanted Englishmen settled throughout the thirteen colonies in the early stages of American history. However, as one author wrote, “As Englishmen, the colonists all belonged to one nation; as Americans, they inhabited different provinces. Their local pride as New Englanders, Pennsylvanians, or Virginians was fierce and their sentiments toward the other colonies only on rare occasions resembled brotherly love.”¹³ After the American Revolution, American national identity and the relationship between the geo-political factions that formed the nation was hardly any more stable. Indeed, much of the America’s early history, internal politics, and foreign relations, does imply a sense of nationhood but also shows the efforts of individual states loosely bonded by a few

¹² Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York, 1990), xvi. Foner also points to the perceived commitment to the right to citizenship and equal rights transcendent of race which threatened traditions and local autonomy in southern communities.

¹³ Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, 1992), 409.

common interests and held together under the Constitution. Such a bond would prove to be one of the Confederacy's most formidable enemies. This is not to say that American nationalism was not a conceptual idea, but the idea was that the nation existed to serve the interests of the states, who, in turn served the interests of the people. The American Civil War changed this perspective by forming a direct relationship between the nation and the people.¹⁴

Nationalism is not a specifically American idea. There is a vast literature on nationalism which demonstrates the fluidity and complexity of the subject. Liah Greenfield's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* defines nationalism and identity by arguing that "national identity in its distinctive modern sense is, therefore, an identity which derives from membership in a 'people,' the fundamental characteristic of which is defined as a 'nation.'¹⁵ While Greenfield addresses nationalism across a wide spectrum of both time and place, the author concluded that the American Civil War "marked the line between the dream of nationality and its realization."¹⁶ By effectively establishing that nationalism is a process that evolves with each generation, Greenfield opened up the possibilities of examining the realization of American nationalism after the Civil War and the role of the media and memory in bolstering this nationalism.

Another insightful book for my research is *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson. This foundational text offers an example of a theoretical insight for this thesis. Anderson historically contextualized nationalisms within "their meanings" in an attempt

¹⁴ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Columbia, 1991), 3-8. Thomas points to the apologias of Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens (President and Vice-President of the Confederacy respectively) who claimed the central issue of the war was fundamental state rights. He argued that the doctrine of state rights had become an embedded aspect of southern culture traced back to the its intellectual origins of Thomas Jefferson.

¹⁵ Greenfield, *Nationalism*, 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 480.

to understand why nationalism and its proponents “command such profound emotional legitimacy.” Moreover, Anderson situates nationalism outside of geo-political exceptionalism, examining nationalism’s ability “to be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.”¹⁷ In addition, the author addresses patriotism and racism as they concern nationalism, a useful perspective considering the centrality of both issues to the American Civil War. Using Anderson’s notions of community allows for the contextualization of American nationalism, community culture, and loyalty in relation to the emerging nationalism during the Civil War.

Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Invention of Tradition* also offers valuable insight for this thesis. His essay, “Inventing Traditions,” addresses the nature of rituals and symbols among people that consider themselves part of a nation. Hobsbawm’s notion that traditions are sometimes “invented” as “tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature... which automatically implies continuity with the past,” offers a valuable context for examining flag iconography during and after the Civil War as a new “tradition.”¹⁸

In the study of Civil War history, there exist relatively few areas that have yet to be explored in some detail. Flags during the Civil War, however, often tend to be addressed in a logistical manner. It has been the work of determining to whom which flags belonged, the meaning of certain emblems or icons on each flag, and of course, honoring those who fought under each flag narrowed down from national to regimental. Some examples of such work include *Emblems of Southern Valor: The Battle Flags of the Confederacy* by Joseph H. Crute, Jr. and a two-volume work, *Advance the Colors!:*

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, 2006), 4.

¹⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 1-4.

Pennsylvania Civil War Battle Flags by Richard A. Sauers. Sauers' study, is a chronicle of Pennsylvania flag history as well as small histories of military units involved in the Civil War and their respective flags.¹⁹

Others have focused on the controversies concerning the Confederate battle emblem and its impact on race relations, politics, and southern identity. Two prominent works are John M. Coski's who wrote *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* and K. Michael Prince's, *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!* These works provide insight into how current issues concerning southern culture have drawn on the past, particularly the nostalgia of the Confederacy and its emblems, to advance new political agendas. Indeed, Prince concluded that Southern History "always seemed to reinvent itself according to familiar design," and "it was there, in nostalgic reminiscence, that the antebellum South found its sense of sustenance."²⁰ The Confederacy's dramatic end added another building block for the nostalgia of the southern tragedy that forged its way through the 20th Century in popular culture and memory.

Among the historiography of Civil War flags at least one book, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South*, by Robert E. Bonner, situates the role of the Confederate Flag as a symbol of nationalism used by the press to rally support for the southern nation. Addressing the visual importance of flags during the war, in the South particularly, Bonner argued that "popular patriotism that placed flags at its center has largely eluded the attention of cultural historians of either the Confederacy or of the Union," neglecting "the powerful ways that these emblems expressed political

¹⁹ Richard A. Sauers, *Advance the Colors!: Pennsylvania Civil War Battle Flags* (Harrisburg, 1987).

²⁰ K. Michael Prince, *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!: South Carolina and the Confederate Flag* (Columbia, 2004), 51.

commitments and elicited military courage in battle” in Civil War society.²¹ His work opened a door for examining flag culture in a broader sense of American history centering on the role of the flag in constructing narratives of that history.

Chapter One of this thesis begins by touching briefly on the creation of the American flag, early American nationalism, and the function of the media prior to the Civil War. In this chapter I argue that newspaper reports of two incidents—in particular the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the death of Elmer Ellsworth in 1861—were central to driving a wedge between northern and southern societies. These crises created an atmosphere producing a narration of the war that had long-lasting consequences for the emergence of the collective identities in the Union and Confederacy.

Chapter Two focuses on the war years and the birth of flag iconography and culture within both the Union and Confederacy. This chapter explores the creation of individual accounts and media disseminations of the war and the use of flag imagery in these accounts. I argue that flag imagery is addressed in terms of the complex relationships symbols and individuals and the functionality of the symbols within the homefront communities and on the battlefield. In addition, the chapter addresses the resolution of the war and its lasting impact in concern with flag culture and the coalescence of a war torn society in a growing visual culture.

Chapter Three concentrates on the national memory of the war and its relationship to flag iconography as well as the formation of an American national identity and narrative. The process of rebuilding a united national identity and promoting a national healing during Reconstruction and into the Twentieth Century benefited from the introduction of flag iconography during the Civil War. Additionally, this chapter focuses

²¹ Robert E. Bonner, Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South (Princeton, 2002), 4.

on newspaper contribution to the rise of patriotism, nationalism, and flag imagery in American society through the subject of the war and mass distribution of print and war images. Lastly, the chapter looks at American flag iconography and its functionality as a symbol for American national memory and mainstay in American culture as a result of the war.

The American Civil War marked a turning point in American nationalism and the rise in use of flag imagery became the symbol of this change. The result of the war created an American culture closely tied to flag iconography. As nationalism triumphed in favor of an unbreakable Union after the Civil War, Americans incorporated the events of the war as the defining moment of American identity and memory. The American flag, an image that had flooded American culture during the war, functioned as a symbol for the war as a heroic conflict of great American patriots. With the rise of flag images in the wartime press, Americans turned to flag imagery in their own personal narratives of courage, pride, and patriotism created during the war. These sometimes romanticized narratives influenced the national healing process by focusing on the brave, heroic, and even tragic events of the war and on the deeds of patriotic Americans both North and South. As southerners were challenged to return their loyalties to the United States, the nation faced the task of placing the war into national memory-but in a manner that promoted reconciliation and not resentment. The nation's symbol, the American flag, which transformed in meaning at the conclusion of the war to encompass the visual representation of a common history, served this purpose.

Chapter 1

By the time of the First Continental Congress in September 1774, unrest and discontent abounded throughout the individual colonies. Common dissatisfaction with British rule motivated delegates from twelve of the thirteen colonies to attend the convention to discuss the presentation of a unified front against intolerable British regulation. At the commencement of the Congress, delegate Patrick Henry from Virginia proclaimed, “We are in a state of nature, sir...The distinction between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian but an American.”¹ In the face of a common enemy, Americans found a reason to unite. Two years later a local newspaper described the election of members to the General Assembly. The theme of a unified front, consisting of the colonies, visualized in the streets of city in the form of a flag, the paper reported. “A number of respectable mechanicks (sic) and other citizens assembled at the coffee-house in the morning, and produced a flag, upon which was an eblematical representation of the thirteen *United Colonies*, with this motto, ‘*In Union there’s Strength.*’”² The creation of this particular flag was the visual and ceremonial expression of the feelings of Patrick Henry nearly two years earlier.

In its rebellion against the British Empire, the orators, politicians, and essayists of the revolutionary generation created the foundation for the spirit of American nationalism. They disseminated this spirit in the broadsheets of the nation. Indeed, as David Waldstreicher argued, American nationalism consisted of “the relationship between local street theater and the nation: a relationship that came into being through

¹ James M. Elson, ed., Patrick Henry: In His Speeches and Writings and in the Words of His Contemporaries (Lynchburg, VA., 2007), 69.

² The Pennsylvania Packet, Feb. 12, 1776.

the mediation of print.” The association between print and American nationalism is undeniable. From the Revolutionary Era through the beginning of the Civil War, the written word mediated nationalism as it “embodied and mobilized a nationalist ideology, an ideology that made consensus the basis of patriotism.” However, until the Civil War, American nationalism was essentially practiced on a local level. Celebratory and political practices between communities shared commonalities that often transcended class boundaries but represented a form of ‘national’ patriotism that was, in fact, essentially regional.³

The Civil War created for the people of the United States an opportunity to forge a new basis for national narrative and perhaps rethink the old practices. Times of the greatest national fervor in America, including its creation, tend to have revolved around military conflict and spilled blood of American citizens. In fact, after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams enthusiastically wrote to his wife that the signing day “ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other.” Adams reminded himself and his wife that celebration could not come without sacrifice, as he was “well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain this declaration.”⁴

It did not take long after establishing peace with Britain for conflict to break out among those who had “drank to the United, Free, and Independent States of America”

³ David Waldstreicher, “Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebration, Print Cultures, and the Origins of American Nationalism.” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 82, No. 1, (Jun., 1995), 37-38, 49.

⁴ Eric Brunn and Jay Crosby, eds., Living History in America: The History of the United States in Documents, Essays, Letters, Songs and Poems (New York, 1999), 150.

concerning the role of the federal government within the ideology of state sovereignty.⁵ Indeed, Patrick Henry, who had once announced to his peers in 1774 his enthusiasm for an American nation; in 1788 he now contested the idea of the strong federal government under the proposed constitution asking his fellow statesmen “Whither is the spirit of America gone?”⁶ Over the next seventy years, Americans across the growing nation attempted to answer this question. Eventually, differing ideas concerning the interpretation of the Constitution, sectionalism, and slavery brought politically diverging Americans into a violent conflict. However, their practices of patriotism and national symbolism shared commonalities, for much of their histories were one and the same.

Within these practices, the flag has enjoyed a time-honored place. George Washington raised what is recognized as the first American Flag in January, 1776, to announce the creation of the Continental Army. The design of the flag changed many times before the Civil War, and the stars and stripes theme decorated a variety of items such as paper money, the national seal, and on political banners. During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key’s wrote his ode to the flag, the “Star-Spangled Banner”, but it was not until the upheaval of the Civil War that the song gained currency. Even by 1860 the American was hardly recognized as the dominant symbol of patriotism among American citizens. It was the Battle of Fort Sumter and the newspapers reportage that catapulted the flag into the national spotlight.⁷ During the four long years of conflict, the “Stars and Stripes” flooded American culture.

⁵ Frank Moore, ed., Diary of the American Revolution, I (New York, 1856), 284.

⁶ Ralph Ketcham, ed., The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates (New York, 2003), 203.

⁷ Mark Leepson, Flag: An American Biography (New York, 2005), 5, 15, 21, 65.

Americans became accustomed to the power of flag iconography over the course of the war and they turned to this image as the symbol of a shared identity, history, and a unified nation at its end. Conflicts such as the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War had brought the flag into the American national context. It had been the symbol of unified opinion concerning conflicts against foreign powers and common enemies of the sectionalized Union, especially among the soldiers involved in those conflicts. The onset of the Civil War, however, caused Americans in sectional communities to search for a national identity that transcended former unifying factors. The war ushered in and established the practice of modern American nationalism and flag symbolism offered a visual connection with that nationalism.⁸

At the onset of the Civil War, the nation recognized the flag as one national symbol but not as the predominant symbol of American nationalism and patriotism embedded with a common identity and history. The war served as a catalyst to solidify the “Stars and Stripes” as the symbol of ideas, of opinions, and of pride for Americans. In the case of the Civil War, the national flags of both the Confederacy and the Union inspired a host of emotions and reactions. These emotions were the result of political cause, on the individual and collective and became invested in national flags. For historian John M. Coski, Confederate flags- national and battle flags-during and after the war served as “the symbolic repository for all the opinions and feelings that surround the

⁸ The relationship with flags and soldiers is unique. Many soldiers who participated in the Civil War were soldiers before in the United States military and had participated in conflicts under the American flag. The attachment to flags by soldiers forms the basis of American flag culture. However, the Civil War brings that culture to the forefront of American society. It begins to take on new meaning to people who have never fought a banner, yet accepted the flag as a symbol of nationalism rather than patriotism alone.

Confederacy,” and it is safe to say that the American flag had the same effect in the reconciled Union.⁹

Of course, each side identified with their own national flag, whose designs were very similar, but the processes of establishing flag iconography as the primary symbol of a nation occurred much the same. The similarities stemmed from the shared history and cultural aspects of the two nations-so much so that after the war, the American flag became the unrivaled and unquestioned symbol of American nationalism and patriotism and incorporated the war and the defeated Confederacy into the national narrative. The early stages of the American Civil War offer a case in which the visual presence of national flags demonstrated for all to see the cause of the collective body, but also the inspirations of the individual.

With so much invested in the flag, it is less than surprising that their presence invoked such sentimental and, in other cases, hostile reactions. In the reports and editorials of the press and individual accounts during the early events of 1861, questions and ideas of national identity often turned to the image of national flags to rally support or provoke outrage. They offered a focal point to create the narratives of the events of the war by the press in a culture becoming accustomed to visual imagery. Easily reproduced and circulated, all that could see the image were capable of “permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder...in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.”¹⁰ Individual citizens invested flags with their own meanings that fit

⁹ John M. Coski “The Confederate Battle Flag in Historical Perspective” in J. Michael Martinez, William D. Richardson, and Ron McNinch-Su, eds., Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South (Gainesville, 2000), 89.

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader (New York, 2004), 65.

into a national narrative to which they remained loyal to their community and the nation which it represented.

The American Civil War divided a nation, but not along a clearly defined geographical boundary. The division was among individuals and sectional regions all across the United States. In fact, a major problem for Southern secessionists was the realization that not everyone in the South supported their efforts to carve a new nation out of an old one. Some chose to be loyal to the United States as whole while others chose to break ties with the United States to form a separate nation from the commonalities between southern states. Secession resembled a revolution of sorts, but the South seceded and “went to war against the existing status quo in the United States, not to accomplish something new, but to defend something old.” Though it may have been a “conservative” revolution, the change or conformation of national identity was no less intense or stressful as a result in both the North and South.¹¹ By April, 1861, the opposing sides were established and the issue of asserting national identity exploded as a political issue in newspapers and among individuals. To stimulate the opinions and emotions of citizens of the North and South alike, national flags found their way into the spotlight.

The political value of the national flag in this conflict lay in the ideas and sentiments that people invested in these symbols now brought to the forefront of the American public. In the case of the Civil War, those people were soldiers and citizens alike, which were often one and the same. Indeed, the majority of the fighting forces on both sides of the conflict were citizens-turned soldiers-an identity that developed and grew over the course of the war aided in part by the ever-present symbol of national will,

¹¹ Emory M. Thomas, The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience (Columbia, 1991), 1.

the flag. Soldiers and loved ones left behind attached their beliefs and justifications for abandoning their normal lives to these flags. As one author explained, “there is something in the impermanent nature of the flag – in both its susceptibility to injury and its fragile ephemerality – that makes it more like us, sealing the bond between flags and men.”¹² This bond reflected a need to know that one’s sacrifice have meaning in the form of the emotional and causal investments made by soldiers and civilians for individual ideology and national causes.

At the outbreak of secession, several opinions existed concerning the fate of the United States and the future of an impending southern confederation. Alexander H. Stephens, Unionist before secession, said of the political tension between North and South just before secession “Good governments can never be built up or sustained by the impulse of passion... Let the fanatics of the North break the Constitution, if such is their fell purpose.”¹³ Even a supporter of the Union, caught up in the emotional tension of sectional differences, detested Republican notions of federal power. Stephens later accepted the vice presidency of the Confederacy.

Another prominent and outspoken figure of the era, Horace Greeley, announced in the *New York Tribune*: “If the cotton states shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we shall insist on letting them go in peace... We hope never to live in a republic where one section is pinned to the residue of bayonets.”¹⁴ Greeley later advocated a more fierce policy towards bringing the rebellious states back into the Union.

The thoughts of these two men, though not necessarily typical, demonstrated the paradoxical ideas that emerged during the early stages of the war. Stephens, a man of

¹² K. Michael Prince, *Rally ‘Round the Flag, Boys!* (Columbia, 2004), 9.

¹³ Joe H. Kirkberger ed., *The Civil War and Reconstruction: An Eyewitness History* (New York, 1991), 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

union sentiment, became the vice-president of those who wished to dissolve that union. Greeley, an outspoken opponent of secession advised that the southern states should be allowed to leave in peace. With these mixed feelings among American citizens, it is not surprising that advocates of the opposing causes (especially the press) looked for a visual symbol to inspire the conscience of their audiences. During the year 1861, the visual manifestation of national flags became the symbol of conflicting ideologies between two nations.

After the announcement of secession by the first seven states, men of all ages rushed to sign up for military service while others who could not serve, including women, became champions of the cause of the Confederacy or the Union. The cause, however, differed among the men who volunteered for their respective countries. The soon to be citizen soldiers rushed to the recruitment offices for different reasons. As James I. Robertson, Jr. wrote, “men and boys who flocked to enlist did so with an excitement of the unknown.”¹⁵ Some went to war for political reasons, some for pride and excitement, and others volunteered for the fight to come for fear of being ridiculed as a coward if they did not.¹⁶

As Lisa Tickner argued, the use of flags or banners “focused a sense of shared identity and imbued it with political significance.” They were “rallying points for the march and commentary on it.”¹⁷ The men went to war “caught up in a heated atmosphere” and were “emotionally moved” by simple but meaningful things, such as

¹⁵ Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 5.

¹⁶ See James McPherson’s *For Cause and Commrades: Why Men fought in the Civil War* (New York, 1997) for further reading on citizen soldier’s reasons to fight in the Civil War.

¹⁷ Lisa Tickner, “Banners and Banner-Making” in Schwartz and Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* 341.

“the sight of a flag waving defiantly at some moment.”¹⁸ Indeed, the visual aspect of the national flags during the early stages of the American Civil War inspired emotions, both sentimental and vengeful and served as a constant visual reminder of why the soldiers and citizens were involved in such a terrible but seemingly necessary situation.

The visual presence of the flag during these times of high emotions and frailty only added to the rashness and impulsiveness of soldiers and citizens alike. For one young soldier it was too much to imagine the degradation of his beloved flag, writing his father, “Will it be necessary only when our land is invaded and laid to waste with fire and sword; our homes desolated; our loved ones butchered-when the Confederate Flag trails in the dust...”¹⁹ The spirited soldier reminded his father of the cause and of patriotism by pointing to the Confederate symbol desecrated by invaders. Likewise, an Iowa farmer, after receiving the news of war, inquired to the patriotism of his aunt and uncle in the spring of 1861. Patriotism intensified his inquiry as he questioned theirs: “War! War! Seems to be the order of the day! Does patriotism for the stars and stripes kindle in your breasts? It seems to be a time when we can show to the world that there is still the old love of Liberty coursing in our veins.”²⁰ The flag had come to symbolize both the literal and figurative home of American liberty.

Flags had come to be invested with more emotion in the growing sectional conflict. Its origins lay in the four decades of debate over labor and economy, deep-seated problems that came to be boiled down into easily communicated symbols of “liberty” and “nation.” For Woodworth: “Whatever these men were fighting for seems

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ William B. Styple ed., *Writing and Fighting From The Army of Northern Virginia* (New Jersey, 2003), 27.

²⁰ Oren Shorts letter, May 5, 1861. Ms89-047 Virginia Tech Civil War Special Collections.

to have been better expressed in material symbols than in reasoned discourse.”²¹ By early 1861, the increasing popularity of flags and other symbols demonstrated that the Confederacy and the United States had moved beyond the point of rational conversation.

In fact, the past four decades of discourse between the southern and northern politicians concerning labor and economy had led to the impending conflict. In any case, by early 1861 the Confederacy and the United States appeared to be separated beyond the point of rational conversation, and the opposing national flags visually confirmed such separation.

Secession and the Formation of a Confederate Nationality

Erik Erikson posited that “it takes a well established identity to tolerate radical change.” Many southerners chose to believe that the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 represented radical change and threatened southern community order and identity. Likewise, threats of secession by some southern states destabilized the very idea of an American identity and the very fabric of the nation itself. Neither northerners nor southerners proved willing to tolerate what was perceived as “radical change,” suggesting that pre-Civil War American society, which had witnessed the sectional tensions between free and slave states for nearly four decades, lacked a well established national identity.²²

As the South Carolina Secession Convention approached its assembly date in Charleston, the political tension between the North and the South reached a fevered pitch. With deep rooted sectional differences, the irreconcilable result of the Democratic

²¹ Steven E. Woodworth ed., The Loyal, True, and Brave: America’s Civil War Soldiers (Delaware, 2002), 16.

²² Erik H. Erikson, Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytical Insight (New York, 1964), 96.

Convention, and the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln, the political climate deadlocked. The country watched to find out who would act first. Away from the convention, Charleston Harbor sat in anxious stillness. Any military movement pertaining to the forts that defended the harbor would be a decisive act of hostility that neither South Carolina nor the United States could afford to make. However, as Charleston Mayor Charles Macbeth stated a few weeks before the convention, if secession was to be the course of South Carolina, then the forts surrounding the harbor ““must be theirs.”” Major Robert Anderson and his Union troops, stationed at Fort Moultrie, waited with apprehension with no instruction and no expectation of “assistance from Washington.”²³ When South Carolina seceded, things changed overnight: “On December 19, 1860, the presence of American troops in Charleston presented no official complications. By the morning of December 20, however, the soldiers were a ‘foreign army’ in possession of some Palmetto real estate.”²⁴ Later that day, the *Charleston Mercury* printed an extra edition which announced in bold letters: “The Union is Dissolved.”²⁵

Feeling that it was only a matter of time before the newly seceded South Carolinians would turn their attention to the harbor defenses under his command, Major Anderson, on the evening of December 26, transferred his small garrison at Fort Moultrie across the bay to the unfinished Fort Sumter. Upon arriving at the fort, an officer under Anderson’s command wrote in a private letter, “Tomorrow morning, the stars and stripes will be hoisted over our new position, although the sight will sting South Carolina to the

²³ David Detzer, *Allegiance: Fort Sumter, Charleston, and the Beginning of the Civil War* (New York, 2001), 59, 79, 85.

²⁴ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York, 1979), 67-68.

²⁵ Ford Risley, ed., *The Civil War: Primary Documents on Events from 1860 to 1865* (Connecticut, 2004), 37.

quick.”²⁶ The officer could not have been more correct. The United States flag waving over Fort Sumter struck severely at the emotions of the Palmetto State citizens. On December 28, 1860 under the headline of “Major Anderson,” an anonymous writer to the *Charleston Mercury* proclaimed “Maj. Robert Anderson, U.S.A., has achieved the unenviable distinction of opening civil war between American citizens by an act of gross breach of faith.” Of course Americans on the other side of the line could read reports in the *Chicago Tribune* that Major Anderson’s action had “brought with it not merely a nation’s gratitude for the patriotism of the man, but a nation’s admiration for the genius which conceived and the decision which executed the act.”²⁷ In any case, from the moment Anderson stepped ashore at Fort Sumter until mid-April 1861, the citizens of Charleston visibly saw their claim to autonomy challenged by the “Stars and Stripes” waving across the bay.

Certainly, the Harper’s Weekly image of Major Anderson and his troops raising the “Stars and Stripes” over Fort Sumter echoed the popular northern sentiment of patriotism. The sketch itself portrays a triumphant but humble circle of Anderson and his men paying respect to the flag of which they would defend for several months inside hostile Charleston Harbor. The men, paying full respect to the flag in an almost religious ceremonial expression, look to be preparing for consequences of their now recognized actions. Above all, the image must have been an inspiring one to Unionists. The central figure in the image is the American flag, and the portrayal of the troops in the state of supreme respect and honor for the beloved symbol attempted to evoke inspiration from

²⁶ As quoted in Detzer, *Allegiance*, 121.

²⁷ Risley, *Civil War: Primary Documents*, 63-64.

its viewers.²⁸ It was images such as this that began to redefine collective identities in the United States.

By April, Major Anderson and his men had guarded Fort Sumter for 107 days with no relief and food supplies on the brink of exhaustion. In early January the federal government in Washington had attempted to supply the fort when the ship *Star of the West* sailed toward Charleston Harbor with supplies and 250 soldiers. However, South Carolinian Major Peter F. Stevens' artillery battery on Morris Island fired upon the ship and sent it retreating to New York.²⁹ The situation escalated on April 6 when Lincoln informed the South Carolina governor that an expedition force would be sent to re-supply Fort Sumter. If resistance did not occur, Lincoln stated, there would be no military reinforcements sent along with the supplies. With supplies on the way and the newly formed Confederacy's sovereignty in question, Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker instructed the commander of the Confederate forces at Charleston to demand the surrender of Fort Sumter. Twice Major Anderson refused the offer to surrender his garrison. He did add that his garrison would be forced to evacuate the fort by April 15 for lack of rations.³⁰

With United States' troops and supplies in route to the fort, the Confederacy could not allow the garrison to remain in enemy hands. To do so would place the new nations' sovereignty in question, especially if the fort was allowed to be re-supplied. After learning that the forces surrounding Fort Sumter would begin the bombardment at 4 a.m., Anderson "ordered someone to raise the American Flag," one that could be seen from all

²⁸ Harper's Weekly, Jan. 26, 1861. See Image 1.

²⁹ Detzer, Allegiance, 157.

³⁰ Kirkberger, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 47-48.

around the harbor, for “he wanted it waving above his post when the South Carolinians – now, finally, his enemy – opened fire.”³¹

On April 9, *The New York Herald* announced that “the revolution in the South is beginning to assume a more decided attitude, and its proportions apparently have struck terror into the midst of the present administration.”³² However, Confederate authorities agonized over how to deal with Lincoln’s reinforcements, now on their way down the coast. To allow the fort to be reinforced sacrificed southern national sovereignty; to deny the reinforcements could mean civil war.³³ At 4:30 in the morning on April 12, a single mortar shot fired across the night sky towards Fort Sumter. The bombardment began.

Throughout the two days of the barrage, the flag was presented for all in the harbor to see. The American flag stood atop the flagstaff of Fort Sumter, a focal point for the emerging narrations of the crisis. For some, to fire upon the American flag insulted the authority of the federal government; while others believed they were acting in the way of the revolutionary Founding Fathers by rebelling against an oppressive and detached government. The positions concerning the situation at Fort Sumter did not fall strictly along sectional lines. In fact, a contributor to the *Knoxville Whig* wrote in disgust of the acts of South Carolinians as the “deed(s) of men bent upon a diabolical revolution, hungering and thirsting for blood and slaughter.” Indeed, this same writer also criticized the federal government, which he believed “was unwise, stubborn, sectional, and ignorant of the state of public sentiment in the South.”³⁴ According to this disenchanted observer,

³¹ As quoted in Detzer, *Allegiance*, 257-58, 267.

³² *New York Herald*, Apr. 9, 1861.

³³ Detzer, *Allegiance*, 254-55.

³⁴ Risley, *The Civil War*, 37.

both the United States' and the Confederacy's attempts to establish sovereignty were appalling and national identity meant nothing without responsible actions.

In the two days that passed during the attack on Fort Sumter, the symbol of success and failure, of aggressor and coerced, and of the federal and sovereign was the American flag. During the battle, the flag represented the ebb and flow of the fight, and of the success of the secessionist or the federal government. The hostilities, it seemed, depended on its visibility. During the bombardment, the commanding Confederate general sent a messenger to offer surrender terms to Major Anderson. Colonel Louis Wigfall, under the flag of truce, approached Anderson who was surprised to notice that firing had not ceased. He questioned Wigfall declaring that ““they were still firing on him,”” to which the Confederate officer replied, ““Then take your flag down...they will continue to fire upon you as long as that is up.””³⁵

Some time before this encounter, the flagstaff at Fort Sumter shattered under Confederate fire, but the flag reappeared. One reporter noted that, “at the expiration of about twenty minutes, it (the flag) again appeared upon the eastern rampart, and announced that resistance was not ended.” On April 14, the soldiers and spectators in Charleston Harbor breathed a sigh of relief “when the booming of the guns upon the parapets of Fort Sumter, announced the lowering of the “Stars and Stripes.” For onlookers, the scene of the surrender was both exhilarating and sentimental. One writer described Major Anderson “slowly lowering his flag” as an emotional experience with “...the shouts from assembled thousands, upon the shores and the steamers, and every

³⁵ Battle of Fort Sumter and First Victory of the Southern Troops, April 13th, 1861 (Charleston, 1861), 9. Virginia Tech Civil War Special Collections.

species of water craft.”³⁶ Shortly thereafter, the South Carolinians viewed from afar as the Palmetto flag and secessionist troops exiled the unwelcome force and replaced the offense to Confederate sovereignty with the Palmetto flag.

The pivotal events at Fort Sumter provided fuel for the patriotic fire among northern and southern citizens and the press sought to exploit the enthusiasm brought on by the crisis. Press reports of the battle, focused on the symbolism of the American flag flying above Fort Sumter during the battle and the Confederate flag flying over the ramparts after the fort’s surrender. The *Charleston Press* followed the battle with attentiveness and the expression of Southern patriotism unprecedented in the new Confederate nation. However, the press was not alone in witnessing this spectacular event as demonstrated by a publication compiled of articles from the *Charleston Press* titled “The Battle of Fort Sumter.”³⁷

On the eve of April 11, masses of citizens had gathered around Charleston Harbor to catch a glimpse and hear the noise of the first shots fired in the name of the Confederacy, staying until the wee hours of the morning before plodding homeward. The somnolent spectators slept little that night when cannon fire disrupted their slumber as the report went on to imply:

...our citizens, aroused to a forgetfulness of their fatigue through many weary houses, rushed again to the points of observation; the roaring of ordnance, and before thousands of spectators whose homes, and liberties, and lives were at stake, was enacted this first great scene in the opening drama of this most momentous military history.

In the moonlight the spectators could see “the grim fortress rising so defiantly out of the sea” and in the center of that fortress, under a hail of cannon fire, stood the flagstaff of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

the fort which, in “the deepening twilight revealed the stars and stripes floating defiantly in the breeze.” Indeed, southern spectators witnessed this historic event and visible through the emotional turbulence of the bombardment was the flag of their former nation. Only upon its descent did the spectators, tied as much to the representations that gave meaning to the flag, understand that “this first fortress of despotic power fell prostrate to the cause of Southern Independence.”³⁸ They did not see themselves as the “defiant” group of a formerly unified nation, but as the protectors against those who defied South Carolinian and Confederate self-declared sovereignty symbolically placed before them on the flagstaff of Fort Sumter.

As Southerners celebrated the fall of Fort Sumter, famed lawyer Horace Binney perhaps best expressed the North’s overwhelming sentiment and foretold of things to come writing, “There is among us but one thought, one object, one end, one symbol, -the Stars and Stripes. We are to a great degree at present, and will shortly be throughout, an armed nation.”³⁹ Violent conflict and the bloodshed of an entire generation loomed in the near future.

Defiance in Virginia: The Elmer Ellsworth Affair

The Commonwealth of Virginia avoided secession in the first rush to leave the Union. Indeed, in February Virginia leaders initiated a Peace Convention, and hoped for a political resolution that would avoid armed conflict. The firing on Fort Sumter in April, however, determined that peaceful resolve was impossible.

Some in Virginia condemned the actions of South Carolina in writing. One angry Virginian declared in the *Richmond Whig* that “We have never had a doubt that it was the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

³⁹ Commager, *The Civil War Archive*, 72.

deliberate purpose of South Carolina, by some rash, illegal steps, to involve all her sister Southern States in a calamity of civil war.”⁴⁰ But Lincoln’s call for more troops in aftermath of Fort Sumter aroused great anxiety. The Baltimore *Sun* headlined the day’s news on April 15, 1861 with the words “Important from Washington, Proclamation of President Calling Out.” *The Sun* quoted Lincoln’s call for troops:

Where as the laws of the United States have been for some time [sic] and now are opposed, and the execution thereof obstructed in the State of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, by combinations too powerful to suppressed by ordinary course of judicial proceedings...I, Abraham Lincoln, of the United States, in virtue of the power in me vested by the constitution and the laws, have though fit to call forth, and here by do call forth the militia of the several states of the Union to the aggressive author of seventy-five thousand, in order to suppress said combinations, and cause the laws to be duly executed.

The article added that, “the greatest anxiety prevails everywhere.”⁴¹ With this proclamation, Lincoln resolved to use forcible and armed conflict to recall the rebellious states and preserve the integrity of the Union, and it required every state remaining in the Union to provide the troops.

Thereafter, the potential for armed conflict grew more likely, and not every state in the Union was willing to answer Lincoln’s proclamation. As Emory Thomas wrote, “the President’s call for volunteers pushed the slave states off the fence.” It was this issue that turned the tide in Virginia. Hastily, the Virginia state convention that had been debating the issue of secession since February voted 88 to 55 in favor of leaving the Union.⁴² Furthermore, Virginia resolved not to allow this military force to cross over its land to put down the so-called rebellion; her own state autonomy was under attack.

⁴⁰ Risley, *The Civil War*, 64.

⁴¹ *The Sun*, Apr. 15, 1861.

⁴² Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 93.

Governor John Letcher of Virginia answered Lincoln's call for troops announcing "I have only to say that the militia of Virginia will not be furnished to the powers at Washington... You have chosen to inaugurate civil war, and having done so we will meet it in a spirit as determined as the Administration has exhibited toward the South..."⁴³ To the rest of the seceded states, Virginia was a welcome ally. On April 18, *The Macon Telegraph*, reported with pride and a profound sense of flattery that the Confederacy should: "Hang out our banners! Virginia, the mother of states and of statesman has seceded at last and joined her children in their gallant struggle for the dignity and rights of independent free men! Shout true hearted Southerners, Virginia is with us! All is right! The day is ours."⁴⁴

For the first time since the Revolution, Virginia waved a new flag representative of a new country. Less than a week later, the same newspaper reprinted a story from the *Richmond Enquirer*. The article described the scene of the capitol in Richmond and the raising of Virginia's new banner stating, "Yesterday morning the flag of the Southern Confederacy with eight stars was displayed over the capitol in which the convention sits, and it is still there."⁴⁵ Virginia had officially seceded from the Union and a peculiar situation arose for the United States government and Abraham Lincoln; Washington D.C. now bordered hostile territory.

Across the Potomac River, stationed in Camp Lincoln in the United States capitol, bivouacked the 11th New York Zouves commanded by a young officer and a friend of Abraham Lincoln, Elmer Ellsworth. Colonel Ellsworth and his men had left New York at the end of April. Indeed, the Fire Department Zouves inspired the citizens of their native

⁴³ Kirkberger, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 56.

⁴⁴ *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, Apr. 18, 1861.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Apr. 24, 1861.

state, a reporter stated, “With our citizens at large, a procession of firemen is always an event of considerable interest; and it is not therefore to be wondered at that a regiment of 'Fire Zouaves' enrolled under the command of the gallant Ellsworth... would call forth a popular ovation, such as that which was witnessed yesterday.”⁴⁶ At this particular ceremony, the newly formed regiment received a new set of colors, donated by several prominent citizens of the city.

In an emotional speech, the chief of the fire department bid farewell to the regiment invoking the flag as inspiration and comfort: “‘The Star Spangled Banner in Triumph we shall wave.’ Let this be your war cry as your rush to the onset; let it nerve your arms and fire your ranks, face it in triumph only; and do your bring it back, sir, though it be tattered and torn in the fight. Old associates, remember on every trial that the thousands here around you have placed in your hands a glorious charge. Go forth from this hour and swear this flag to live, for this flag to die. 'People have high hope in you. You have established a character for noble daring which has received the admiration and the tribute of the people.’”⁴⁷ Ellsworth’s earnest reply encompassed his personal feelings and his regiment’s attachment to the flag “We shall carry that flag into battle... I will say that, should we come back, we will bring back these colors as pure and as unsullied as they are now. In this we pledge our lives.”⁴⁸ With these sentiments behind them, the regiment marched for Washington under the national banner of the United States.

Across the river from the capitol at Washington D.C. rested the town of Alexandria. Atop the Marshall House, a local hotel waved the Confederate flag. Indeed, two of Lincoln’s advisors noted in their biography of the president that the dissenting

⁴⁶ New York Herald, Apr. 30, 1861.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Apr. 30, 1861.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

symbol flew ““in plain view of the windows of the Executive Mansion in Washington.”” Among the bureaucrats and military personal stationed in the United States capitol, including young Ellsworth conversation turned to that insulting symbol across the river. While emotions no doubt flared in reaction to what visibly demonstrated treason to the Union supporters, the time was not appropriate to take action. It would be May 23, 1861 before the state of Virginia officially joined the Confederacy.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, young Ellsworth and the rest of Washington looked toward Alexandria and the rebellious symbol exhibited defiantly for all to see. Now it was the Confederate flag that threatened the autonomy and unity of the Unites States just as the American flag had done at Fort Sumter toward the Confederacy. Once again, flags influenced emotions and heightened tensions among nations and among individuals.

On the morning of May 24, a few hours after the confirmation of secession in Virginia, Colonel Ellsworth and his Zouves, Ellsworth and his men boarded three steamboats and crossed the river into Virginia. After landing, Ellsworth detached companies for strategic military duties such as cutting telegraph lines and disrupting the railways that led to Richmond. As the colonel moved farther into Alexandria, he set his sights on the Confederate flag atop the Marshall House. Ellsworth entered the hotel and demanded to know the name of the person who had raised the banner. He and several men ascended the stairs to the attic and found the flagstaff, cutting down the offending flag. However, starting back down the stairs he was met by the owner of the hotel James M. Jackson, a prideful secessionist who shot and killed the colonel with a double barreled

⁴⁹ Ruth Painter Randall, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth (Boston, 1960), 244.

shotgun. With the symbol of the southern insurrectionist cause in his hands, Colonel Ellsworth died in the service of the United States.⁵⁰

Union forces captured Alexandria and in the death of Ellsworth and his flag became the symbol for the cost of victory. Vengeance flowed through the hearts of the Union forces that had invaded Alexandria with Ellsworth. In fact, Ellsworth's very own regiment spent the following night aboard ship to prevent hostilities against residents and property in newly occupied Alexandria. Washington citizens, upon hearing the news of first officer killed during the Civil War, demonstrated their deep remorse as "church bells began to toll and one by one the flags were seen sliding down their staffs to half mast."⁵¹ A few days after the tragic event, *The Philadelphia Enquirer* reported the events of Ellsworth's death under the headline "THE ASSASSINATION." The report quoted an eyewitness who saw "the rebel flag, stained with his blood...we laid about his feet."⁵² Ellsworth died to remove a symbol of rebellion, leaving the memory of the young soldier and of his death to the public.

The press took up the cause of Ellsworth and on the day following the colonel's death, the *New York Herald* proclaimed for its readers:

The sun of the 24th of May has risen and exposed to our gratifying gaze the Stars and Stripes floating over Alexandria, where the secession flag has been haunting the sight for weeks past. Truly the past has been a great night work for the Union. Secession is suddenly doomed, and nothing but an ignominious doom awaits the leading traitors in this great wrong against popular government and free institutions.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 257-58.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 261. Emphasis in original.

⁵² *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, May 27, 1861.

⁵³ *The New York Herald*, May 25, 1861.

May 24th began with the death of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth and ended with an established martyr for the Union cause. Now the northern press not only had the image of flags to call on, but also the death of a Union soldier who died attempting to remove a symbol of defiance towards the United States.

There was one man in Washington who could not help but to receive the news of Ellsworth's death hard upon his own conscience. Newly elected President Abraham Lincoln, had been faced with holding the nation together from the beginning of his presidency, but Ellsworth's death was personal. A few years earlier, Ellsworth had served as an apprentice at Lincoln's law firm in Springfield, Illinois and Lincoln had been in New York to see Ellsworth and the New York Zouves off to war.

After hearing the news of Ellsworth's death, the President lost control of his emotions while the gentlemen in the room with him observed in awe their Commander and Chief.⁵⁴ Upon regaining his composure, Lincoln explained to the visitors, "I will make no apology, gentlemen, for my weakness; but I knew poor Ellsworth well and held him in great regard." For Lincoln too, the Ellsworth's death was an important symbol of sacrifice. He declared the loss of Ellsworth a great sacrifice for the country and that there was on symbol of comfort for the future of the United States:

There is one fact that has reached me, which is a great consolation to my heart and quite a relief after this melancholy affair. I learn from several persons, that when the Stars and Stripes were raised again in Alexandria, many of the people of the town actually wept for joy and manifested the liveliest gratification at seeing this familiar and loved emblem once more floating above them. This is another proof that all the South is not secessionist; and it is my earnest hope that as we advance we shall find as many friends as foes.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Randall, Ellsworth, 261-62.

⁵⁵ Don E. Fehrenbacher and Virginia Fehrenbacher eds., Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln (California, 1996), 8-9.

Indeed, for the past several months he had gazed from the executive room in the White House only to see a different visual symbol across the river, one of defiance. It no longer held its contentious position, but its removal came with great sacrifice. Consequently, from Lincoln's statements concerning the raising of the American flag in Alexandria, the event offered a piece of the narrative that concerned national identities in the North and the South. Despite the perceived notion that sectional differences were universal on either side of the Mason Dixon Line, some of the reactions to the American flag in Alexandria proved otherwise.

The event did not go unheralded in the South. The *Charleston Mercury* introduced the owner of Marshall House hotel, James W. Jackson, to southerners as a "gallant fellow" and declared his actions "among the many acts of self-devotion which will yet stem the current of invasion, his will not be forgotten or unhonored."⁵⁶ Thus the South also gained a martyr from the events that occurred in Alexandria. Indeed, the newspaper viewed the events as the manifestation of dueling ideologies with the respective flags as the visual representation of those ideas. The article explained, "It was he (Jackson) who cut down the LINCOLN flag at Occoquan, in spite of threats that he would be shot if he did," and upon the invocation that Alexandria be evacuated "he declared his flag should never fall unless he should have fallen first." A newspaper described the scene at the Marshall House: "It had been seen floating defiantly for a long time, and this morning he undertook to make his (Ellsworth) promise good, and entering the hotel with a squad of soldiers to pull it down, JACKSON, determining to sell at least one foot of Virginia soil for its full value, dropped him in his tracks, and an instant

⁵⁶ The Charleston Mercury, June 3, 1861. Emphasis in original.

afterwards fell himself.”⁵⁷ The South now had a hero of its own in Jackson, the defender of the southern flag.

While Ellsworth was on a mission to remove the secession flag, Jackson was as equally resolved to have the flag kept in its place. In taking Ellsworth’s life and giving his own in protection of that flag, Jackson achieved martyrdom overnight and strengthened the notion of a “blood-sacrifice” for the nation and its symbol. Nearly two months later, the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* described the death of Jackson in an article titled *Sketch of the Martyr Jackson*. “When he met Ellsworth coming down with the flag wrapped around him... Without uttering a word-it was enough that his flag had been taken down-Jackson shot him through the heart, the load carrying a part of the flag... into the heart itself, where it was afterward found.”⁵⁸ The story wove a tale of patriotism and nationalism closely related to the flag, and for the first time blood had been spilled in its name.

In June, *Harper’s Weekly* published a sketch of the tragic death of Ellsworth on the cover page of the newspaper. The image was a recreated action sketch of Jackson firing the shot at Ellsworth who clutches his chest in agony as he begins to fall down the steps in death. In the corner of the front page is a sketch of the Marshall House with the infamous “Stars and Bars” flying above. In other words, not only does the viewer receive an image of Ellsworth’s death, but also an image of the reason he was killed waving against the skyline. Lurking in the shadow, Ellsworth’s assassin created with his gunshot

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

⁵⁸ *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 20, 1861

a martyr for the North. The sketch of the incident offers for those outraged by the assassination a tragic, almost Shakespearean, portrayal of their martyr's last moments.⁵⁹

Spectators in Washington and Alexandria, and readers all across the North and South, defended their sectional allegiance based on the image of the flags and the narratives of the events of which the flags had played such a great part. Unionists exalted the name of Ellsworth, the brave defender of the Union who had acted to bring down the symbol of a rebellious and insubordinate faction of the United States. He confirmed the sovereignty of the federal government with his life. By contrast, secessionists echoed praises of patriotism and loyalty for the deceased Jackson who was reported as “instantly put to death—some say by both bullet and bayonet.”⁶⁰ The ordeal at the Marshall House, in fact, confirmed the suspicions of newly seceded Virginians on the individual level that the incident was an example of the invasion of personal property by an all powerful federal government. The Confederate flag defended to the last by Jackson spoke to the resolve of many Virginians and symbolized their commitment to defiance. All across the new Confederate nation, newspaper headlines announced the invasion into Virginia. One report printed in Texas simply described the actions in Alexandria and the deed of Jackson: “The famous Col. Ellsworth pulls down the Confederate flag, and is shot by a *Patriot*.”⁶¹

In February, 1861, Howell Cobb, a staunch secessionist from Georgia and former Secretary of the Treasury announced to the Montgomery Convention that with the United States, “the separation is perfect, complete and perpetual.”⁶² Cobb, of course, spoke of

⁵⁹ Harper's Weekly, June 15, 1861. See Image 2.

⁶⁰ Pittsfield Sun, May 30, 1861.

⁶¹ The Standard, June 11, 1861. Emphasis in original.

⁶² Kirkberger, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 53.

the political ties between the seceded southern states and the United States, and not of the deeper seated and emotional ties between former America patriots and a new national identity they would be forced to construct as members of the new Confederate nation. In constructing the narratives of events that confirmed sovereignty or challenged autonomy, it became clear that the use of national flags as symbols of common causes, and in some instances, as a focal point of propaganda served as a method of establishing national identity in both the new Confederate nation and the United States. The wartime press played a pivotal role in constructing national identities by turning to the image of national flags to inspire support or condemnation among their subscribers. Not only did the physical presence of a flag evoke emotions of the fighting men, but also of the spectators, and of those who would read the narrative accounts of the events after the fact. The national flag assumed a fundamental role in how citizens and soldiers alike constructed their loyalties and national identities during 1861.

With these two dramatic events and the narratives that enshrined them in the national discourse, the separated nation saw in critical events flag imagery that had never before flooded the nation in such fervor. An American symbol had been solidified. The symbol of nationalism and patriotism in the United States unquestionably became the flag. Though separated during the war, the North and South shared similar devotion and allegiance to flag imagery. A people faced with crisis react in many different ways. As secession, the attack on Fort Sumter, and the death of Elmer Ellsworth Americans both North and South invested meaning into these events and into the flags that had been come to represent them.

Chapter 2: Deepening the Divide

The secession of the southern states called into question traditions of American nationalism that had been dedicated to emphasizing sectional differences rather than unity for much of the past fifty years. Northerners and southerners called on the same histories of the generations that came before them to defend their ideas and actions. As communities all across the Union and Confederacy looked to their American heritage for inspiration, many of them found comfort in the “Old Flag.” New groups began to take part in sculpting American identity, and the war provided a catalyst to bring those groups into the national discourse. Woman, African Americans, and first-generations immigrants influenced the idea of American identity that emerged after the war. All across the North, imagery of the American flag flooded these communities. In the South, many felt that the new national flag of the Confederacy had incorporated into it the American heritage resonating in the “Stars and Stripes.” Many Americans faced a crisis in terms of national identity and looked for symbols that defined their nationality and represented their allegiance during the conflict. It was the process of forging a national identity and the crisis of war that provoked citizens and soldiers to invest Civil War flags with meaning.

As the seceded states elected representatives to gather in Montgomery, Alabama to create a government that would unite the South, another issue pressed the new nation. What would be the symbols that represented the national identity of a country that had acted as individual states and now wished to form a common bond? Their northern counterparts reacted to secession calling on traditional patriotic songs, images, and the Revolutionary past. Moreover, the American flag, as the symbol of patriotism for a

national cause, began to be unfurled all across the North. Southerners faced a challenge almost in every facet of government and national identity formation that northerners did not. The federal government and national identity of the Union was established and functional, the Confederacy did not have such a luxury. Moreover, when Major Robert Anderson and his garrison took shelter in Fort Sumter after South Carolina seceded, Unionists across the North and South could take solace in the sight of the American flag waving high above the fort. One northern newspaper reported that in Philadelphia the townspeople had gathered to commend Major Anderson's plight "declaring that persons who wage war against the United States...public enemies, and declaring that the American flag shall be protected to the last extremity."¹

On the same day in January as the northern newspaper printed a community's decision concerning secessionist hostilities, opinion in a Louisiana newspaper pondered the heritage and connection to the American flag. The author lamented: "There are too many memories, southern memories at that, connected with it, to permit it to be discarded for the newly invented banners of those who forgot Washington and Jackson fought under its folds." Much of the rest of the article included a brief history of the Revolution and the construction of the first American flags.²

Less than three weeks later, Louisiana seceded and no longer could call the flag its national symbol, but the emotional attachment lingered. As this article demonstrated, however intense the political climate and the push for secession may have been, many southerners recognized the history and tradition of the 'Old Flag' and were not quick to abandon it.

¹ New York Herald, Jan. 6, 1861.

² The Daily True Delta, Jan. 6, 1861.

The men who gathered at the Confederate Congress in February 1861 recognized the need for a new national symbol that demonstrated the separation from the Union and the legitimacy of the Confederacy. The Confederacy, for its own benefit, needed a symbol that could give its citizens a symbol of the new nation, if for no other reason than to help the stress of the transition from the Union to the Confederacy. On February 9, 1861 the Confederate Congress appropriated a committee, one representative from each state, to implement a flag. With a committee selected, not much time passed before representatives of the states began voicing their opinions concerning the design of the flag. Five days after the Committee on Flag and Seal was constructed, Walker Brooke of Mississippi recommended:

That the committee on the Flag and Seal of the Confederacy be instructed to adopt and report a flag, similar as possible to the flag of the United States making only such changes as may be necessary to distinguish easily the one from the other, and to adopt the former in the arrangement of its stars and stripes to the number of States in the Confederacy.³

Mr. Brooke exhibited the sentiment of many of those who had embraced secession, though perhaps reluctantly, and focused less on creating a new image but rather on one that encompassed the South's connection to American heritage.

Paradoxically, many southerners wishing to be separated from the United States did not want to be disassociated completely from the past. After all, to some, secession had only been necessary to preserve particular southern social and economic interests and did not necessarily mean the rejection of all things American. The Confederate Constitution was a written testament to this fact, for it nearly mirrored the United States Constitution in all except the Preamble.⁴

³ Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865, 1: (Washington, 1904), 40, 48.

⁴ Marshall L. DeRosa, The Confederate Constitution of 1861 (Columbia, 1991), 135-151.

Over the next several months, dozens of recommendations flooded the Congressional proceedings. By the time the Congress adopted a flag in March, over one hundred design suggestions had reached the Congress in Montgomery.⁵ When the committee returned with its report, the struggle over breaking away from a nation that the southern states had invested a great deal was ever more apparent. The committee looked back to its forefathers that had successfully revolted against Britain pointing out that “They were determined to build up a new power among the nations of the world,” and imitation did not suffice. The committee therefore adopted a flag described as such:

...the flag of the Confederate States of American shall consist of a red field with a white space extending horizontally through the center, and equal in width to one-third the width of the flag. The red spaces above and below to be the same width as the white. The union blue extending down through the white space and stopping at the lower red space. In the center of the union a circle of white stars corresponding in number with the States in the Confederacy. If adopted, long may it wave over a brave, a free, and a virtuous people.⁶

Confederate nationalists now had an image to invest there ideas and future. Citizens all across the South went to work crafting the image and preparing to defend the new nation and its symbol.

Woman and Minorities

With men and boys rushing off to defend their homes, the homefront was left in question. The young men of the nation, swept away by the vehemence and excitement of war, enlisted with such an idealistic notion of war that writer and poet Herman Melville wrote of the coming conflict, “Grief to every graybeard/ When young Indians lead the war.”⁷

⁵ Bonner, *Colors and Blood*, 47.

⁶ *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865*, 1: 101-02.

⁷ Kaplan, ed. *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War by Herman Melville*, (21.

With a large portion of the male working force leaving for war, women stepped replace the lost labor. Though not generally scurrying off to battle, patriotism was no less a part of their consciousness. One southern woman recorded in her diary the scene of her everyday life in Alexandria, Virginia, as the Confederacy prepared for war.

Our soldiers must be equipped. Our parlor was the rendezvous for the neighborhood, and our sewing machine was in requisition for weeks. Scissors and needles were plied by all. The daily scene was most animate. The fires of our enthusiasm and patriotism were burning all the while to a degree which might have been consuming, but that our tongues served as safety-valves.

She explained her own recognition of the solemn matter and the sacrifices that faced her new country, “All ages, all conditions, meet now on one common platform. We must all work for our country.”⁸

Mrs. Loula Kendal Rogers, a graduate of Wesleyan College, witnessed in Augusta, Georgia “the marriage of the ‘Empire and Palmetto States,’” Georgia and South Carolina. In a celebration of secession, citizens had gathered near the Savannah River to raise “the old Revolutionary Flag” but could not find anyone brave enough to climb the tall and flimsy pole that would hold the flag. Finally, a sailor “taking up the flag rope in his teeth climbed safely to the top amid cheers of the crowd, and the roar of fifteen guns for the Southern States.” As the sailor walked through the crowd on his return trip, “the people filled the sailor’s pockets with bills.”⁹

A few months later, Mrs. Roger documented the Confederate Congress’ choice of a national flag and incorporated what she believed the design represented to the southern people. She wrote of the flag now commonly known as the Stars and Bars: “The three bars were emblems of the Trinity, the white for Love and stainless character, while the

⁸ Andrew, Women of the South in War Times, 75.

⁹ Ibid., 291.

blue was for the great heaven spangled with stars to watch over us, and the red for the vesper light that should never die out.”¹⁰

Upon receiving a letter from Colonel Orren Smith of North Carolina containing a description of the new national flag, Mrs. Rogers resolved to construct a sample. She explained he had sent her the description “...knowing my interest in everything that concerned the welfare of our beloved Southland.” She recalled, “In his description he dwelt particularly on the stars being placed in a circle instead of broadcast as in the United States flag. I made one the very hour that description arrived so I had the honor of making the first Confederate Flag ever made in Georgia.”¹¹ Even in description of the Confederacy’s national flag, men and women found difficulty in not using the American flag as a basis for comparison.

There are countless instances of women, both North and South, crafting flags for the soldiers who departed for war, but Mrs. Rogers’ account is particularly useful for several reasons. First, it demonstrated that the war and the creation of nationhood was not simply a male initiated and invested endeavor. Second, the account expressed the patriotic and nationalist sentiment that women encountered and participated in as citizens of a nation. Women played a significant role in the creation, replication, and dissemination of flags during the war. Lastly, much of the focus of these personal accounts resides in the image of the flag. The flag culture that ruptured across the nation during the Civil War was not gender specific. Though the social and political hierarchy in America was blatantly male dominated, the symbolism of the flag transcended that domination at the very least in a metaphysical sense. Flag imagery did not necessarily

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 291-93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

develop ideas of class, race, or gender, simply because each person who called a flag their own incorporated into it their own ideas and interests. If nothing else, women's participation during the war was an introduction to developing a political identity.¹²

Mrs. Mary A. Ward, also a native of Georgia, described the political zeal of the women in her southern community of Rome. "There were a great many men in the Southern homes that were disposed to be more conservative and to regret the threatened disruption of the Union, but the ladies were all enthusiastically in favor of secession." The war empowered woman in ways that had not been present before. Though women had been active in social clubs or church events, now when they gathered there was a political agenda and a material need. Mrs. Ward explained, "We began preparing our soldiers for the war. The ladies were all summoned to public places, to halls and lecture-rooms, and sometimes to churches..." Before the secession crisis, many such gatherings had been reserved for the men of the community. Some women went further in their support for the war effort including one lady who "...was a very brave lady herself. She had on a brown traveling-dress, and a broad scarf crossed on her dress... This lady went to war with her husband, and staid (sic) there through the whole struggle and never came home until the war was over."¹³

Women in the North shared southern women's enthusiasm for the war. A young New York woman wrote, "We all have views now, men, women and little boys... It seems as if we never were alive till now; never had a country till now. How could we have ever laughed at Fourth-of-Julys?"¹⁴ For this young woman recognized, like for

¹² Ibid., 293. For further reading regarding women in the Civil War see Lisa Tendrich Frank's Women in the American Civil War (Santa Barbara, 2008).

¹³ Commanger, Civil War Archive, 85-86.

¹⁴ Ibid., 74.

many in building the memory of the war years later, “America” was an idea forged by the Civil War. As more and more people in the North accepted this ideology the importance of the American flag became more palpable. The young New Yorker added: “Outside the parlor windows the city is gay and brilliant with excited crowds...and all the thousands of flags, big and little, which suddenly came fluttering out of every window and door and leaped from every church tower, house-top, staff and ship-mast.”¹⁵ The American flag was now the unquestioned symbol of America as a national entity.

Women were not the only group to have a vested interest in the flags that represented the Union and Confederacy. Hundreds of thousands of first-generation immigrants enlisted to fight for their new homes. Those of German and Irish birth formed the largest in numbers to volunteer for service in the military. An estimated 200,000 Germans and 150,000 Irishmen served in the Union army. With significantly less immigration in the Southern states, nearly 71,000 Germans and 46,000 Irishmen enlisted in the Confederate military. Having less opportunity in the South for work because of the slave population, the Irish in particular enlisted in great numbers due to their belief in the preservation of slavery to protect Irish jobs. Many Irishmen and Germans alike enlisted to protect the place they had chosen for their homes.¹⁶

Germans and Irishmen enlisted for service to save the Union for many different reasons, but one common motive often applied. Many of these immigrants volunteered for service to secure their individual and group position in American society by exhibiting American patriotism. Germans had come in the face of oppression to find liberty and democracy in America, ideas that had failed in the Revolution of 1848. The

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁶ Dean B. Mahin, *The Blessed Place of Freedom: Europeans in the Civil War* (Dulles, 2002), 15, 21, 65, 77. See also Anne J. Bailey’s *Invisible Southerners: Ethnicity in the Civil War* (Athens, 2006).

Irish reasoning resided in gratitude. Only a short time had passed since northern harbors had opened their ports to the starving Irish demoralized by famine.¹⁷ One northern newspaper implied, “There can be no greater proof of unanimity of feeling which pervades all classes at the North in support of the government than the fact that not only our naturalized citizens, but foreign residents, are eagerly volunteering their services...Both Germans and Irish are offering themselves in large numbers.”¹⁸

In Baltimore, in April, 1861, enlisted men of the German Guards told the Governor that “they had come to sing the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ with him.” The Governor replied that, “he was still under the stars and stripes. The song of the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ was then sung with fine effect.”¹⁹ In Pittsburgh, a Catholic cathedral had placed an American flag on its towers and one newspaper correlated this with Irish sentiment to the Union: “The American ensign was displayed from the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Paul’s today. This is one of the largest churches in the United States. Our Irish citizens are rapidly volunteering.”²⁰ In Lowell, Massachusetts, the women of the city presented “a lovely banner” to the Irish Company raised to defend the Union. “This company is composed of the better class of our adopted citizens,” a newspaper noted.²¹

The nationalism and flag passion that flourished throughout both the North and South incorporated immigrants, and for the immediate future, society expected them to be patriotic citizens. A Virginia newspaper printed a letter, from “An Irish Volunteer” that exclaimed: “I trust and pray that the Southern flag which now waves in all parts of the

¹⁷ Ibid., 11, 21.

¹⁸ New York Herald, Apr. 19, 1861.

¹⁹ Boston Daily Advertiser, Apr. 18, 1861.

²⁰ Philadelphia Inquirer, Apr. 22, 1861.

²¹ The Lowell Daily Citizen and News, May 9, 1861.

Confederacy in fond anticipation for a glorious future, may yet smile upon us, a free, independent and prosperous people.” The article continued: “Irishmen, go at once and enroll your names in the Irish Regiment...and fight side by side with those people who have always extended the hand of friendship to the Irish.” Irish loyalties to the Confederacy, according to this unanimous volunteer, were a matter of gratitude and indebtedness to the Southern people.²²

The African American population held a peculiar place in American national identity during the war. Free blacks in the North and ex-slaves who fled their bondage in the South rushed to enlist in the Union army in 1861 but were met with resistance. It was not until July, 1862, and the Second Confiscation Act that African Americans were officially accepted into military service. Many who filled the ranks in black regiments were not official citizens of the United States, yet they called the American flag their own and went to war for their country despite their status as second-rank members of society.²³

When the all-black 54th Massachusetts Regiment assembled for the presentation of the colors to the regiment, Governor John Albion Andrew announced, “Although the presentation of a stand of colors to a noble body of men is no new scene in this Commonwealth, this occasion is a novel and peculiar one—there is an importance attached to this occasion which never existed with any similar event.” The Governor incorporated the right to citizenship of these black soldiers in the national idea represented by the flag, and suggested that they now belonged to an American nation. With this meaning

²² Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 29, 1861.

²³ Hunter, “No Man Can Hinder Me” (New Haven, 2003) 5, 10. See also James McPherson’s Marching Toward Freedom: Blacks in the Civil War, 1861-1865 (New York, 1991) for further reading on African Americans in combat during the Civil War.

invested in the American flag, he required that their duty be “before it shall ever be surrendered to the foes may its white stripes be spattered with the red blood of their brethren that bear it in the field.”²⁴ Black soldiers would indeed shed much blood fighting for their cause.

African American troops often sustained heavy casualties due to poor training and being assigned to dangerous and sometimes futile military operations. At the July, 1863, Battle of Fort Wagner South Carolina, the 54th Massachusetts lost a staggering forty-two percent of its men killed, wounded, or missing.²⁵ A year later, African American troops of the Fourth Division under Union division commander Edward Ferrero, a white officer, participated in the attack on Confederate entrenchments around Petersburg, Virginia. During the engagement, the Fourth division lost 209 men in comparison to the 227 men combined of the three other divisions who were killed during the attack.²⁶

To acknowledge and assess the performance of black troops at Petersburg, a newspaper article reported the capture of two Confederate battle flags: “They charged upon the next and an interior line of the enemy and for a time gained decided advantages, as is attested in two rebel battle flags which they captured and brought off with them.” The attack, however, was a disaster. As the Fourth Division faced a counterattack, Confederate troops “exasperated as we know them to have been at sight of the negroes, fought with the fury of devil.” The black troops “ran, a terror stricken, disordered mass of fugitives, to the rear of the white troops.”²⁷ In capturing the battle-flags, the black troops proved their worth and bravery. Although often discredited as second rate

²⁴ James Gooding and Virginia Adams, On the Altar of Freedom (Amherst, 1991), 21-22. Emphasis in original.

²⁵ Stephen Wise, Gates of Hell, (Columbia, 1994), 114.

²⁶ Hunter, “No Man Can Hinder Me”, 41.

²⁷ Baltimore Sun, Aug. 3, 1864.

soldiers, in capturing the Confederate emblems, they gained a level of respect from white readers if for no other reason than because news of such an occurrence had established honor among white units in the Union Army.

Community and Individual Expression

Nationalism burned in the hearts of northern citizens, a sentiment shared by the South and its people. If northerners turned to the American flag to express their belief in the American nation and the preservation of the Union, southerners did the same with their new emblem. However, Americans both North and South did not become national overnight. The seeds of nationalism grew from within individuals and communities. South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens proclaimed to a group of volunteers, “I shall endeavor not to expose our own State, and shall march you beyond our borders under *pressing emergency*; but wherever the Confederate flag floats, there too is our country, now and forever.”²⁸ While South Carolina was strongly influenced by state’s rights Governor Pickens exhibited the unifying power of the new national symbol.

In Bloomington, Illinois, less than two weeks after the surrender of Fort Sumter, citizens of the community gathered to discuss the secession crisis and resolved “alike to live in a common, *a whole* country, or to die, if need be, for the preservation of that country.” Among the crowd, several gentlemen citizens gave patriotic speeches that “called to mind the sacred reminiscences of the past, the imperious duties of the present, and the glorious prospects of the future, all clustering around our ‘star-spangled banner,’ there displayed before them.” The Union had suffered a blow but the staunchly Unionist community of Bloomington saw in this crisis an opportunity to show the rest of the

²⁸ The Liberator, May 31, 1861. Emphasis in original.

nation that their community would answer the call to save the Union.²⁹ In this Illinois community, the commitment to the Union was expressed in their dedication to the American flag.

This association was established much deeper in the heart of Americans than in a community enthusiasm that came with such an event. Rachel Bowman and Samuel Cormany began their courtship in an American society deeply divided and on a course for violent conflict. Married in late 1860, the couple spent their honeymoon in Canada. The news of secession shocked young Samuel who described the situation in his diary: “There is much excitement and discussion of possible WAR IN THE UNITED STATES...Matters surely are in a lamentably unsettled condition.” Conditions in his native country remained unsettled and his fear of a possible war became a reality. The newlyweds continued their stay in Canada until 1862, when Samuel returned to his native Pennsylvania. He enlisted in Union Army to defend his home. As they crossed over into the United States, Samuel wrote, “We hailed with joy the sight of the Star Spangled Banner...”³⁰

Nearly a year later, while her husband fought just a short distance away at Gettysburg, Samuel’s wife Rachel recorded a sight after the battle in Chambersburg. “At daybreak the bells were rung- Then all was quiet until about 8 o'clock when a flag was hoisted at the diamond.” Citizens of Chambersburg had taken matters into their own hands and captured straggling Rebels who passed through the town.³¹

²⁹ Weekly Pantagraph, Apr. 24, 1861 quoted in William P. LaBounty, ed., It Is Begun! The Pantagraph Reports the Civil War (Bloomington IL, 2001), 11-12.

³⁰ James C. Mohr, ed., The Cormany Diaries: A Northern Family in the Civil War (Pittsburgh, 1982), 132, 218. Emphasis in original.

³¹ Ibid., 340.

The diaries of the Cormanys offer a glimpse into Civil War America and its effect on the individuals and families. Even at the at the most individual level, the American flag began to be recognized as the symbol of the nation. Samuel hailed the sight of the flag in returning to a war-torn country. The sight that Rachel described in the town of Chambersburg spoke not only of her individual encounters with the flag but also of the symbolism that had been incorporated in it. The Confederates had met defeat on Union soil, and in the moment of victory, the town's people looked to the flag as the symbol for that victory and the nation.³²

In the South, men, women, and children embraced the symbol of the new Confederate nation. Many went to work to promote its importance for citizens of the country. In 1861, a song titled "The Flag of Secession" announced in verse: "Now the flag of secession in triumph doth wave- O'er the land of the freed and the home of the brave."³³ Within this song and its verses, lies the great paradox of Confederate nationalism. Throughout the war, it was difficult to leave behind the American traditions and heritage. Confederates wanted to preserve their way of life, but much of that life resided within an American context. Leaving the Union initiated an identity crisis for many southern citizens. Underneath the title of the song written to glorify the Confederacy's new symbol read the words: "Tune-'Star Spangled Banner.'³⁴

All across the South, newspapers reported instances of Confederate flag supporting patriotism. *The Standard*, a newspaper based in Clarkesville, Texas reported: "The Confederate flag was hoisted over the State Capitol at Nashville...in the presence of

³² *Ibid.*, 340.

³³ *The Flag of secession*. 1861. Microfilm: Filmed by Duke University.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

5000 people. Patriotic addresses were delivered...”³⁵ In spectacle events such as these, the objective was to combine the ideology of a united community and the passion and patriotism of the individual. Though flags did not necessitate this community feeling of patriotism, the inspiration of community gatherings merged with the visualization of nationalism through flags “made the order of things dynamic, mobilizing...the more immediate ideological and political exigencies of the particular moment.”³⁶ Southern citizens needed a symbol for their new nation and upon establishing the flag; it became the expression of Confederate nationalism.

Another newspaper pleaded to southern citizens for donations to the Confederate cause. It described a young boy who donated a dollar to the cause while displaying a Confederate flag from his hat. “A noble little bright-eyed boy, too small to lift a Minie Rifle, but with a toy Confederate flag in his cap, speaking forth the honored patriotism of his infant soul, came unurged, and offered us \$1...” Proud of the little boy’s deed, the paper proclaimed, “Let all the dear ‘little folks’ emulate his example, and perhaps they may put to shame the sordid and selfish.”³⁷

However, some Southern citizens never lost their attachment to the American flag. A Union soldier marching through Georgia in September, 1863, recorded an encounter with an “old gray-haired man and woman.” Upon seeing the troops and their commander, “the old man asked the Colonel if he had the stars and stripes with him, he said he wanted to see them...it has been so long since I have seen them.” Upon the old

³⁵ The Standard, July 13, 1861.

³⁶ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in Schwartz and Przyblyski, eds., The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader, 125.

³⁷ Macon Daily Telegraph, July, 26, 1861.

man's request, the Colonel ordered his men to "unfurl the Flag and the band play,' so we did, and the old folks wept for joy."³⁸

Southern soldiers experienced similar encounters with the American flag as they advanced into northern territory in June 1863. A Confederate soldier marching through Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, noticed that "the people of Chambersburg are very loyal to the 'old flag' and keep it displayed everywhere possible." The soldier wrote of the women of the town: "The windows and porches were filled with women who were covered with flags, and each one had a flag, waving it over our troops as they passed along the street, often giving them a sharp bit of their tongues in addition."³⁹

The men of the 7th Virginia, taunted by the ladies of Chambersburg, often returned the banter as one man was heard to "say to a very bold looking girl who was standing on a porch with a great flag pinned and hanging over her shoulders and her bosom: 'Look here, Miss, you'd better take that flag off!' She replied with some asperity: 'I won't do it. Why should I?'" The soldier replied in turn, "Because, Miss, these old rebs are hell on breastworks."⁴⁰ At the heart of the matter resided the image of a flag that just a few years before, both individuals had called their own. The commonality of flag passions in the Union and Confederacy created a shared cultural theme that eased the reconciliation after the war and crafted the practice of American nationalism into a visual and emotional relationship between citizen and flag.

³⁸ Autobiography of William Wallace Hensley. 1912. Ms2009-007 Folder 1 Virginia Tech Civil War Special Collections, 17.

³⁹ S. L. Blackford and C. M. Blackford, eds., Letter's from Lee's Army: or Memoirs of Life In and Out of the Army of Northern Virginia During the War Between the States (New York, 1947), 185.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Americans Go To War: “Round the ensign of red, white, and blue”

The events that had precipitated the War Between the States had engulfed citizens in flag imagery for political and national unification. Now the banners that had been exhibited all across the North and South were exhibited by armed troops preparing for battle. In the months that followed Fort Sumter until the clashing of the armies at Manassas in July, soldiers who enlisted in the military came in close contact with flags. Seeing these flags unfurled in camp for the first time evoked a host of emotions in the new soldiers. One soldier, later a member of the color-guard for the 21st Illinois, wrote of his feelings after enlisting in early 1861: “Talk about Patriotism, when a young man will leave a good farm partly paid for and wife and three children and go into the Army to be a target for 1000 or more men to shoot at him, if that did not show it, how could he show it?”⁴¹ The colors of a military unit became a visual symbol of individual patriotism and sacrifice to be protected at all costs. James K. Hosmer, a member of the 52nd Massachusetts color-guard wrote in his diary: “Hardiker carries the white State-flag, the tall sergeant, the star and stripes. Old Flag, you are woven of no ordinary stuff! Rank and file and shoulder-straps, it is a sacred thing! It has for a warp, liberty; and for a woof, constitutional order; and is dyed in the tints of love and justice.”⁴²

Many young soldiers invested such meaning in the flag but few so elegantly integrated the very fabric of the flag with words such as “liberty,” as did Corporal Hosmer. For him, the sight of the flag waving with “the crimson stripes of the standard leaping and flowing out above us like the currents of arterial blood,” was a visual inspiration. It was the symbol for the reasons to fight on and of a common connection

⁴¹ Hensley, *Autobiography*, 1.

⁴² James K. Hosmer, *The Color-Guard: A Corporal’s Notes of Military Service in the Nineteenth Army Corps* (Boston, 1864), 93.

between the men who fought under it. The flag was, in essence, the symbol and source of life-blood of a regiment to soldiers both in blue and gray. The flag culture that grew out of the Civil War may have been initiated by the media and other non-military persons, but it was the soldiers who firmly established this American tradition in spilled blood and patriotic memory.⁴³

When the Confederate and Union armies met for the first major battle of the war at Manassas in July 1861, the opposing armies saw for the first time the groups of men ready to fight and die for the banners that waved over them. During the battle, and in the accounts of the aftermath, the flags of the armies gained another boost in their rise to iconic status in American culture. In a report of the action experienced by New York soldiers during the First Battle of Manassas, the American flag became the centerpiece for describing the drama, confusion, and heroics of the battle. “An American flag suddenly appeared within the redoubt that had done us our greatest damage, and that still kept up its storm. But seeing this signal, an order was given to cease firing, as we were shooting our friends.” In the heat of battle, Union soldiers had opened fire upon one another, the flag the only cause for stopping the tragedy. “A further order was then made to advance our colors to the front, out, as it seemed to be certain death to stand exposed to the tornado which swept the brow of the hill, the color-bearer naturally hesitated for a moment...” The color-bearer recognized something in the first major land battle; the color-bearer held a prestigious and patriotic place in the line but with it came the most danger.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 93, 96.

⁴⁴ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 3, 1861.

Thus was the case for the 71st New York when the color-bearer hesitated in the face of a Confederate Artillery battery. The report went on to explain:

Whereupon several of Company 'F' sprang quickly forward, with the exclamation: 'Give us the colors!' But Captain Coles, of Company 'C,' was the foremost in the effort, and seizing the flag, he ran with it full fifty paces to the front, and held it at arms length high in the air, and then planted it on the earth. Its folds were hailed in the Rebel battery with a demonic yell, and in the next instant the bright banner was riddled with a shower of balls. Providentially, the gallant Captain was untouched.⁴⁵

Stories of this nature undoubtedly inspired the public and expressed the dangers of carrying the colors in battle. Understanding the peril they faced in carrying the flags established the bravery of men defending their country's emblem and only strengthened the symbolism of the flags for those at home that did not face bullets and bayonets to fly them. This type of narrative became the epitome of American nationalism. Stories like this one, both Confederate and Union, were enshrined within the American flag as a part of the American national heritage begun after the Civil War.

By no means did every soldier feel the need to wave the flag and face the eminent danger that came with carrying the symbol. A soldier in the 5th Texas Regiment, who had enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861 to fulfill "a debt he owed to the Southern cause," felt no similar attachment to his battle emblem. When the color-bearer of his regiment was wounded at Second Battle of Manassas, he recalled a conversation with the man before the battle who "said there were some who wanted him for color bearer, but he cared nothing for the position, and asked me if I would accept it and remarked that he thought it would be in better hands with me." Stunned by the man's suggestion, and in no desire to carry the colors, the soldier replied:

⁴⁵ Ibid.

You are mistaken, for I feel I am too cowardly for a flag-bearer to risk myself; and I can find the oftener I can load and shoot the better able am I to maintain my honor. In fact, I have said I never would pick up a flag, going into battle, for I would not lay down my gun when I thought there was a chance to kill a Yankee.

William A. Fletcher, who was a frontiersman by nature, was no less patriotic than the wounded soldier but felt no need to attach his patriotism to a flag. He served the Confederacy bravely throughout the war and refused promotion several times for he felt he could help the war effort with a gun rather than a flag in his hand.⁴⁶

As the war continued, color-bearers became the primary targets of enemy fire. Killing or wounding the color bearer was a demoralizing sight for others in the same line of battle. Furthermore, the colors were often were noticeable demonstrations of tactical maneuvers by troops. The loss of the colors caused confusion within the ranks. At the Battle of Stones River, William W. Hensley, angered for being passed over earlier for promotion to color-bearer recalled: "I looked to the right and saw Lieutenant Hunter with our flag and I went to him and said, 'Where is our Color Guard?'" The Lieutenant explained, "'They were all shot down.'" Realizing the urgency of the situation, Hensley requested that he carry the colors, which was granted, after which he "gave him (his) gun and took the flag and carried it till the four days fight was over."⁴⁷ Hensley was later captured at Lookout Mountain and survived a stay in Andersonville Prison.

Nowhere during the war was the danger of carrying the colors more apparent than at the Battle of Gettysburg. The deadly attack on July 3, 1863, known as Pickett's Charge saw a staggering cost in life to protect the colors. Many of the soldiers who survived to leave accounts of the charge turned to flags to describe the ebb and flow of

⁴⁶ William A. Fletcher, Rebel Private: Front and Rear: Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier (New York, 1997), xiii, 57.

⁴⁷ Hensley, Autobiography, 12.

battle and the heroics of those that participated on both sides of the stone wall. One Confederate veteran reported: “As evidence of how close was the fighting at the part of the line, I saw a Federal soldier with an ugly wound in his shoulder, which he told me he received from the spear on the end of one of my regimental colors.” Though not successful that day, the soldier took pride in the fact that “all of the five regimental colors of my command reached the line of the enemy’s works, and many of my men and officers were killed or wounded after passing over it.” A colonel of the 55th Virginia wrote of the retreat from the Union lines: “I retreated slowly, with the Color bearer my only attendant. The Color bearer was severely wounded by a shell while we were retiring, and I had to bear him and the Colors to a place of safety.”⁴⁸

Lieutenant Colonel S. G. Shepard of the 7th Tennessee vividly described the fate of many color-bearers during the devastating charge. As he and his troops approached the Union line:

Every flag in the brigade excepting one was captured at or within the works of the enemy. The First Tennessee had 3 color-bearers shot down, the last of whom was at the works, and the flag captured. The Thirteenth Alabama lost 3 in the same way, the last of whom was shot down at the works. The Fourteenth Tennessee had 4 shot down, the last of whom was at the works. The Seventh Tennessee lost 3 color-bearers, the last of whom was at the enemy’s works, and the flag was only saved by Captain Norris tearing it away from the staff and bringing it out beneath his coat. The Fifth Battalion also lost their flag at the enemy’s works.⁴⁹

An officer of the 11th Mississippi described a similar fate of his troops in the fierce fighting at the Union works: “Four brave men had already fallen under the colors of our Reg’t, & now the fifth bore them aloft, & rushed boldly forward, to embrace, if need be, the fate of the other four.” He continued: “The flag staff was now cut in two midway the

⁴⁸ Richard Rollins, ed., Pickett’s Charge: Eyewitness Accounts at the Battle of Gettysburg (Mechanicsburg PA, 1994), 270-71.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 272.

flag, but without one moment's pause, the never-flinching little Irishmen, his flag now dangling in graceless confusion, from one corner, still pushed fearlessly, upon the stone fence. Thirteen of our Reg't had concentrated upon the colors, as if to constitute ourselves its guard."⁵⁰

Union soldiers wrote of the Confederate charge with similar use of flag imagery. During the fight, Union troops fought viciously to capture the enemy's colors. One soldier reported that a Union division "secured 12 stands of colors and prisoners enough to swell the number captured by the corps to about 4,000." Captain Robert McBride of the 71st Pennsylvania recalled that "we charged right to the wall, and right there I captured the colors of the rebel standard and drove him to the rear...I took them from him; grabbed them out of his hands."⁵¹

"Old Glory" waved throughout the ranks of the Union soldiers who repulsed the famed charge and patriotism had a place in the hearts of those that fought under it. Lieutenant Frank Haskell wrote of his own experience pointing to the symbolism, heritage, and inspiration that encompassed the American flag on the battlefield: "The trefoil flags, colors of the Brigades and Divisions, moved to their places in the rear; but along the lines in front, the grand old ensign that first waved in the battle at Saratoga, in 1777, and which the people coming would rob of half its stars, stood up, and the west-wind kissed it as the sergeants sloped its lance towards the enemy." The Lieutenant continued, "I believe that not one above whom it then waved, but blessed his God that he

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 320, 330.

was loyal to it, and whose heart did not swell with pride towards it, as the emblem of the Republic, before that treason's flaunting rag in front.⁵²

The courageous scenes described by the soldiers at Gettysburg remained enshrined in their memories. As their narratives reached the homefront, the symbolism of the flags became entwined with the narrative of the war. It was these same accounts embedded with flag imagery that Americans saw as patriotic and incorporated them into the national narrative. The protection and service of the flag developed into a cause for honor that had never been seen before in American culture. The attention that flag imagery received within the ranks, in the press, and on the homefront was unparalleled in American history. As flags became entwined with the ideas of honor and heroics, any action that protected the flag became heralded as patriotic. Such flag fervor led Corporal John C. Hesse of the 8th U.S. Infantry to petition Congress on his own behalf in 1864 that he believed himself "entitled to receive a 'medal of honor,'" for protection of the American flag during the current rebellion.⁵³

Surrender: "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain"

After four years of bitter conflict, General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia. The report of the surrender by the *Richmond Whig* informed the public just how decimated Lee's once mighty Army of Northern Virginia had become. "According to the official report, Gen. Lee surrendered 26, 115 men, 159 pieces of cannon, 71 stands of colors and 15,918 stand of small

⁵² Ibid., 337.

⁵³ U.S. War Dept., Comp., War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1902), Ser. 1, Vol. 1, 566.

arms.”⁵⁴ Though other Confederate military forces remained, the surrender of Lee’s army meant the end of the Confederacy.

While the South Carolinian recognized that his surrender implied that he was once again under the authority of the United States, others did not share his feelings for the United States nor the American flag. A soldier in the 1st South Carolina recalled a scene of the surrender that cast a dim shadow on reconciliation. “General Lee, accompanied by Gen. Meade and staff, rode around...On passing by us we began to cheer and yell. Meade turned to his color-bearer, who had his headquarters flag rolled up, and said, ‘Unfurl that flag.’ This he did, when an old ragged, half starved, worn-out Confederate soldier in our lines cried out, ‘Damn your old rag. We are cheering Gen. Lee.’”⁵⁵

Another soldier remarked of his victorious Union brethren after witnessing a Confederate officer and a Union officer shaking hands: “I had a feeling the war was really over. After all, I never hated any one Yankee. I hated the spirit that was sending them to invade the south.”⁵⁶

That spirit of the South had been embodied in its flags. The Confederate national flag had served the citizen as a symbol of their new country. Yet, as the war-battered soldiers of the Confederacy yielded their arms and colors to the Union army, these southern soldiers gave up their sacred emblems and prepared to re-embrace the American flag and an uncontested Union. A South Carolina soldier remarked of the victors: “They, the Yankees, acted with much consideration, and like good soldiers, and good Americans

⁵⁴ Richmond Whig, Apr. 25, 1865. My emphasis. For further reading regarding the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia see William Marvel’s A Place Called Appomattox (Chapel Hill NC, 2000).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 24.

can only act, did not show that exultation they must have felt.”⁵⁷ On the battlefield, the Confederate Battle Cross predominately represented soldiers in the field and had become recognized by many Union soldiers as those “damn red flags of rebellion.”⁵⁸

Now both colors were to be surrendered to those of which the symbols were meant to defy. As the Confederate units relinquished their, a Union officer recalled: “We were six hours receiving their arms, etc. Not an unkind word was spoken to them: some of their color-bearers shed tears when they delivered up their colors.” A Pennsylvania soldier added that “sadly, (they) painfully furled their flags and laid them down, some kneeling and kissing them with tears in their eyes.”⁵⁹ The Confederate emblems only existed as legitimate national symbols for four years. Within that time, however, thousands of people abandoned the ‘Stars and Stripes’ and placed their loyalties in a flag that now represented a lost cause.

After four years of civil war, the American flag regained its place as the symbol flying over all the states, this time as the uncontested national symbol of the United States of America. The internal conflict created the opportunity for the use of an all encompassing national symbol in a society in the midst of embracing visual culture. Flag imagery, both in the North and South, during the Civil War was stimulated by the politicized press and the individual investment of citizen and soldier alike. As veterans and new generations of unified Americans looked to place the Civil War into American historical context, the American flag, which had so dominated visual culture during the war, became the image of American heroism and patriotism for both northerners and

⁵⁷ Chris M. Calkins, The Final Bivouac: The Surrender Parade at Appomattox and the Disbanding of the Armies, April 10-May 20, 1865 (Lynchburg VA, 1988), 36. Emphasis by author.

⁵⁸ Rollins, Pickett’s Charge, 340.

⁵⁹ Calkins, The Final Bivouac, 34, 36.

southerners. After all, it had been a war between Americans, who now needed a unified national historical narrative that did not alienate the defeated and demean their bravery. Nor could it resolve anything less than an unquestioned tribute to federal authority and national state unity. With the establishment of flag iconography during the war, the American flag became synonymous with the narrative of American history.

Chapter 3

It is impractical to generalize the context of a conflict and the reasons that people participate in them. History has determined that people will fight and die for economic, social, or political reasons, each in some way different from their comrades. Generally there is some presence of hope for self-preservation and the protection of one's interests. Yet, the cause is often an individual one, why and how do people unite and develop ideas of community struggle? During the Civil War, three major factors influenced American culture and identity: ideas of nationalism, the newspapers and print, and the invention of narratives of the war that remained at its conclusion and shaped American memory. During the four decades before the Civil War citizens of a divided American nation turned to and were motivated by sectional and community ties rather than nationalism. At the onset of the war, it became apparent that for either nation to survive, they each had to develop an ideology that united their respective communities for a common cause. For the North, the general assumption was that preserving the Union as one national entity under the Constitution created a community identity. In the South, deeply engrained economic and social structures threatened by those who did not share the same structures created a political "other" that united southern communities. The attention paid to building collective identities in each of these entities ultimately led to the emergence of modern American nationalism. For the first time in American history, nationalism did not stem from the threatened invasion of a foreign power, but to maintain the American Union in the face of internal divisions.

Louis Hartz suggested that the Civil War could not be considered "one of the triumphs of nineteenth-century nationalism," because "socially the Civil War was unique

to America and there is no comparative material on the basis of which to analyze it.”¹ Perhaps between America and other nations, the comparative analysis between the plight of the United States and other countries in the Nineteenth Century is limited in this opportunity. Within the context of United States, however, and Confederate national identities, patriotic flag practices during the Civil War, and the incorporation of the conflict into a patriotic national memory, there is evidence that the result of the war was the triumph of nationalism. One needs look no further than the flag passions of the South and the iconic status of the American flag during and after the war to see this triumph. The processes of creating unity across southern and northern communities, the practices of “popular linguistic nationalism” within these communities, and the visual flood of patriotic symbolism in flag iconography became American traditions, invented as aspects of a national community.²

Ideas of nationalism and flag iconography, deeply embedded in American tradition during the war, functioned as healing remedies for post war bitterness that may well have never allowed the country to become a nationalist community. The evidence for the healing power of post-war Nineteenth Century American nationalism and nationalist practices in flag iconography reside in the construction of the American narrative and memory during and after the Civil War.

Nationalism

Benedict Anderson claimed: “Nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.” Recognizing the political importance of nationalism was the first step for Anderson. The second was realizing that “nation, nationality, and

¹ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, 1991), 19.

² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 42.

nationalism-all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone analyze.”³ American nationalism proves to be one of the most complex quandaries of nationalism from the Revolution to the end of the Civil War in terms of national identity. The Union before the war was weak at best. Most of the national identity stemmed from a briefly shared history of which, one historian argued, “migration and the Revolution formed the bedrock.” However, sectional differences, blatantly recognized during the Revolution among the Founding Fathers and the debates concerning the Constitution, overshadowed the weak nationalism created by early American history. In fact, both southerners and northerners called on that Revolutionary tradition in support of their very different causes during the Civil War. There lies the paradox of American nationalism before and during the Civil War: the different interpretation of the same historical narrative as a defense for union or secession.⁴

The central problem with analyzing nationalism during the Civil War era is the idea of legitimacy. Could Lincoln’s stance on the “Union,” and in later years, the “American nation” be considered legitimate? The South certainly did not believe so. The idea of Confederate nationalism has been a topic of debate by historians for decades and with very little conclusiveness on the state of its legitimacy. Drew Gilpin Faust provided an explanation that transcended the notion of Confederate legitimacy questioned by the war and the unsuccessful bid for independence by the Confederacy. She argued that “the creation of Confederate nationalism, the establishment of a common understanding of national identity and purpose, was a prerequisite to Confederate

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ Susan-Mary Grant, “From union to nation? The Civil War and the development of American nationalism” in Susan Mary Grant and Brian Holden Reid, eds., The American Civil War: Explorations and Reconsiderations (New York, 2000), 337-38.

survival-with or without the challenge of total war.” For the American nation, “Independence and war reopened unfinished antebellum debates, (and) intensified unresolved prewar conflicts.” In doing so, southerners portrayed their independence as the fulfillment of American nationalism.”⁵

Northerners who fought to save the Union and the linguistic transformation of Abraham Lincoln, who began referring to the Union as a “nation” by 1863, felt they were also establishing an American nation. Perhaps Susan-Mary Grant best described nationalism in America during the 1860s by concluding that, “the experience of the Civil War operated on the construction and refinement of both Union/American and Confederate nationalism.”⁶ The result was the fundamental American nationalism that defined America immediately after the Civil War through the present.

There is an important similarity between the attempted establishment of nationalism in the Union and Confederacy that is demonstrated by the use of symbols to legitimize nationhood. The notions of American nationalism may very well have differed between the Union and Confederacy, but the visual symbols of national identity and legitimacy took practically the same forms. The most iconic and identifiable symbol among the citizens of the opposing nations resided in the national flags. The emphasis on historical connectedness to the Revolutionary past, the quest to establish symbols of the nation, and the forcefulness of the press in creating narratives of flag imagery to spawn national fervor can be found on both sides of the conflict. Such strategies were the foundations of the American national tradition after the war. The use of flags for the symbol that entitles a country and the citizens living under it, especially during the Civil

⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, The Creation of Confederate Nationalism (Baton Rouge LA, 1988), 7, 14-15.

⁶ The American Civil War, 334, 342.

War, follows in the liberal tradition emphasizing a society that “shapes the outcome of the struggle in which they engage,” as Hartz argued.⁷ Southerners along with northerners did shape the struggle they participated in by helping to establish flag symbolism as a dominant tradition representing American nationalism for future generations.

The war was by no means an occurrence that rapidly descended on the American people. Generations of Americans had participated in the political decline between North and South. The election of a Republican president, secession, and military action represented what Eric Hobsbawm defined as a “transformation of society” that threatened the “social (and political) patterns” that connected Americans with the Revolutionary generation.⁸ Regardless of what Americans thought of nationalism, there was a general consensus that the roots of the American narrative began with the ideas and actions of the Founding Fathers.

The flags represented a legitimate claim to America’s past and the right to decide a course for the future. After the war, it was this link that most commonly bonded the defeated southerners and victorious northerners, for both could look to the establishment of flag iconography for a “new tradition,” that stretched “back into the assumed mists of time.”⁹ The American flag in its emergence as the dominant national symbol incorporated the flag passions and patriotic deeds of the Civil War, both North and South, and created a united and patriotic American narrative that reached back to the Revolution. This formed the foundation for why the American flag became and remains such an iconic symbol of American nationalism.

⁷ Hartz, Liberal Tradition in America, 18.

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983), 4.

⁹ Ibid., 1-2, 4.

The conflict between the states brought the American flag into the center of national attention because Americans struggling to create a national identity tied to the past needed a powerful and all encompassing symbol. Young in existence compared to nations such as England or France, nationality in America mostly celebrated the cohesion of the individual states in military ventures against the British Empire. By 1860, as one historian wrote, “In the absence of any strong sense of nationality, all Americans really had was the Union.”¹⁰ If the war was, indeed, the “refinement” of nationalism in America, people needed to be able to connect to a historical past visually identified by the flag.

Clement Laird Vallandigham of Ohio expressed this sentiment of the relationship between the Union and the Confederacy in a speech before the House of Representatives in January 1863:

Other ties also, less material in their nature, but hardly less persuasive in their influence, have grown under the Union. Long association, a common history, national reputation, treaties and diplomatic intercourse abroad, admission of new States, a common jurisprudence, great men whose names and fame are the patrimony of the whole country, patriotic music and songs, common battlefields, and glory won under the same flag.¹¹

Now northerners and southerners fought under different flags, but a common history existed in the symbols of both.

In the Confederacy, searching for a unifying history between southern states proved more difficult, mainly due to southern ideology concerning state loyalty. Though the Union held a sentimental position for many southerners, it was their states’ that deserved supreme loyalty. Many of them had been in existence longer than the Union. Confederate Colonel William C. Whickham offered this sentiment after receiving a

¹⁰ Grant and Reid, *The American Civil War*, 340.

¹¹ Frank Freidel, ed., *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War, 1861-1865*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, 1967), 716-17.

severe wound while fighting in Williamsburg, Virginia. Upon being found in great discomfort by another soldier, Whickham exclaimed, “It’s a damned shame I should have to suffer so much now and probably be killed tomorrow for a cause of which I do not approve.” He continued, “Remember...if I am killed tomorrow it will be for Virginia, the land of my fathers, and not for the damned secession movement.”¹² Whickham was willing to fight and die for his home state, his notion of country. It was with Virginia that his greatest loyalty laid, a sentiment shared by many Confederate soldiers toward their home state.

Simple actions by the states in the Confederacy displayed the system of confederation each had volunteered to enter. Paper money, circulated by the Confederate government in 1861, had lost almost all of its value by the end of the war as citizens lacked confidence in its worth. States continued to print their own paper currency throughout the war with Georgia and Mississippi printing bills until 1865. While the Confederate bills contained images of national interest, such as the Confederate flag and Stonewall Jackson, state bills contained images that pertained to the history of the state. Virginia, for example, printed three different bills with a picture of George Washington on the face and two different bills with Governor John Letcher on the face. Conversely, in February, 1862, Lincoln signed the Legal Tender Act nationalizing U.S. currency and issued some \$432 million in “greenbacks.”¹³ Both the Union and the Confederacy attempted to nationalize currency with the Union having the only success. Nevertheless,

¹² Blackford, Letter’s From Lee’s Army, 144.

¹³ Dietrick’s Standard Confederate Money and Postage Catalogue (Lorraine, VA, 1923). Virginia Tech Civil War Special Collections. Ironically, as Susan-Mary Grant argues in her essay, “From Union to Nation?”, George Washington as a symbol competed with the American flag and the National Seal as the national symbol of the United States. Mark Egnal, Clash of the Extremes: the Economic Origins of the Civil War (New York, 2009), 322-23.

these attempts were part of the processes of becoming national that had yet to take place in America.

During the war, Southerners learned to be national in many of the same ways those loyal to the Union did. Their unsuccessful bid for independence overshadowed the notion of Confederate nationalism, or at least its legitimacy. However, ideas and actions that served nationalism did exist in the Confederacy, with flag iconography the most prominent and successful manifestation of that nationalism. In the Union, nationalism transformed American society. The flag, currency, the power and sovereignty of the federal government all pointed to an American “nation” and not simply a union. Though Confederates considered themselves apart from the Union, they were not immune to the effects of nationalism. Embracing those effects, however willingly or reluctantly, eased the transition of the states back into what Lincoln called “a new nation.”¹⁴

Newspapers

On April 30, 1861, the *Rutland Herald* of Vermont published an appeal to preserve the Union under the Constitution. “The time has arrived that is to try men’s souls. The epoch in our national history, that is to decide the fate of the noblest Government ever established on earth, has now dawned.” The article continued: “Our national flag, the ensign of liberty, that...has carried terror into the hearts of tyrants, and made thrones of despots quake beneath them; this noble flag beneath whose folds every American citizen has been proud to live or die, -this glorious banner beneath which our revolutionary Fathers fought for liberty...is now insultingly torn from Its proud height.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Commanger, *Civil War Archive*, 438.

¹⁵ *Rutland Herald*, Apr. 30, 1861 as quoted in Andrew S. Coopersmith, *Fighting Words: An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts of the Civil War* (New York, 2004), 36-37.

Articles such as this one appeared all across the North after the bombardment of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops. Newspapers in the South took the opposite stance but called on the same history and patriotic language of their northern counterparts. A *Richmond Whig* editorial pointed to American history as a rallying cry: "Our Revolutionary Sires fought for and secured what they termed 'certain inalienable rights.' These rights they considered worth the most costly sacrifice in blood and treasure... The Southern States have declared and asked for nothing more."¹⁶

In Louisiana, the *Shreveport Weekly News* affirmed the Confederacy's legitimacy by pointing to the coincidence that, "The first shot of the American freedom is 'liberty!' It is a talismanic word. There are *seven stars* on the blue field of our Confederate flag!"¹⁷ For the author of this article, it was no mere coincidence that there were seven letters in the word "liberty" and seven stars on the new Confederate emblem.

All of these newspaper articles used flag imagery to give legitimacy to their cause and to inspire their communities on the grounds of nationalism. The authors of these articles relied on flag symbolism to express the indefinite terms of nationalism and connect communities across a large nation during a time of war. The importance of newspapers and their use of patriotic language that often employed flag imagery in transforming American nationalism were immeasurable. The connection between American communities was insubstantial at the very least. It consisted of "an imagined political community" in the sense that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the

¹⁶ *Richmond Whig*, May 2, 1861.

¹⁷ *Shreveport Weekly News*, May 13, 1861 as quoted in Coopersmith, *Fighting Words*, 29.

minds of each lives the image of their communion.”¹⁸ Newspapers, which often printed articles from other newspapers across the country, acted as a patriotic and political connection between members of a community and between communities themselves during the war. In using flag imagery, the newspapers presented the public with a visual manifestation of political connectedness.

While both citizens and soldiers participated in the rise of nationalism in America, particularly through the use of flags as described above, it was the press that disseminated the idea of universal nationalism to far-flung individuals and communities. At the onset of the war, some 3,700 newspapers published weekly, if not daily, editions that constituted the distribution of 1.4 million copies a day.¹⁹ Among the politically charged articles in many of these newspapers, the image of flags as the symbol of nationalism was a re-occurring theme. After the surrender of Fort Sumter, the pivotal role the American flag played as a symbol of federal power and the Union to northerners and as an image of hostility to southerners raised the flag to an iconic status it had never seen before. With the events of the war and the use of flag imagery to narrate these events, flag fervor in the both the North and South exploded.

Readers in New York turned to newspapers such as the *Herald* for the secession and wartime news. The *Herald* averaged roughly 70,000 daily copies sold a year after 1859 compared to an average of over 3,000 daily copies of all other U.S. newspapers. When the *Herald* reported the news of Fort Sumter, the newspaper sold around 135,600 copies of the story. The capture of Richmond in early April, 1865, boosted sales of the paper to 133,200 issues. The circulation numbers ensured that thousands of people

¹⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 96.

¹⁹ Coopersmith, *Fighting Words*, xv.

would be confronted with editorials that daily created a sense of connectedness among the citizens while also turning to flag imagery in print.²⁰

Several northern newspapers even published advertisements for the sale and purchase of American flags. The *Herald* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published advertisements of flag companies offering the sale of flags of many different sizes. The *Hartford Daily Courant* contained one article that advertised “Flag Envelopes” and “Flag Paper” that could be purchased by patriotic citizens of Hartford. The advertisement read: “The subscriber (the first to introduce the Flag Paper in Hartford) has been overrun with orders, but is now prepared to fill orders with dispatch, at the most reasonable prices.” The American flag became a commodity.²¹ During the Mexican-American War in 1848, the flag had seen a similar rise in status as soldiers carried the national flag rather than the regimental flags for the first time. The popularity of the flag grew enough to cause for the establishment of the first mass distribution company dedicated to the sale of the symbol. However, as had been the case in the Revolution and the War of 1812, the flag symbolized an American military cause not synonymous necessarily with a sense of popular nationalism.²² The Civil War, by contrast, became a nationalist endeavor, and caused the flag to stand for more than simply military force against a foreign nation.

One visitor traveling through America in the late eighteenth century believed newspapers were “of all the means of enlightening a nation, the best and the most easily

²⁰ Douglas Fermer, *James Gordon Bennett and the New York Herald: A Study of Editorial Opinion in the Civil War Era, 1854-1867* (New York, 1986), 324.

²¹ *New York Herald*, Apr. 23, 1861, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Feb. 21, 1861, *Hartford Daily Courant*, Apr. 29, 1861,

²² Woden Teachout, *Capture the Flag: A Political History of American Patriotism* (New York, 2009), 81-82.

accomplished.”²³ *Harper’s Weekly*, a sixteen page “magazine” first published in 1857 with a circulation of over 100,000 copies a week, was a particularly good example. Technological advances had made mass distribution available like never before, *Harper’s Weekly* took the initiative with both text and images. During the Civil War era, the “magazine” published within its pages ten to fifteen illustrations in each issue concerning the war; this added up to over 2,600 images between the years 1861 to 1865. The images consisted of sketches and photographs transferred to paper by woodcut engraving.²⁴ *Harper’s Weekly* exemplified the role of the press in promoting patriotism and nationalism during the war by not only publishing articles that contained patriotic language but also incorporating images that connected its readers to the national realm.

In a December 1860 issue, the ‘magazine’ published a poem titled “The Dying Eagle” that spoke to the dismay about South Carolina’s secession from the Union. The last stanza read:

By the feud of father, son, and brother—
By the broken heart of wife and mother—
By the bond of union, and that other
Bond of blood,
Broken now—he knew, and fell forever
Where he stood.²⁵

The poem expressed the sentiment of many Americans who lamented the dissolution of the Union. Melancholy, rather than patriotic fire swept across much of the nation. In January, 1861, Mayor Fernando Wood of New York City declared: “We are entering upon the public duties of a year under circumstances as unprecedented as they are gloomy and painful to contemplate. It would seem that a dissolution of the Federal

²³ David A. Copeland “Newspapers in America,” in Shannon E. Martin and David A. Copeland, eds., *The Function of Newspapers in Society* (Westport CT, 2003), 103.

²⁴ *An Index to the Illustrations of Harper’s Weekly During the Civil War* (Fairfax VA, 2000).

²⁵ *Harper’s Weekly*, Dec. 22, 1860.

Union is inevitable.”²⁶ Yet, the news of Major Anderson’s resolve to remain in opposition to South Carolina’s secession by occupying Fort Sumter and waving the “Stars and Stripes” sparked a new assessment of the situation among many Americans. In following the news of Fort Sumter through its surrender in April, *Harper’s Weekly* not only incorporated flag imagery in its language but also in images. Images such as the one titled “The Bombardment of Fort Sumter by Batteries of the Confederate States” portrayed the American flag being fired on and inspired people in a way that words could not.²⁷

In the weeks that followed, the journal covered the events in Charleston Harbor and all across the nation closely. With all of the news of secession and civil war, *Harper’s Weekly* offered images to supplement the words. The closest southern equivalent to *Harper’s Weekly* was the *Southern Illustrated News*, printed in Richmond between 1862 and 1865. Published as a weekly journal, the *Southern Illustrated News* also incorporated images throughout the pages. Though the images were significantly fewer, the journal mainly used flags as a decorative border for the many portraits of Confederate officers it printed. For example, the portrait of General Robert E. Lee printed in January, 1863, displayed the Confederate battle and national flags crossed over a cannon barrel.²⁸

Though images were few, the flags discussed in text could be found throughout the newspaper as Confederate nationalist propaganda. Poems published in the journal written by a Reverend John Collin M’Cabe, D.D. abounded with patriotic sentiment towards the Confederate banner. The poem stated:

²⁶ Commanger, *Civil War Archive*, 46.

²⁷ *Harper’s Weekly*, Apr. 27, 1861. See also Image 3.

²⁸ *Southern Illustrated News*, Jan. 17, 1863.

O! there was a time, but 'twas long ago,
 In the days of my childhood's years;
Ere the North had evoked this cloud of war
 With its tempests of blood and tears-
When I loved to look at the stars and Stripes...
But that day has past-and the land is dazed,
 And that flag's a degraded flag;
Aye, that banner is nothing now to me
 But a soiled, and worthless rag.

The article continued with the Reverend's new ode of patriotism titled "The Southern Flag:"

O, I love to look on that glorious flag,
 As it waves from our tow'rs and domes;
Affording protection to loyal hearts,
 And defense of our Southern homes;²⁹

The *Southern Illustrated News* printed poems and other opinions of patriotic nature just as newspapers in the North. Journals such as the *Southern Illustrated News* and *Harper's Weekly* included a mix of news and opinion that defined Nineteenth Century journalism while also offering visual images as supplemental references for their readers.

Throughout the war and as flag passions developed flag imagery became a mainstay in newspaper images. It was typical, for nineteenth century journalism characteristically combined fact and opinion in their reports of the news, but now this combination accompanied visual images that proved just as powerful in persuasion.³⁰ In a society on the verge of internal warfare and national ideological transformation, the most powerful image, for better or worse, came in the form of the American flag. The war offered a catalyst for the symbol of the American nation, often marginalized or in competition with other symbols, to utilize its persistent historical relevance and "become

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1862.

³⁰ Hazel Dicken-Garcia and Giovanna Dell'Orto, *Hated Ideas and the American Civil War Press* (Spokane WA, 2008), 5.

a part of mainstream culture.”³¹ During the war the press in both the Union and Confederacy played an important role in establishing flag iconography in both language and visual representation for post-war American culture.

The Civil War, the American flag, and American Memory

In the Spring 1894, Archbishop John Ireland stood before veterans of the Civil War from New York to speak a few words on the subject of patriotism. Nearly thirty years had passed since the end of the war, but the duty and honor obtained by veterans of America’s bloodiest conflict remained fresh in Ireland’s mind. He had himself served as a volunteer in the Union Army. On this day however, he recognized that that “the honor is mine to address the country’s heroes, the country’s martyrs.” The veterans had made the most noble of sacrifices to come to the aid of the nation. As Archbishop Ireland observed: “Your tried hands are doubly pledged in purest unselfishness and bravest resolve to uphold in the reign of peace the loved flag which in days of war they carried over gory fields above stain or reproach.” The speaker continued by offering sweeping and romantic oration on the subject of patriotism in American history. However, upon speaking of the Civil War and the meaning of its outcome, his opinion was firmly resolved. He announced: “This only fact, that the States are one nation, and that, at home and abroad, one flag symbolizes them.” In the memory of this veteran, the Civil War signified the defining moment of American nationalism and only one symbol circumscribed the American nation, the American flag.³²

³¹ Ibid., 263.

³² A. Noel Blackeman, Personal Recollections of the War of the Rebellion: Addresses Delivered Before the Commandery of the State of New York, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (New York, 1897), 198, 205.

These feelings of patriotism did not only resonate from veterans of the Union armies but also among veterans from the Confederacy. In 1896, General James Longstreet, commander of the First Corp of the Army of Northern Virginia, published his memoirs of the war. He dedicated his work to the soldiers under his command, “to the living and the dead, in memory of their brave deeds, their toils, their tribulations, and their triumphs.” Though Longstreet held deep pride and honor for his place among his command, he recognized that the outcome of the war had solidified the nation. He asserted: “I believe there is today, *because of the war*, a broader and deeper sense of patriotism in all Americans; that patriotism throbs the heart and pulses the being as ardently of the South Carolinian as of the Massachusetts Puritan.” More importantly, Longstreet expressed the nationalist spirit that flowed from the memory of the war explaining that with his book, “I have endeavored to perform my humble share of duty in passing the materials of history to those who may give them place in the records of the nation,-not of the South nor of the North,-but in the history of the United States.”³³

Benedict Anderson wrote that “it may be useful to begin a consideration of the cultural roots of nationalism with death.”³⁴ The Civil War and the effects the conflict etched into American history reside in the issue of death, of sacrifice of those in the past to enable the future. Much of American culture has chosen to remember the war in this way and in doing so have discovered the patriotism that is required to solidify nationalism. As the war found a place in American memory as a patriotic and nationalist

³³ James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America (Philadelphia PA, 1896), v, xvi.

³⁴ Anderson, Imagined Communities, 10.

conflict it “blurred now into mythology, into signs and symbols.”³⁵ As one author wrote, “Historians have learned from painful experience how hard it is to convey the awesome and awful quality of that war, how difficult to recapture its grief and sorrow or even its pride.”³⁶ Susan-Mary Grant argued that the nation owed its existence to warfare and the Civil War transformed “from a bitter sectional conflict to a holy crusade that established and sanctified the nation.”³⁷ The intricacies of the war offer a story that pointed more toward the possibility of deepened sectionalism more than to a powerful nationalism. Yet, American memory turned to the flag as the symbol of the nation, and used the image as a symbol of connectedness that camouflaged dissension and inequality after the war.

Bitterness and resentment obviously existed throughout the nation in the years after the Civil War. The American flag, however, seemed generally to transcend these feelings. For example, during a parade in South Carolina of the fire department, the fire chief noticed that the American flag was nowhere to be found in the midst of all the banners. He endeavored to personally display the flag whereupon, “Every person in the column readily and cheerfully saluted it by lifting his hat or cap in passing.”³⁸

Newspapers all across the nation reported the celebrations for the Fourth of July, 1865, in which the flag was persistently on display. In Philadelphia, the description of the ceremony filled three pages of print. In one particular instance, upon the delivery of the Declaration of Independence, “The Glee Club” then sang with fine effect the well-known campaign song of the Republican party during the last Presidential canvass, ‘We’ll rally

³⁵ Charles Joyner, “Forget Hell!”: The Civil War in Southern Memory,” in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War (Baton Rouge LA, 2003), 18.

³⁶ Ibid., 18.

³⁷ Susan-Mary Grant, “The Charter of Its Birthright: The Civil War and American Nationalism in Ibid., 206.

³⁸ Quoted in Leepson, Flag, 127.

round the flag, boys,' their effort being loudly applauded.”³⁹ The event displayed the unification of a community that felt itself a part of a nation under one symbol. As one author concluded on patriotic practices such as the singing of anthems, “No matter how banal the words or mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. The image: unisonance.”⁴⁰ After four years of bloodshed, Americans welcomed a feeling of unity.

The newspaper also included a street by street account of the decorations placed on the outsides of the houses inside the city. One house in particular, listed only as “No. 2046,” received special attention. “From the upper windows of this house was suspended a large American flag, covering almost the entire front.”⁴¹ Symbols of the conflict, especially the flags of the war, assumed the role of personalizing the political climate. Indeed, a New Orleans newspaper expressed the doom of the southern individual due to political significance of the war. “They have no more guns to fire. But they tore down the American flag. They are once more doomed; they are now doomed politically, by their own action, by their own fault.”⁴² However, in the construction of the war’s memory in American culture, doom was not to be the political fate of southerners. By 1877, a political reunification had at least initiated enough for newly elected President Rutherford B. Hayes to conclude in an address to Congress: “All apprehension of danger from remitting those States to local self-government is dispelled, and a most salutary change in the minds of the people has begun and is in progress in ever part of every section of the country once the theater of unhappy civil strife, substituting for suspicion,

³⁹ Philadelphia Inquirer, July 7, 1865.

⁴⁰ Anderson, Imagined Communities, 145.

⁴¹ Philadelphia Inquirer, July 7, 1865.

⁴² New Orleans Tribune, Aug. 3, 1865.

distrust, and aversion, concord, friendship, and patriotic attachment to the Union.”⁴³

However, the differing politics between northerners and southerners may have been overshadowed by the patriotic pride in the heroics of the veterans and the ascension of American flag iconography; it did not dispel political strife.

Though the image of the American flag seemed to represent unity and a new national identity, it did not represent these ideas equally for all of America’s citizens. African Americans, for example, did not fit into the national vision as fully privileged citizens no matter what role they played in the Civil War. In 1896, *The Freeman* newspaper demanded equal rights for black citizens incorporating the use of flag imagery. The author of the article exclaimed: “They fought for the flag in the war, and that flag, with all it represents and stands for, must secure them every constitutional right in Peace.”⁴⁴ The flag symbolism in the article emphasized the new and powerful position that the American flag held as persuasive and patriotic collateral. The author told the story of one black color-bearer in the Union army who had been ordered to “guard, defend, protect, die for, but do not surrender these colors.” The color-bearer replied, “Colonel, I’ll return those flags to you in honor, or I’ll report to God the reason why.” The author proudly and sentimentally explained the fate of the man: “He fell mortally wounded in one of the desperate charges in front of Port Hudson, with his face to the enemy, with those colors in his clenched fist pressed upon his breast. He did not return the colors, but the God above him knew the reason why.”⁴⁵

The political rigidity between northerners and southerners concerning issues of racial equality did not align with the culture memory entrenched in the new American

⁴³ Commanger, *Civil War Archive*, 811.

⁴⁴ *The Freeman*, Apr. 25, 1896.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

narrative. Instead, it was to be a monumental memory, both figuratively and literally. On the Fourth of July, 1865, the corner stone for the National Monument at Gettysburg was set to commemorate the “sacred memory of our dead heroes.” Citizens and veterans gathered for the ceremony of the towering monument to be built in the center of Gettysburg National Cemetery. Even free-masons attending the ceremony were reported to have announced in a public forum that they “shall not be concerned in plots or conspiracies against the Government.” Rather they stated, “Let us here, on the birthday of the nation, pay merited honor to the memories of those citizens who have given up their lives in defense of their principles which test true patriotism.”⁴⁶ True patriotism for white veterans and citizens who experienced the Civil War came in the form of the heroic and sacrificial deeds of white soldiers both North and South. American culture enshrined the war in national memory as a struggle of patriots.

The American flag, and the historical significance of the Confederate battle-flag, became the symbol of this ideology. In June 1875, Colonel C. Irvine Walker presented the battle-flag of the 10th South Carolina to the Carolina Rifle Club in Charleston. In his dedication speech, Walker embodied the iconic status that flags developed during the war and enlightened the tradition of flag iconography that remained in American memory and identity after the war. “Around this rag-a mere dingy, faded rag-cluster the proudest memories of my life. Memories of the deeds of those I love; memories of all that they suffered, all that they gave-wealth, health, their lives, that we might be free.” He proudly continued: “Do you think that I have cherished this? Do you think that I have sacredly

⁴⁶ Philadelphia Inquirer, July 7, 1865.

treasured this? I have worshipped it.”⁴⁷ Walker’s sentiments demonstrated the iconic status that flags had gained during the war.

In the 1898 Fourth of July parade in Dallas, Texas, a newspaper article described the reaction of American citizens to the unity demonstrated by war veterans.

At the corner of Main and Field streets the local posts of the Grand Army of the Republic and the United Confederate Veterans fell in line, and amid deafening cheers from all beholders, marched side by side down the crowded thoroughfare in the shadow of a large-sized, battle-scarred American flag.⁴⁸

Just three days before the celebration, U.S. forces stormed Spanish defenses on San Juan and Kettle Hill in Cuba and soundly defeated the Spanish as a united American military force under the American flag for the first time since the Civil War. The color-bearer who carried the American flag up San Juan Hill was Color-Sergeant George Berry of the 10th U.S Cavalry, an African-American soldier.⁴⁹

After the Civil War, parades, battlefields, monuments, cemeteries, and veteran reunions all became “sites of memory” for “the cultural production and ideological assertion,” of nationalism. Flag iconography, in the form of battle-scarred American flags, assumed a much more ritualized position by visually creating a “sense of the presence of the past in the present.”⁵⁰ Despite political tensions that remained in the lingering sectional divisions of the nation, the Centennial year of 1876 marked a significant time in the historical narrative of the American nation. With Reconstruction’s end near, the memory of the war remained fresh in the minds of the people. On the

⁴⁷ Carolina Rifle Club, Presentation of the Battle flag of the 10th Regiment S.C.V Confederate States Army, June 22, 1875 (Charleston SC, 1875), 9.

⁴⁸ Dallas Morning News, July 5, 1898.

⁴⁹ Kathlyn Gay, Spanish-American War: Voices from the Past (Brookfield CT, 1995), 50-51.

⁵⁰ Tamar Katriel, “Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums” in Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, eds., Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity (Detroit MI, 1999), 99-100.

historic day of July 4, 1876, Americans looked to one symbol to display the heritage and the history of the United States: the American flag. A newspaper described the celebration in Baltimore, Maryland and pointed to the status the American flag had gained as the nation's symbol: "The general features on every side were vast numbers of brilliant American flags...flags from every window of the homes, flags from staffs, flags on long lines from housetops to the ground, large flags across the streets nearly sweeping the tops of passing vehicles, street railway cars and horses with miniature flags, babies in nurses arms carrying the national colors, and other babies crying for more flags."⁵¹ The flag had become a mainstay symbol in American culture.

Historian David Blight posited: "Nations may not remember, but they are the evolving creations of high stakes contests between groups that do remember and contend to define the past, present, and future of national cultures."⁵² The American flag was not the only flag to gain prominence from the events of the Civil War. For the Southern people shadowed by the loss, memory and symbolism of the war became fixtures in southern culture. It was the Confederate Battle Cross (the St. Andrew's cross pattern) that became the symbol of white southern culture post-war, not the Confederate national flag. The Confederate nation dissolved in 1865, but the memory of those that participated in the conflict, of the Old South, and southern conservative heritage remained. As John M. Coski argued, the Confederate battle flag "became most meaningful for memorial rituals...veterans testified that the battle flag was the only flag

⁵¹ The Sun, July 7, 1876.

⁵² David Blight, Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War (Amherst MA, 2002), 278-279.

that meant anything to them.”⁵³ Their attachment to the Confederacy only remained in the patriotic deeds experienced under the battle flag.

For confederate veterans, there existed a sense of dual loyalty to the past and the present. They were loyal to the reconstructed nation and its flag while also remaining loyal to the defunct southern past in the symbolism of the Confederate battle flag.

Randolph H. McKim, a Confederate veteran, reiterated this sentiment on Flag Day in 1904. “Strange as it may seem to one who does not understand our people; inconsistent and incomprehensible as it may appear, we salute yonder flag-the banner of the Stars and Stripes-as the symbol of our reunited country, at the same moment that we come together to do homage to the memory of the Stars and Bars.” He continued: “There is in our hearts a double loyalty to-day; a loyalty to the present, and a loyalty to the dear, dead past. We still love our old battle flag...and we will honor it and cherish it evermore,-not now as a political symbol, but as a consecrated emblem of an heroic epoch.”⁵⁴

However, in the years following World War II the Confederate battle flag enjoyed new life as powerful political and cultural symbol. The controversy over the Democratic national convention’s adoption of civil rights policies spurred the creation of the Dixiecrat Party in 1948 whose unofficial symbol became the Confederate battle flag. Offshoot groups in the South of the Ku Klux Klan began using the flag as a part of ceremonial rituals by 1943. The Confederate symbol infiltrated pop-culture and by the early 1990s the consumerism of Reaganomics. Nonetheless, the popularity of the southern symbol never legitimately challenged the American flag as the symbol of

⁵³John M. Coski, “The Confederate Battle Flag in Historical Perspective,” in Martinez, Richardson and McNinch-Su, eds. *Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South*, 102.

⁵⁴Randolph McKim, *A Soldier's Recollections: leaves from the diary of a young Confederate, with an oration on the motives and aims of the soldiers of the South* (New York, 1910), 289.

American nationalism after the Civil War. The flag's use remained sectional and became attached to political and cultural movements far from the symbols original context.⁵⁵

The press may have introduced patriotic flag iconography to the public in 1861, but in the end, the soldiers who fought under these flags established their iconic status in American memory and culture through their experiences during the war. For Civil War soldiers, the image of the flag connected them with a past filled with heroism and sacrifice. Veteran groups such as the patriotic Grand Army of the Republic “dedicated themselves to gaining mass and official support for everything from anthems to holidays. Most important, they promoted enshrinement of the flag as the nation’s most sacred symbol.”⁵⁶ Perhaps a North Carolina officer present at the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia prophesized the relationship between soldiers and the American flag after the war and the effect it would have on American culture. He proclaimed, “We had our choice of weapons and of ground, and we have lost. Now that is my flag (pointing to the flag of the Union), and I will prove myself as worthy as any of you.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ John M. Coski, “The Confederate Battle Flag in Historical Perspective,” in Martinez, Richardson and McNinch-Su, eds. Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South, 108-109, 111.

⁵⁶ Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, “The Radicalism of Patriotism, 1865-1918” in John Bodnar, ed., Bonds of Affection Define Their Patriotism (Princeton NJ, 1996), 61.

⁵⁷ Joshua L. Chamberlain, The Passing of the Armies: An Account of the Final Campaign of the Army of the Potomac. Based Upon Personal Reminiscences of the Fifth Army Corps (New York, 1993), 201.

Epilogue

The Civil War transformed the role of the American flag into the nation's most sacred symbol. In doing so, the flag became the visual manifestation of national identity and history, continuous throughout American history, of the "nation," instead of merely the Union. The war and flag iconography changed the way Americans viewed national identity and created an attachment to the symbolism of flags that prevails in American culture to this day. Though southerners and northerners lived and fought under different banners during the Civil War, the experience of the war created a sense of shared national history under the ideology of nationalism that generated from patriotic language and flag imagery among citizens, soldiers, and the press. After the war, soldiers held a peculiar position in the promotion of the flag as the national symbol. Veterans who had fought, who had lost comrades in the great struggle, resolved to enshrine the memory of their deeds in American history and the national narrative. The symbol for this enshrinement was the same banner that they had served and defended during the war, the flag.

It may be argued that the iconic status of the American flag only be considered no more than a cherished relic of the nationalism produced by the American Civil War. However, by examining the narratives of the war, both personal and of the newspapers, it becomes apparent that flag iconography flourished in American society like never before. While the American flag did not create American nationalism, it served the important role of providing a visual symbol for the transitions occurring in American nation. After the war, the image of the American flag that had flooded newspapers and visual culture during the war became the focal point for the memory of the conflict and the fabric that held together the new American narrative.

In his essay titled “The Legacy of the Civil War,” Robert Penn Warren described the war as “our only ‘felt’ history-history lived in the national imagination...It is an overwhelming and vital image of human, and national, experience.” Warren claimed that the war “is urgently our war, and...reaches in a thousand ways into our blood-stream and our personal present.”¹ The American flag became the symbol for the historical connectedness of future generations. The flag grew in status far beyond a lifeless symbol of identification or even an honored emblem of the Founding Father during the Civil War. It became iconic, even worshipped, for its symbolism and ability to bond citizens under a national history. In a speech to the citizens of Boston at a flag ceremony, president of Harvard Edward Everett recognized the new status of the American flag: “Why is it that the flag of the country, always honored, always beloved, is now at once worshipped...with passionate homage of this whole people?” He simply answered before the crowd, “Fort Sumter.”² With the Union in peril, citizens looked to the flag for a new meaning that included the past history of the nation but also represented the new attitudes of nationalism.

Southerners attempted to embrace nationalism with flag imagery as well. The Confederate national flag was an attempt to create a sense of nationalism for the new nation while encompassing the history it had obtained from the old one. The separation proved more emotionally difficult than expected. Much of the problem with Confederate nationalism resided in the citizens’ attachment to the heritage and history of the Union. While many supported the new nation, most did not want to leave behind the spirit of 1776 and, in fact, called on the patriotism of the Founding Fathers as justification for

¹ Albert Erskine, ed., A Robert Penn Warren Reader (New York, 1987), 270, 307.

² Quoted in Leepson, Flag, 105.

their own actions. The sense of nationhood in the Union could not easily be detached from southerner's memories and thus made it easier for southerners and northerners to incorporate the war into the American narrative as the heroic and sacrificial deeds of American patriots.

Flag iconography and American nationalism during and after the Civil War stemmed from an attempt of Americans to establish a national identity with a historical past. By April 1865, this process had taken root in the minds of American citizens and in American culture. Mrs. Loula Rogers perhaps best described the place of the war and the flags that represented the opposing sides of the conflict. "A land without ruins is a land without memories...A land without memories is a land without history." She continued in true patriotic form, "Had it not been for the midnight shadows that enshrouded our country we should never have know the brilliant stars who illuminated the Southern Cross with their radiance, and have emblazoned their glory in undying light over the whole world."³ Mrs. Rogers elegantly, in her sentimental yet inspiring words, portrayed the future of American nationalism and historical identity.

³ Andrews, Women of the South in War times, 302.

HARPER'S WEEKLY

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[PRICE FIVE CENTS.]

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1857, by Harper & Brothers, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

THE PRAYER AT SUMTER.

We publish herewith an illustration of one of the most striking scenes in the present national crisis—we may say in the history of the nation. The scene is described in a letter from Fort Sumter.

It is known that, on leaving Fort Moultrie, Major Anderson brought away with him the flag which he had been in the habit of hoisting over that fort. He entered Sumter on the night of 28-29th Dec, and determined to hoist the flag at noon on 27th. We give the scene in the words of an eye-witness:

"A short time before noon Major Anderson assembled the whole of his little force, with the workmen employed on the fort, around the foot of the flag-staff. The national ensign was attached to the cord, and Major Anderson, holding the end of the lines in his hands, knelt reverently down. The officers, soldiers, and men clustered around, many of them on their knees, all deeply impressed with the solemnity of the scene. The chaplain made an earnest prayer—an appeal for respect, encouragement, and mercy, as one would make who felt that 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' As the earnest, solemn words of the speaker ceased, and the men responded Amen with a fervency that perhaps they had never before experienced, Major Anderson drew a slip of paper from his pocket, and placed it on the top of the staff, the hand broke out with the national air of 'Hail Columbia,' and loud and exultant cheers, repeated again and again, were given by the officers, soldiers, and workmen. 'If,' said the narrator, 'South Carolina had at that moment attacked the fort, these words would have been hoisted upon the part of any man within it about defending that flag.'"

FORT SUMTER.

By the kindness of two officers of Major Anderson's command, who forwarded sketches to us by Lieutenant Talbot on his recent mission to Washington, we are enabled to lay before our readers, in this Number, a complete series of illustrations of Fort Sumter, the work toward which every eye in the country is now directed. We publish on page 107 a large engraving of the great battery; and on page 60 several views of the interior of the work. All of these, as we stated, are from pictures drawn, within a day or two, by officers of Major Anderson's command.

The following description of the fort is from high authority: "Fort Sumter is a modern triangular pentagonal fort, built upon an artificial island at the mouth of Charleston harbor, three and three-eighths miles distant from the city of Charleston. The island has for its base a sand and mud bank, with a superstructure, if we may so term it, of the red-brown clays from several Northern granite quarries. These rocks are firmly imbedded in the sand, and upon them the present fortification is reared. The island itself cost half a million of dollars, and was ten years in construction. The fortification cost another half a million dollars, and at the time of its occupancy by Major Anderson was so nearly completed as to admit the introduction of its armament. The walls are of solid brick and concrete masonry, built close to the edge of the water and without a berm. They are sixty feet high and eight to twelve feet in thickness, and are pierced for three tiers of guns on the north, east, and west exterior sides. Its weakest point is on the north side, of which the masonry is not only weaker than that of the other sides, but it is not protected by any flank fire, which would sweep the wharf. Once landed, an entrance

marked, the full armament of the fort is not in position, as only seventy-five of the one hundred and forty guns required for it are now mounted. Eleven Paixhan guns are among that number—nine of them commanding Fort Moultrie, which is within easy range, and the other two pointing toward Castle Pinckney, which is well out of

range. Some of the Columbiads, the most effective weapons for siege or defensive operations, are not mounted. Four of the thirty-two-pounder howitzer guns are on pivot carriages, which gives them the entire range of the horizon, and others have a horizontal sweep of fire of 180 degrees. In addition to these heavier preparations for defense, the walls are pierced every where for muskets, of which there are epidemic numbers ready and loaded. The magazine contains seven hundred barrels of gunpowder and an ample supply of shot, powder, and shells for one year's siege, and a large amount of miscellaneous artillery stores. The garrison is amply supplied with water from artificial wells, which are supplied by the frequent showers of rain.

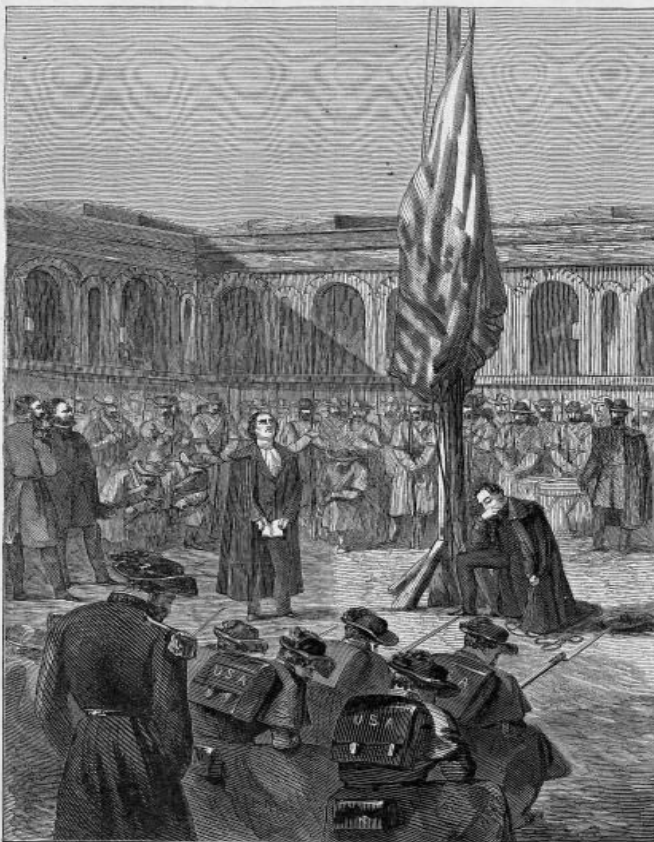
"In a defensive or strategical point of view, Fort Sumter possesses its fire through all the channels from the sea approach to Charleston, and has a full sweep of range in its rear, or city side. The fort is sufficiently out of range from a land artillery attack, so that all apprehensions for breaching it from that source may be put at rest. The maximum range of the guns from Sumter is three miles; but for accurate firing, sufficient to kill a vessel, the distance would require to be reduced one-half of that figure. The great garrison of the fort is six hundred men, but only seventy-nine of that number are within the walls."

Some military men have communicated to the *Herald* a plan for taking Fort Sumter, which is likely to be adopted by the South Carolinians in the event of an attack. The *Herald* says:

"The question so often asked, Is Fort Sumter impregnable against any attack that may be made by the South Carolinians? we answer emphatically in the negative. In making this statement we have the opinion of an officer who has several times-on previous occasions—been in the trenches of the fort, and who says the work can be carried by an assault on the north or possibly on the east—the weakest point—and thus from the main gateway entrance to the work, and by attacks with cannon-batteries effecting an entrance through open weaknesses of the fort, at which no guns are mounted. The attack would be made just before daylight, so that the movements of the assailants would be covered by darkness. At all events, the only obstacle to the approach of a fleet from Charleston would be composed of the fire of a few barbette guns; and if the attacking force should be so fortunate as to gain a position within one-half mile of the fort these guns could not be depressed enough to keep the assailants in short range; hence the defense of the fort would depend upon the mastery of the garrison, and when the assailants shall approach near the walls of the fort to complete the distance with hand-grenades and shells dropped from the parapets. That the success of Fort Sumter is fully possible we have not the slightest doubt; and that that attack, when it shall be put into execution, will be made upon the most scientific and strategical principles."

The same authority gives us the following about Columbiad guns:

"Many persons are under the impression that cannon of very large size, such as those with which Fort Sumter is armed, are so great damage as a distance of four or five miles; but such is not the fact, as ascertained by actual experience by the United States School of Ordnance. Commander Halgren, in his work on heavy artillery, has given the result. The farthest range of a hundred-pounder shell, even at an elevation of thirty-five degrees given to the gun, is 4533 yards; the time of flight being thirty-five seconds. The great howitzer, Columbiad, the largest gun made, loaded with twenty-two pounds of powder, a shell of 175 pounds, and the elevation of thirty-five degrees, has made a range only of 3600 yards, the projectile averaging thirty-two seconds in its flight. By ascending the elevation to thirty-nine degrees, only 100 yards were gained by the range. From the same gun, with a charge of powder of twenty-eight pounds, a shell of 150 pounds, and an elevation of thirty-five degrees, a range of 3611 yards has been attained; and at an elevation of thirty-one degrees, a



THE PRAYER AT SUMTER, DECEMBER 27, 1860.

hundred and forty pieces of ordnance of all calibers. Two tiers of the guns are under bullet-proof casemates, and the third or upper tier open, or, in military parlance, en barbette; the lower tier for forty-two-pounder Paixhan guns; the second tier for eight and ten inch Columbiads, for throwing solid as hollow shot, and the upper tier for mortars and

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Image 1: [Harper's Weekly](http://www.harperweek.com), Jan. 26, 1861

HarpWeek, LLC. 1857. *Harper's weekly journal of civilization*. Norfolk, Va: HarpWeek, LLC. <http://app.harperweek.com/>.

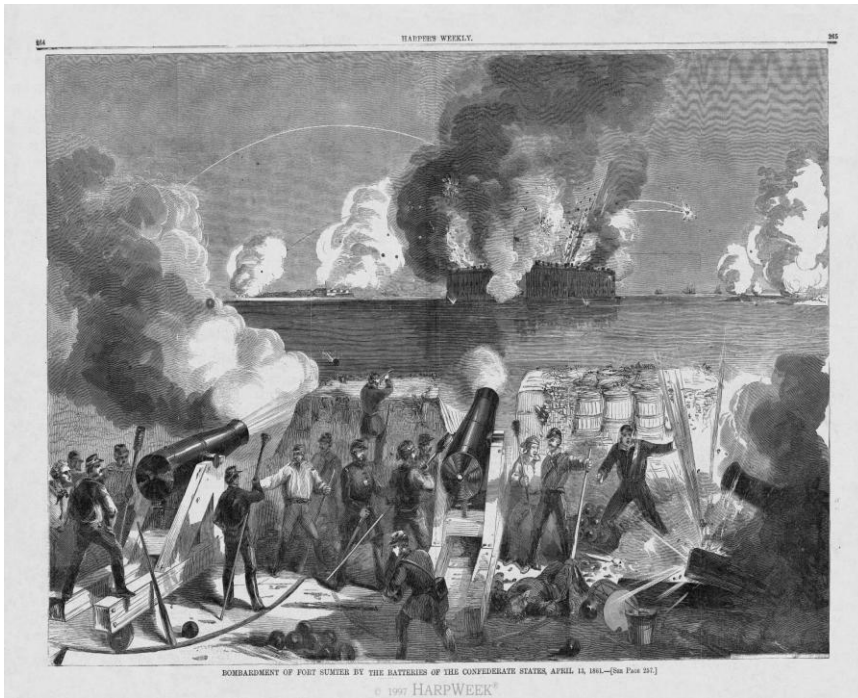


Image 3: Harper's Weekly, Apr. 27, 1861
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