

“The Verdict of History”:
Defining and Defending James Buchanan through Public Memorialization

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, decorum called for the veneration of past presidents as devoted patriots. The terms “sage” and “statesman,” which became synonymous with patriotism, riddled the remembrances of every president during this period. The Civil War, however, marked a significant shift in national meanings of patriotism. Civic virtue and morality gave way to post-Civil War ideals of warrior heroism. No longer would presidents simply be expected to maintain virtue and character; rather, they were to exhibit the heroism of Civil War soldiers. For those presidents who did not meet the public’s new patriotic criteria, their once untouchable legacies became contested terrain.

This thesis explores how changing definitions of patriotism influenced the public’s consideration of and relationship with presidents, and how the former leaders – as well as their families and supporters – manipulated the nation’s collective memory of their lives and administrations. It specifically focuses on James Buchanan (d. 1 June 1868), whose administration not only preceded the Civil War but also bore the brunt of post-Civil War opprobrium. Buchanan and his descendents repeatedly sought to refute the public’s disparaging “verdict of history,” which criticized the former president’s passivity in response to secession as evidence of his lack of patriotism. Over time, various forms of monuments and memorials arose in an attempt to counteract this criticism. This thesis demonstrates that as the Civil War influenced meanings of patriotism, presidents and their descendants took measures to control public memory via increasingly innovative and elaborate forms of memorialization.

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Introduction

Driving north on Interstate 81 from Virginia Tech, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland each disappear in the rearview mirror before you arrive in Southern Pennsylvania. Shortly beyond the border sits a roadside sign reading “James Buchanan’s Birthplace,” and upon taking the exit, another sign directs you to turn left and venture nearly fifteen miles to Mercersburg. Just beyond Mercersburg sits little Stony Batter, birthplace of James Buchanan, the fifteenth president of the United States and the only Pennsylvanian to hold the nation’s highest office.

The path to Stony Batter features numerous memorials to Buchanan’s life. The James Buchanan Restaurant and Pub sits on North Main Street in downtown Mercersburg. The restaurant, which contains memorabilia representative of Buchanan’s life, serves patrons in the former president’s childhood home.¹ Just across the street sits the Lane House, the birthplace of Harriet Lane, James Buchanan’s niece and First Lady for the country’s only bachelor president.² Uncle and niece – she affectionately referred to Buchanan as “Nunc” – grew close after Buchanan became Lane’s legal guardian. It is fitting, therefore, that these sites are in such close proximity to one another.

¹ Buchanan was born 23 April 1791. He lived at the site of the current James Buchanan Restaurant and Pub from 1796 to 1807.

² It is customary for the president’s wife to serve as First Lady, the White House hostess. There had been precedent for other relatives to serve as First Lady, however, including Andrew Jackson’s niece. Jackson’s wife died shortly before he assumed office. Likewise, Dolley Madison sometimes served as First Lady for Thomas Jefferson, a widower.



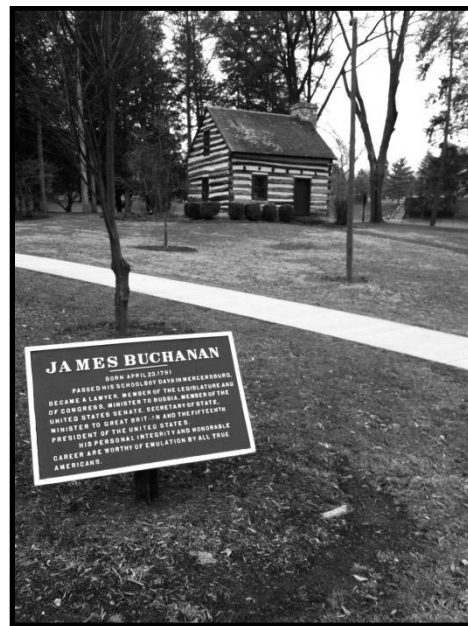
Images 1 and 2: Left, the James Buchanan Restaurant and Pub, located at one of James Buchanan's childhood homes in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Right, the Lane House, birthplace of Harriet Lane. The homes sit across from each other on North Main Street. Photos by the author.

Further down the road another roadside marker alerts drivers to the nearby site of Buchanan's Birthplace State Park. The plaque recognizes Buchanan's service as a lawyer, member of the Pennsylvania legislature, Senator, minister to Russia, Secretary of State, minister to Great Britain, and president of the United States. Having presented the litany of Buchanan's accomplishments, the plaque notes that Buchanan's "personal integrity and honorable career are worthy the emulation of all true Americans."³ A short drive through the woods brings you to the actual memorial; the cabin itself has been moved several times in the Mercersburg area and currently sits on the campus of nearby Mercersburg Academy. In its place at Stony Batter sits a pyramid of stone, Harriet Lane's monument to her uncle's birthplace and one of two monuments for which her 1903 will provided.⁴ Surrounding the monument are various interpretations of Buchanan's life, displays that discuss his long political service and experience, as well as the strict Constitutionalism that guided his policies. Indeed, one plaque notes that Buchanan

³ Roadside plaque, "James Buchanan," Mercersburg, PA.

⁴ The other is the national Buchanan Memorial in Washington, DC. This monument will be explored in Chapter Three.

“governed under a simple principle, ‘I acknowledge no master but the law.’”⁵ Mention of Buchanan’s presidency centers on the rampant sectional deterioration over the issue of slavery. According to the display, Buchanan assumed the presidency at a time when “the United States was rapidly splitting over the issue of slavery. He kept the Union together through compromise, but the abolitionists in the north and secessionists in the south did not want compromise.”⁶ According to this interpretation, Buchanan was not responsible for the outbreak of the Civil War. Instead, he tried, ultimately in vain, to mollify the increasingly incendiary tensions between the North and South.



Images 3 and 4: Left, the Buchanan Birthplace Memorial at Buchanan Birthplace State Park in Stony Batter, PA (just outside Mercersburg). Right, the cabin in which Buchanan was born and lived for his first five years. Today, the cabin sits on the campus of Mercersburg Academy. Photos by the author.

Such displays of memorialization would hardly seem out of place to honor one of Pennsylvania’s most eminent citizens. Beneath their surfaces, however, the monuments are products of personal and political struggles over Buchanan’s memory. A plaque at Stony Batter,

⁵ “President James Buchanan,” plaque at Buchanan Birthplace State Park, Stony Batter, PA.

⁶ “President James Buchanan.”

for example, informs visitors of Harriet Lane's trying efforts to preserve her uncle's legacy. It tells briefly of how Lane "fought to honor her uncle. She helped publish presidential memoirs and spent years dispelling the belief he caused the Civil War."⁷ Notably, at times the contests for memory are not so well concealed. For example, the display at Stony Batter briefly discusses the Buchanan National Monument in Washington, DC, and the "political wrangling" that eventually gave way to the memorial's construction. But casual visitors to the park might question why such wrangling was necessary to honor Buchanan. The monuments at Mercersburg and Stony Batter raise questions regarding not only the way in which history remembers and honors presidents' lives and administrations, but also how memory and sites of memory are constructed and contested. Such places are fraught with various, and sometimes conflicting, tensions, agendas, and stories, as well as cultural and political meanings.

Reaching a Verdict: The Civil War, Reconstruction, and Presidential Remembrances

The post-Civil War deaths of presidents Buchanan (d. 1 June 1868), Franklin Pierce (d. 8 October 1869), and Millard Fillmore (d. 8 March 1874), whose administrations preceded the war, provoked especially discordant responses throughout the country. Indeed, debates emerged nationwide regarding whether to criticize these presidents after their deaths. Integral to such discussions were increasingly contested criteria regarding what comprised an adequate and responsible remembrance of a president's life and administration. The *New York Herald* obituary that followed Buchanan's death exclaimed "De mortuis nil nisi bonum" (Loosely, do not speak ill of the dead). On the other hand, *Harper's Weekly*, for example, justified its criticisms of Pierce's and Buchanan's administrations by noting that "no conspicuous actor in

⁷ "A Quest for Honor," display at Buchanan Birthplace State Park, Stony Batter, PA.

our politics . . . should disappear in a mere swash of praise.”⁸ Furthermore, following all three presidents’ deaths, various papers assumed the role of judges and described their rulings as verdicts.⁹ However, when *Harper’s Weekly* declared that “the verdict of history” would recognize the great inferiority of the Pierce administration, one must question what considerations merited such a verdict and whether the presidents or their descendants themselves had any power to control the ruling.¹⁰

Embracing the idea that presidents’ deaths could ignite a storm of national debate over their legacies, specifically in the post-Civil War era, this thesis begins from two central questions: What values constituted remembrances of presidents, and how did changes in these values affect the way in which the country interacted with their leaders?¹¹ Throughout US history, notions of patriotism had manifested themselves in remembrances of presidents. Prior to the Civil War period, decorum called for veneration of past presidents. The terms “sage” and “statesman” became synonymous with patriotism and riddled remembrances of every president from George Washington in 1799 to Martin Van Buren in 1862. The Civil War, however, marked a significant shift in national meanings of patriotism. Civic virtue and morality gave way to post-Civil War ideals of heroism, steeped within a warrior mentality. Consequently, no longer were presidents beyond reproach; rather, they were expected to exhibit the same heroism and dedication to the nation as Civil War soldiers, later including Confederate soldiers as North

⁸ “The Death of Ex-President Buchanan,” *New York Herald*, 2 June 1868.

⁹ “Franklin Pierce,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 30 October 1869; “The Death of Ex-President Buchanan,” *New York Herald*, 2 June 1868; “Death of Ex-President Millard Fillmore,” *Alexandria Gazette* (VA), 9 March 1874.

¹⁰ “Franklin Pierce,” *Harper’s Weekly*.

¹¹ By remembrance, I refer to initial responses to presidents’ deaths, including editorials, articles, eulogies, and public meetings. I will routinely refer to critical remembrances – At those times I am speaking directly to the phenomenon of post-Civil War remembrances that portrayed presidents negatively.

and South reunited. For those presidents, especially James Buchanan, who did not meet the public's new patriotic criteria, their once untouchable legacies became contested terrain.¹²

This thesis explores the ways in which the Civil War, and specifically its effect on definitions of patriotism, influenced the public's consideration of and relationship with presidents, and how the former leaders – as well as their families and other supporters – tried to manipulate the national public memory of their lives and administrations. It specifically focuses on James Buchanan, whose administration preceded the Civil War and bore the brunt of post-Civil War opprobrium, especially upon his postbellum death. Buchanan and his descendents, specifically his niece Harriet Lane, repeatedly sought to refute the public's disparaging “verdict of history,” which criticized the former president's passivity in response to secession and considered it evidence of his lack of patriotism. Over time, presidents' family members erected various forms of monuments and memorials in an attempt to counteract such negative verdicts. This thesis therefore demonstrates that, as meanings of patriotism evolved following the Civil War, presidents and their descendants took measures to control public memory via increasingly innovative and elaborate forms of memorialization.

Historiography

This research enters into conversation with three primary strands of scholarship: patriotism in nineteenth-century America, post-Civil War reunification, and Civil War memory and memorialization. In defining patriotism, I draw from historian John Bodnar, who has worked extensively on American notions of patriotism, including editing *Bonds of Affection*, a collection of essays on patriotic thought throughout US history. In its essence, the titular *Bonds*

¹² By legacy, I refer to how presidents are remembered not immediately following their deaths, but years or decades later. I use legacy to represent a larger sense of how presidents will be considered in the future and eventually be considered in America's collective memory.

of Affection for the country comprise the meaning of patriotism. Patriots “saw their fates interconnected with the destiny of other citizens in a common project to build a democratic and egalitarian society.”¹³ Bodnar’s depiction of patriotism, and specifically its evolution during the nineteenth century, forms the core of my research. This thesis explores how meanings of patriotism operated after presidents’ deaths, and how this evolved over time, by looking at patriotism through a new source base: presidential remembrances, which include obituaries and eulogies.

The Civil War became the pivot in nineteenth-century meanings of patriotism in the United States and therefore features prominently within this thesis. Shortly after the American Revolution, US citizens were indoctrinated with the growing imagery of patriotism, a constructed patriotism that historian Cynthia M. Koch calls “self-definition.” Patriotism became a central component of post-Revolution education; books and newspapers crafted narratives of America’s uniqueness and greatness at the same time that they formed an image of George Washington that could embody the ideas of moral virtue. Washington’s virtuous character became an example to the young nation, and his accomplishments and stature captivated the public.¹⁴ With the Civil War came new meanings of patriotism. Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary suggests that concepts of patriotism changed among soldiers after the Civil War, shifting from “citizen virtue and moral behavior . . . toward the celebration of male warrior heroism.”¹⁵

¹³ John Bodnar, “The Attractions of Patriotism,” in *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism*, John Bodnar ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

¹⁴ Cynthia M. Koch, “Teaching Patriotism: Private Virtue for the Public Good in the Early Republic,” in *Bonds of Affection*, 19-52.

¹⁵ Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, “‘Blood Brotherhood’: The Racialization of Patriotism, 1865-1918,” in *Bonds of Affection*. For more on patriotism and Reconstruction-era nationalism, see Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Jonathan M. Hansen, *The Lost Promise of Patriotism: Debating American Identity, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002);

Indeed, O’Leary notes that post-Civil War reunification centered on glorifying the heroism of Union and Confederate soldiers alike. My research builds on this concept by examining the consequences of new meanings of patriotism through the medium of presidential remembrances.

To claim there was a clean shift after the war, however, is an oversimplification. There never existed one singular patriotism – multiple meanings existed simultaneously. In Bodnar’s words, “patriotic thought could be a maze within both the minds of individuals and the nation as a whole.”¹⁶ The Civil War did not mark a unified shift in notions of patriotism, but instead created a schism. This separation played itself out in presidential remembrances, which were steeped in the language of patriotism. As patriotism became increasingly contested, presidents’ legacies garnered greater scrutiny. From this shift in patriotic thought arose a desire for some – such as the champions of James Buchanan – to defend against charges that they were traitors to their nation. My research demonstrates that a binary had seemingly formed among presidential remembrances: presidents who were not viewed by the public as patriots were often characterized as traitorous. As patriotism evolved – and presidents were held to the new, existing standards of patriotic thought – so too did the ways in which people were considered patriots.

Struggles to defend presidents’ legacies began during Reconstruction, of which a critical theme is the reunification of North and South.¹⁷ In particular, the study of post-Civil War deaths of presidents has influenced my outlook on how presidents’ deaths influenced the nation. The

Mitchell Snay, *Fenians, Freedmen, and Southern Whites: Race and Nationality in the Era of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Bodnar, “The Attractions of Patriotism,” 4.

¹⁷For more on Reconstruction, see Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, *The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); see also Brooks D. Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), ix, 234-35; James Huntington Whyte, *The Uncivil War: Washington During the Reconstruction, 1865-1878* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958).

assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, for example, garnered mixed reactions in the South. Some people denounced the media's fawning over the president, whereas others bemoaned the loss of Lincoln, who could have proven an ally during Reconstruction. For many Americans, however, Lincoln's funeral was "the grandest funeral spectacle in the history of the world. . . . After such a spectacle few men cared to dispute Lincoln's heroic epitaph."¹⁸ As such, Lincoln's death and funeral helped unite the nation after the Civil War and contributed to his now iconic status in American history. Twenty years later Ulysses S. Grant, a former president and Union war hero, died and received similar accolades. Blight's *Race and Reunion* describes Grant's death as having "produced the most extraordinary outpouring of national grief and reconciliation since the war."¹⁹ Agreeing with this reconciliationist account, that Lincoln's and Grant's deaths brought the country closer together, historian Joan Waugh considers Grant's funeral "a vehicle for a religiously tinged emotional and political reconciliation of North and South and as such is a critical event in the history of the political culture of the United States."²⁰ These works have compelled my research to examine how presidents were remembered after their deaths, especially presidents such as James Buchanan, who were not viewed in the North as Civil War heroes. How the nation viewed these figures prompts new questions that I address in my thesis, including why people reacted as they did, whether responses could change over time, and, if so, who might have the power to effect change.

Except for these examples, few scholars have studied presidents' deaths and how monuments and funerals commemorate their lives. The most relevant scholarship examines Lincoln and his place in Civil War memory. Merrill D. Peterson's *Lincoln in American Memory*,

¹⁸ Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21.

¹⁹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 215.

²⁰ Joan Waugh, "'Pageantry of Woe': The Funeral of Ulysses S. Grant," *Civil War History* 51, no. 2 (June 2005): 151.

for example, explores the varied perceptions of Lincoln that evolved over time: the “Savior of the Union, Great Emancipator, Man of the People, the First American, and the Self-made Man” and someone similar to George Washington, who also guided the country during a time of war.²¹ My research does not challenge this interpretation, but rather seeks to examine how other presidents fit, or do not fit, into similar models. Studying other presidents from the mid-nineteenth century, however, is difficult,²² and there are few analytical studies of presidents’ deaths, especially for those who died after leaving office. My thesis does not simply try to fill this hole in the historiography; instead, my focus on patriotism, the Civil War, and memorialization suggests that even forgotten presidents had significant influence upon the development of presidential memorialization in the post-Civil War era.

Benjamin Hufbauer’s *Presidential Temples* does examine the modern commemoration of presidents, however, and as such provides a foundational book for my research on an earlier era. His work discusses the development of presidential libraries during the twentieth century, beginning during Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency, noting that the library program arose simultaneously with the growth of presidential power during this period. Hufbauer argues that presidential libraries give modern presidents the opportunity for “self-commemoration,” a chance to influence how history and the public would remember them.²³ I argue however that presidential memory developed before this era of self-commemoration, specifically as a result of

²¹ Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 27. For more on Lincoln’s death and funeral, see Scott D. Trostel, *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln* (Fletcher, OH: Cam-Tech Pub., 2002); Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

²² See Martin S. Nowak, *The White House in Mourning: Deaths and Funerals of Presidents in Office* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010); Homer F. Cunningham, *The Presidents’ Last Years: George Washington to Lyndon B. Johnson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989). A look at Cunningham’s *The Presidents’ Last Years* shows that state funerals did not become common place for all presidents until the mid-twentieth century.

²³ Benjamin Hufbauer, *Presidential Temples: How Memorials and Libraries Shape Public Memory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 3-8.

Civil War-era divisions and conceptions of patriotism.²⁴ The federal system of presidential libraries institutionalized presidential self-commemoration, but James Buchanan's efforts to rehabilitate his image show that the movement's roots reach at least as far back as the Civil War.

Finally, this research elaborates upon previous works about James Buchanan. Widely regarded as the definitive account of Buchanan, Philip Shriver Klein's *President James Buchanan: A Biography* examines the sweep of his life, including his early home years, his law career, and his ascent to the pinnacle of national politics. Tellingly, Klein repeatedly notes the impact that the Civil War has had upon the president's legacy. Buchanan's attempts to bridge the animosities between North and South failed, and Klein believes that "a peacemaker who fails . . . is likely to receive for his efforts only resounding curses from both the warring camps."²⁵ Later, hinting at how the country altered its perceptions of presidents after the war, Klein notes that Buchanan's "many talents, which in a quieter era might have gained for him a place among the great presidents of his country, were quickly overshadowed by the cataclysmic events of civil war and by the towering personality of Abraham Lincoln."²⁶ This thesis expands upon Klein's

²⁴ For scholarship on commemoration in general, see John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2003); Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembrance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For works on the more general culture of death in America, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008); Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). For more on death in the United States, see Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000); Charles O. Jackson, *Passing: The Vision of Death in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Mary Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); David E. Stannard, *Death in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

²⁵ Philip Shriver Klein, *President James Buchanan: A Biography* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), xiii.

²⁶ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 429.

observation, pinpointing patriotism as the central link in considerations of presidents and examining the consequences of this shift with regard to presidential memorialization.

Beyond Klein's heralded work, there is relatively little scholarship on James Buchanan, especially when compared to his fellow presidents. Most notably, especially for this work, is the dearth of scholarship that focuses on his post-presidency. Besides Klein's work, which devotes its final chapter to Buchanan's time after leaving office, George Ticknor Curtis's 1883 *Life of James Buchanan* is one of the few works to treat the subject. Curtis authored the first published biography of Buchanan, one sponsored by Buchanan's family.²⁷ His two-volume tome, which will be examined in closer detail in Chapter Three, is equal parts biography and a collection of letters. Buchanan's life and administration are thus handled in extreme detail, but Buchanan's post-presidency is almost completely ignored, except for a collection of letters.

Many works focus solely on Buchanan's presidency. In fact, Buchanan's own memoir, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of Rebellion*, eschews his life story in favor of a sprawling defense of his administration, specifically from Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election to the new president's March 1861 inauguration.²⁸ Philip G. Auchampaugh's 1926 book *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* examines the same period, intending to expand upon Curtis's earlier work. In particular, Auchampaugh gives credit to Buchanan for retaining as much of his Cabinet as he did in the wake of the secession crisis, and determines that the president's ability to prevent a war during his administration proved that "few men beset by so many chances of pitfalls have ever managed to extricate themselves so skillfully."²⁹ The most

²⁷ George Ticknor Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan: Fifteenth President of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883).

²⁸ James Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of Rebellion* (New York: D. Appleton, 1866).

²⁹ Philip Gerald Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* (Lancaster, PA: privately printed, 1926), 190.

recent works on Buchanan have both been products of ongoing book series on presidents and primarily concerned with Buchanan's presidency. Elbert Smith's *The Presidency of James Buchanan* pinpoints Buchanan's pro-Southern tendencies as his greatest failure, compelling him to appoint Cabinet members and support policies that favored the South.³⁰ During the last decade, Jean Baker's short book, *James Buchanan*, also tackles the Buchanan presidency, with two chapters (of four) devoted to Buchanan's pre-presidency. Baker agrees with Smith's assessment of Buchanan's pro-Southernism, adding that the president exhibited a stubbornness and arrogance that did not alleviate the situation.³¹

Interestingly, Smith and Baker seem to come to different conclusions regarding how Buchanan has come to be remembered since his death. Short as Baker's book is, she leaves no doubt as to her opinion of the former president, someone who "came closer to committing treason than any other president in American history" and whose personal defense – his 1866 memoir – showcased his immense stubbornness and refusal to accept fault for the Civil War.³² She acknowledges Smith's work, placing it among the "unremittingly negative" biographies that emerged after World War II and the Civil Rights Movement – after the positive accounts proposed by the likes of Curtis and Auchampaugh – but Smith's readers would not get such a strong sense of vitriol toward the president. In fact, Smith credits Buchanan for a successful defense of his presidency, which, in his opinion, has influenced history to vindicate Buchanan of "the unfair charges spawned by the fear, anger, and sufferings of wartime."³³ My thesis does not seek to bring clarity to this debate; rather, it attempts to look at how these positions became

³⁰ Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1975).

³¹ Jean Baker, *James Buchanan* (New York: Times Books, 2004), 149.

³² Baker, *James Buchanan*, 142-43.

³³ Smith, *Presidency of James Buchanan*, 196.

entrenched in local and national memory of the president, how this debate is representative of the larger contests of memory that continue to occur surrounding the fifteenth president.

Methodology

To achieve this goal, this work engages with a wide array of historical conversations, but I have simplified my methodology by approaching my topic as a political and cultural historian, with influence from memory theory. Certainly this thesis briefly discusses multiple presidents and focuses more closely on Buchanan, but, as noted previously, my intent is not to write the next biography of the former president. Rather, I examine broader cultural themes, including collective notions of patriotism and nationalism in post-Civil War society, and examine how they influenced considerations of presidents' deaths. I then reverse this framework and explore how presidents tried to influence remembrances and cultural responses through self-commemoration.

To do this, I draw on memory theory and how it applies to memorialization. W. Fitzhugh Brundage's edited collection, *Where These Memories Grow*, focuses on the development of collective historical memory in the South, but his analysis of memory transcends regional or national borders. He defines collective memory as that which coalesces when a people's remembrances combine to create a group identity, which is reinforced via methods of memorialization such as physical monuments and public ceremonies.³⁴ This thesis identifies this phenomenon in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, but argues that creators of memorials to James Buchanan, creators of the vehicles of local memory, tried to shape and manipulate memory in order to influence the larger national memory.

Throughout this research I use a loose definition of memorialization, one based on Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory: "moments of history torn away from the movement

³⁴ Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1-23.

of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.”³⁵ *Lieux de mémoire* form a network of memory that operates underneath the surface of the larger national memory, what Nora describes as the movement of history. This network of local, cultural memory tries to maintain public consciousness of the moments of history that the national memory has failed to incorporate. Such sites include museums, monuments, archives, books, and cemeteries, to name just some examples. Although the forms in which *lieux de mémoire* appear are plentiful, their individual importance is in no way diminished by their numbers. Nora writes that “*lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory.”³⁶ Buchanan, his family, and, later, groups within Lancaster comprised the core of a culture committed to preserving Buchanan’s memory and, more importantly, shaping a positive account of the former president’s administration: “The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de mémoire* – that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away.”³⁷ Buchanan’s letter exchanges, memoir, funeral, and eulogy all operate as examples of Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, as do the various monuments and memorials created during the twentieth century. According to Nora, these *lieux de mémoire* form a hidden network, “an unconscious organization of collective memory that it is our responsibility to bring to consciousness.”³⁸ In much the same way, the various memorializations of James Buchanan interact with each other in a network, each memorial having been created by Buchanan’s supporters in order to project a positive account of the former president that might influence how the rest of the country remembered him.

³⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1998): 12.

³⁶ Nora, “*Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 12.

³⁷ Nora, “*Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 12.

³⁸ Nora, “*Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 23.

John Bodnar notes that these defenders of culture are “numerous and intent on protecting values and restating views of reality derived from firsthand experience in small-scale communities rather than the ‘imagined communities’ of a larger nation.”³⁹ As scholars of historical memory note, memory is constructed and memorials absorb meanings from people who interact with them. Richard Morris illustrates how “a memorial’s *cultural* significance derives from its status as a sacred symbol to those for whom it is literally significant, not from its status as an aesthetic object,” and John R. Gillis links memory to identity, identifying that “both identity and memory are political and social constructs, and should be treated as such: “We can no longer afford to assign either the status of a natural object, treating it as a ‘fact’ with an existence outside language.”⁴⁰ The family of James Buchanan and the people of Lancaster have imbued public memorials to James Buchanan with a great deal of meaning, and I examine how they have tried to project this meaning outward, influencing the national memory of our nation’s fifteenth president.

Linking memory theory to Benjamin Hufbauer’s notion of self-commemoration, I will adopt Hufbauer’s term and framework to examine how self-commemoration grew from this period in time. My sources include a variety of newspapers from the years 1799 (the death of George Washington) through Reconstruction that reveal remembrances, as well as other reactions to presidents’ deaths; personal papers, such as the *Works of James Buchanan*, that reveal families’ fixations with asserting their loved ones’ legacies and values; Congressional debates that illustrate politicians’ role in honoring the deceased; and actual memorials, various *lieux de mémoire* that include memoirs, biographies, physical memorials, historic homes, and

³⁹ John Bodnar, “Public Memory in an American City,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Memory*, 75.

⁴⁰ Richard Morris, *Sinners, Lovers, and Heroes: An Essay on Memorializing in Three American Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 31; Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, 5.

literature. This collection of sources, especially the various forms of memorialization to Buchanan, demonstrates the numerous ways in which memory is given life.

Organization

The primary questions that guide this research are: How was patriotism defined following the Civil War? How did this concept influence reactions to presidents' deaths? And in what ways did these contentious opinions compel presidents to take measures toward controlling their legacies? Considering these questions, Chapter One begins with a survey of pre-Reconstruction presidential remembrances to show that the deaths of Buchanan, Fillmore, and Pierce more often provoked critical and contentious remembrances than those of previous presidents. Indeed, people venerated the Founding Fathers, elevating them to an immortal status.⁴¹ A slow, but not insignificant, deromanticization occurred in the years preceding the Civil War, but it was not until John Tyler's death in 1862 that critical remembrances flourished and then persisted into Reconstruction.⁴² I then transition to Reconstruction and examine reactions to the deaths of Buchanan, Fillmore, and Pierce to illustrate general themes and commonalities in such remembrances, and to emphasize their difference from pre-Civil War remembrances. Using an extensive search of newspapers to reveal details of the ceremonies themselves – including in cases sermons and the reactions of the media, politicians, and citizens – Chapter One argues that the nation's responses to these presidents' deaths were both indicative of and exasperated by Civil War divisions and post-war conceptions of patriotism.

⁴¹ Newspapers therefore saw little coincidence in the fact that three of the five Founding Father presidents died on 4 July: Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, 4 July 1826; and James Monroe, 4 July 1831.

⁴² Much of the Northern vitriol stemmed from Tyler's allegiance to the Confederacy (being from Virginia). Southern newspapers, such as the *Richmond Inquirer*, considered Tyler a heroic figure. And again, by critical remembrances I refer to negative portrayals of presidents immediately following their deaths.

Having developed this framework, a sense of presidential remembrance before and during Reconstruction, Chapter Two takes an in-depth look at one president in particular: James Buchanan. His administration's proximity to the Civil War, specifically the fact that Southern states began to secede from the Union during his final months in office, spawned especially negative opinions of the former president. This compelled Buchanan to take unprecedented measures in preserving his legacy, most notably writing the first presidential memoir. What develops out of Buchanan's personal memorialization efforts, and deepens following his death, reveals various layers of memory on local, state, and national levels.

Finally, Chapter Three looks at how efforts to maintain Buchanan's legacy spiraled out from Buchanan to his family, his city, and his state, all in an effort to influence the national public memory. Once again, the Buchanan family (both Buchanan himself and his niece, Harriet Lane Johnston) is emblematic of this movement, as it continually sought to reclaim the president's legacy through various means: a biography commissioned by Buchanan's family intended to assert and bolster his place in history; the establishment of Buchanan's Wheatland home as a historic site; the Buchanan memorial in Washington, DC, completed in 1930; and even a play written by fellow Pennsylvanian John Updike in 1974 that allowed the Buchanan character to discuss his life and motivations.

This research thus shows that as post-Civil War notions of patriotism and nationalism manifested themselves among increasingly critical presidential remembrances, presidents' families took measures to assert their loved ones' legacies through various forms of memorialization.

Chapter 1

Of Gods and Traitors: Charting Presidential Remembrances through Reconstruction

“Is He Gone?”

George Washington survived the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and eight taxing years as the United States’ first commander-in-chief. Ironically, an illness would claim his life on 14 December 1799. Tobias Lear, a family friend and formerly Washington’s personal secretary, witnessed the president’s final moments and captured the solemnity of the general’s passing.

While we were fixed in silent grief, Mrs. Washington (who was sitting at the foot of the bed) asked with a firm & collected voice, Is he gone? I could not speak, but held up my hand as a signal that he was no more. ’Tis well, said she in the same voice, “All is now over I shall soon follow him! I have no more trials to pass through!”⁴³

With that, the first president of the United States died in his bed at Mount Vernon. For the first time, the nation mourned the passing of a president, an event that would become one of the most somber moments in the young history of the United States.

Throughout the nation people remembered Washington for his decades of leadership during and after the American Revolution. In New York City, Washington was eulogized as being “mature in years, covered with glory, and rich in the affections of the American people.”⁴⁴ In the capitol city that bore his name, Georgetown’s *Centinel of Liberty* recognized the former president’s “long life devoted to the most important public services,” his “most eminent, usefulness, true greatness and consummate Glory,” and his “being an honour to our race and a

⁴³ Peter R. Henriques, *The Death of George Washington: He Died as He Lived* (Mount Vernon, VA: Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association: 2000), 74.

⁴⁴ “On Saturday the 14th Instant, Died Suddenly, At his Seat in Virginia, Gen. George Washington,” *The Spectator* (New York, NY), 21 December 1799.

model to future ages.”⁴⁵ For a nation still short on prominent public figures, Washington’s name stood beyond reproach: the hero of the American Revolution, the new republic’s first president.

Politicians’ responses to Washington’s death echoed the country’s somber tone. In the nation’s capitol, Samuel Livermore, president *pro tempore* of the Senate, repeatedly noted Washington’s patriotism and called on Americans to “consecrate the memory of the heroic general, the patriotic statesman, and the virtuous sage.”⁴⁶ President John Adams informed Congress of Washington’s death, characterizing it as the will of Divine Providence.⁴⁷ Adams linked the fallen president’s patriotism with the ideals of “wisdom, moderation, and constancy” that would remain a testament to his memory and a lesson to the country. Washington’s example “is now complete,” Adams said, “and it will teach wisdom and virtue to magistrates, citizens, and men, not only in the present age, but in future generations as long as our history shall be read.”⁴⁸ Rhetoric alone could not express the country’s deep sense of loss. A “multitude of persons” went to Mount Vernon to honor Washington as he was entombed on 20 December, and in nearby Alexandria, citizens decided to wear mourning crepe for a period of thirty days.⁴⁹ Various cities held funeral processions, including Philadelphia on 26 December and Alexandria on 30 December.⁵⁰

Presidents’ deaths contained lessons and meanings for contemporary audiences, and their lives and legacies continue to serve as reminders for Americans in the twenty-first century. Washington’s death also demonstrates the extent to which notions of patriotism have dominated presidential remembrances from the nation’s early days. The terms “virtue,” “sagacity,” and

⁴⁵ “Glory,” *Centinel of Liberty* (Georgetown, D.C.), 17 December 1799.

⁴⁶ Samuel Livermore, “Letter to John Adams,” 23 December 1799.

⁴⁷ John Adams, “Special Message,” 19 December 1799.

⁴⁸ John Adams, “Letter to the Senate,” 23 December 1799.

⁴⁹ “Domestic Occurrences,” *Constitutional Diary* (Philadelphia, PA), 24 December 1799.

⁵⁰ “Funeral Procession,” *Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), 30 December 1799; *Alexandria Times* (Alexandria, VA), 30 December 1799.

“wisdom” became indicative of and synonymous with patriotism at the turn of the nineteenth century. As historian Cynthia M. Koch notes, virtue, morality, and wisdom were central components of early-nineteenth century notions of patriotism, loyalty to one’s country, in the United States.⁵¹ This is in keeping with John Bodnar’s acknowledgment that early republican patriotism valued personal virtue over self-interest.⁵² How this develops and then changes within the context of presidential remembrances drives this chapter, as well as the subsequent actions of presidents such as James Buchanan, viewed in Chapter Two.

The nature of these remembrances speaks to the bonds people felt to their early leaders, specifically those who played integral roles in overthrowing British rule. Interestingly, such veneration and patriotic discourse persisted long after James Madison, the last of the Founding Fathers, died in 1836. Throughout the antebellum period, presidents were remembered for their leadership, character, and virtuosity. Sectionalism and divisions over slavery did provoke some critical remembrances of presidents in the early nineteenth century, and it should be noted that, while alive, presidents were routinely assailed by political opponents, serving as targets of partisan animosity. However, the sources I have uncovered, specifically the eulogies and obituaries that comprise my collection of presidential remembrances, are surprisingly deficient in such partisan rhetoric. When compared with post-Civil War remembrances, wherein many newspaper editors routinely criticized presidents after their deaths but some editors openly questioned whether to disparage the dead, it seems that early-nineteenth century customs dictated that presidents be remembered fondly after their deaths.

In this chapter, I argue that the Civil War shaped public responses to presidents’ deaths. With the advent of war came an increasing tendency to criticize presidents after their deaths,

⁵¹ Koch, “Teaching Patriotism,” *Bonds of Affection*, 19-52.

⁵² Bodnar, “The Attractions of Patriotism,” *Bonds of Affection*, 6.

specifically those, including Buchanan, Fillmore, and Pierce, whose administrations directly preceded – and perhaps helped cause – the Civil War. This chapter looks to examine one ramification of the Civil War and its subsequent effects on presidential remembrances: changes in the meaning of patriotism. Searching scores of newspapers throughout the nineteenth century, one finds that the language of patriotism litters presidential remembrances. Presidents who died before the Civil War were held to existing patriotic standards, specifically the Republican ideals of virtue, character, and morality. When notions of patriotism changed with the Civil War, however, presidents who died after the war were held to the new existing patriotic criteria, which emphasized action and heroism. In looking at one component of post-Civil War society, the evolution of patriotism, this chapter examines how presidents were remembered after their deaths throughout the early- to mid-nineteenth centuries, and tries to convey one reason for the increased vitriol in post-Civil War remembrances. Collectively, these sources elucidate Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary’s point that patriotism evolved after the Civil War to encompass the “celebration of male warrior heroism,” but they also demonstrate the consequences of this evolution.⁵³ Presidents who died after the Civil War were increasingly faulted for failing to measure up to the country’s evolving meanings of patriotism.

“A Great Man Hath Fallen In Israel”: Celebrating the Founders

The 8 July 1826 edition of Reading, Pennsylvania’s, *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* beckoned its readers to listen to the news of the day: “Fellow-citizens: ‘*A great man hath fallen in Israel.*’ The coincidence is so *strong*, and we may say so *beautiful*, that we might hazard the opinion, *he could not have died in a better time*. Peace to thy remains – thou friend of liberty

⁵³ O’Leary, “Blood Brotherhood,” in *Bonds of Affection*.

and the rights of man. The country cannot, will not forget thy virtues.”⁵⁴ The author of this passage referred to the death of Thomas Jefferson just days earlier on 4 July, but it could easily substitute for the popular reactions to the other Founding Father presidents: George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, and James Monroe. Newspaper editors, politicians, and citizens often considered the Founders seemingly immortal figures, and reactions to the Founders’ deaths were routinely steeped in the rhetoric of religion and patriotism. The two were often intrinsically linked; devotion to God was equated to virtue, wisdom, and, therefore, patriotism. As the following section demonstrates, the country’s reactions to the Founding Fathers’ deaths set a definitive tone for presidential remembrances that would persist throughout the early nineteenth century.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on 4 July 1826, bringing a poetic end to a relationship that contained no shortage of irony, symbolism, and contention. One of the earliest political divisions within the new republic emerged between the two figures: Adams, the Federalist who desired a strong national government; and Jefferson, the Democratic-Republican who felt that such a government deviated from the republican ideals with which the country was founded. When Adams narrowly defeated Jefferson to become George Washington’s successor in 1796, the two opponents, under the original rules of the Electoral College, were forced to work together with Jefferson serving as Adams’s vice president. Jefferson returned the favor four years later, defeating Adams’s reelection bid. The icy relationship between the second and third presidents thawed after their administrations, however, and the two regularly wrote each other until their deaths.

⁵⁴ Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, Is no more,” *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* (Reading, PA), 8 July 1826. Emphasis is from original text.

On that day in 1826, the public mourned the passing of a former president for the first time since Washington's death, twenty-seven years earlier. The collective remembrance of both presidents illustrates the potential influence of death in uniting various political factions within a culture. For example, for many newspapers it came as no coincidence that two Founding Fathers would die on the most hallowed day in the nation's young history. The *Essex Register* in Salem, Massachusetts, clearly perceived the hand of God in influencing Adams's and Jefferson's deaths, believing that God's will had been to take the presidents on the fourth of July.⁵⁵ Other newspapers viewed further irony from the nature of Jefferson's and Adams's previous opposition and same-day deaths. One New York newspaper envisioned how "Divine Providence had determine that the spirits of Adams and Jefferson, which were kindled at the same altar, and glowed with the same patriotic fervor, when they commenced their bright career of glory, but which had subsequently been estranged by political events for a series of years, should be united in death, and travel into the unknown regions of eternity together!"⁵⁶ The national sentiment in response to both presidents' deaths appeared to match the *Richmond Enquirer's* acquiescence to a higher power: "We mourn, while we submit to the blow."⁵⁷

In Washington, DC, President John Quincy Adams – the elder Adams's son – and his Cabinet prepared to honor the former presidents. Secretary of War James Barbour spoke for the president regarding Jefferson's and Adams's deaths and issued the General Orders for the military's commemoration of the presidents' lives. President Adams requested that all military stations pay funeral honors and all Army officers wear mourning crepe for a period of six months, thereby setting a precedent for future mourning periods. For Barbour, the fact of Jefferson's and Adams's deaths on the same day, and on the fourth of July no less, demonstrated

⁵⁵ "Death of Mr. Jefferson," *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), 10 July 1826.

⁵⁶ "Death of Mr. Jefferson," *NY Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), 11 July 1826.

⁵⁷ "Death of the Venerable John Adams!" *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), 11 July 1826

the divinity not only of the former presidents, but of their God-given patriotism. Their “patriotic efforts” were “Heaven directed,” and therefore a sign that God favored the United States.⁵⁸

Patriotism was not only linked to virtue and wisdom, but also to providence; indeed, for Barbour, patriotism was a gift from God himself.

Five years later, providence again touched the Founding Fathers when James Monroe passed away on 4 July 1831. In perhaps the most expressive remembrance, the *Daily National Journal* could hardly contain its emotion:

Thus are we once more called on to contemplate the bright and glorious anniversary of our Independence, as a day of *mourning!* John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, have all died on the *Fourth of July!* All had been fathers of our Independence! All had been Presidents of our country! Such wonderful coincidences strike the mind with irresistible force; they cannot fail to waken the attention of the most sluggish observer of passing events; they are a mirror in which skepticism must see reflected the finger of heaven.⁵⁹ [emphasis in original]

James Madison, the last living Founding Father president, died just six days before the fourth in 1836. Still, the irony was once again not lost on the media, which wished that he could have lived until Independence Day.⁶⁰ The 4th of July assumed even greater significance in 1836; for the first time, the country would celebrate the birth of the United States without a living Founding Father president.

Beyond a close, religious reading of the Founding Fathers’ deaths, the early presidents were praised for their actions and characters, which were linked to meanings of patriotism. A central component of patriotism in the early nineteenth century was the exhibition of virtue and purity of character. Historian Cynthia M. Koch argues that leaders of the new republic constructed American patriotism via education and imagery, including the growing legend of

⁵⁸ James Barbour, “Letter to the Army,” 11 July 1826.

⁵⁹ “Death of James Monroe,” *Daily National Journal* (Washington, DC), 8 July 1831.

⁶⁰ “James Madison,” *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia, PA), 4 July 1836.

George Washington.⁶¹ This chapter shows, however, that whereas Washington laid the groundwork for a national sense of character and virtue, presidential remembrances throughout the early nineteenth century equated every subsequent president with similar ideals of patriotism. Remembrances of presidents' deaths demonstrate that the young nation valued knowledge and temperament more than the warrior heroism that would come to dominate post-Civil War society.

In remembrances of presidents' deaths during the early nineteenth century, the terms "statesman" and "sage" became synonymous with "patriot." When Jefferson died, the *Daily National Journal* declared that God had intended to remove the former president from the rest of world: "The benignity of Providence . . . has snatched the patriot, the statesman and sage of Monticello from the grasp of human distress, from the oppression of penury and pain, to a world where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."⁶² Adams received similar sentiments from the press. He was considered "the patriot, statesman and Christian," a man whose pure private character exemplified his "virtuous and patriotic life."⁶³ Such language pervades presidential remembrances, reinforcing early nineteenth-century meanings of patriotism.

In short order the act of publicly honoring the memory of fallen presidents, especially their patriotism, had become of the utmost importance for current presidents and political leaders. Following James Madison's death, President Andrew Jackson rushed a remembrance to Dolley Madison after he and Secretary of State John Forsythe realized that Congress had not yet passed mourning resolutions, even though ten days had passed since Madison's 28 June 1836

⁶¹ Koch, "Teaching Patriotism," in *Bonds of Affection*, 19-52.

⁶² "Death of Thomas Jefferson," *Daily National Journal* (Washington, DC), 7 July 1826.

⁶³ "Death of John Adams," *Boston Commercial Gazette* (Boston, MA), 6 July 1826; "Death of John Adams," *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), 6 July 1826.

death. Forsythe in particular requested a speedy note from Jackson be delivered to the former First Lady rather than wait until Congress reconvened.⁶⁴ In his note, Jackson ensured Dolly Madison that “there is not one of your countrymen who feels more poignantly the stroke which has fallen upon you or who will cherish with a more endearing constancy the memory of the virtues, the services, and the purity of the illustrious man whose glorious and patriotic life has been just terminated by a tranquil death.”⁶⁵ In a moment of haste to remember Madison’s death, Jackson tellingly selected virtue, service, and purity to emphasize Madison’s life and patriotism.

Rather than upholding specific policies or actions during their administrations, at their deaths, newspaper editors praised presidents’ virtue and wisdom. Newspaper editors viewed these patriotic characteristics as significant influences on the populace, capable of inspiring certain actions and emotions, as well as reinforcing cultural meanings of patriotism. The Founders were venerated figures worthy of eternal remembrance for their gifts to the country. In the words of a song written in honor of Madison and sung moments before John Quincy Adams delivered a eulogy in his honor, the actions of the Founding Father presidents, represented here by Madison, would continue to influence the country after their deaths and into the Second Party System.

A fame so bright will never fade,
A name so dear will deathless be ;
For on our country’s shrine he laid
The charter of her liberty.

Praise be to God ! His love bestowed
The chief, the patriot, and the sage ;
Praise God ! to Him our fathers owed
This fair and goodly heritage.

The sacred gift, time shall not mar,
But Wisdom guard what Valor won –

⁶⁴ John Forsythe, “Letter to Andrew Jackson,” 9 July 1836.

⁶⁵ Andrew Jackson, “Letter to Dolly Madison,” 9 July 1836.

While beams serene her guiding star,
And Glory points to Madison !⁶⁶

Beyond the Founding: Controversy and Continuity During the Second Party System

In 1824 a historic and contentious presidential election gripped the country. The race to succeed James Monroe, the last Founding Father to serve as president, culminated with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams's victory in the House of Representatives over Tennessee General Andrew Jackson and Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford (of Georgia). Charges of political collusion between Adams and Speaker of the House – and Adams's future Secretary of State – Henry Clay compelled Jackson's supporters to label Adams's victory the result of a “corrupt bargain.” Thus ended the Democratic-Republican Party, which soon split into Adams's National Republicans – later referred to as the Whigs – and Jackson's Democrats.

The Second Party System, which began with the notorious political scandal, saw a new generation of men ascend to the presidency: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, and James K. Polk. Though their background and political careers were often quite different, remembrances of their presidencies were remarkably similar to those of the Founding Fathers. However, over time criticism became more pronounced. Some presidents, including Jackson and Polk, would see their presidencies entangled in highly politicized sectional debates that later invited a smattering of negative remembrances. However, if the presidents of the Second Party System were not as spectacular as their esteemed predecessors, they were still perceived to have exhibited character, wisdom, and virtuosity reminiscent of the Founders.

⁶⁶ “ODE – By the Choir of the Boston Academy of Music. Poetry by Park Benjamin. Music by G. J. Webb,” performed 27 September 1836. In Adams, “An Eulogy on the Life and Character of James Madison, Fourth President of the United States,” 27 September 1836.

Andrew Jackson was one of the most controversial – and, by political foes, reviled – early nineteenth-century presidents, but reactions to his death generally did not hint at the partisan feuding that occurred during his administration. He was the architect of the Indian Removal policy, and was censured by the Senate during the Bank War for his removal of federal deposits from the Bank of the United States, an act that the legislative body considered anathema to the “authority and power” of the Constitution and “in derogation of both.”⁶⁷

And yet, Jackson’s death on 8 June 1845 brought with it only a small assortment of critical remembrances of his life and presidency. In Baltimore, *The Sun* called for Americans to put aside their political differences: “for let political differences be what they may, death buries them all . . . all will admit that he [Jackson] was one of the most pure and honest minded patriots that has lived since the days of the great and good Washington.”⁶⁸ For some, however, this sentiment was difficult to rectify with Jackson’s actions. In Boston, the *Daily Atlas* implored its readers to not be deceived by Jackson’s military record.

Even the sanctity of death and the veil of the grave, should not be permitted to shroud the errors and the iniquities of distinguished men. . . . Let it be our care to see that the glare of a military career, and the energetic exercise of power, are not permitted to hide gross political errors, or draw off the public attention from offensive and arbitrary public acts.⁶⁹

In this case, Jackson’s military excesses ran counter to the long-standing ideals of virtue and public stoicism. In Philadelphia, the *North American* vacillated between criticism and praise. Jackson’s virtues, courage, and sagacity were never doubted. However, “as a statesman he was patriotic in his purposes and extremely arbitrary in enforcing them. His opinions were rather the result of impulses than a calm comprehensive survey of facts. . . . He was a democrat in his creed

⁶⁷ Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2008), 279.

⁶⁸ “Death of Gen. Andrew Jackson,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 16 June 1845.

⁶⁹ “Death of General Jackson,” *The Boston Daily Atlas* (Boston, MA), 18 June 1845.

and in his social intercourse, and an irresponsible dictator in discharging his Executive functions.”⁷⁰ Despite the negative tone, however, the obituary’s conclusion revealed the public’s ongoing infatuation with virtue and character: “He [Jackson] will be remembered for his valor, for his iron force of character, and the Christian meekness which he rendered back in his being.”⁷¹ While newspapers clashed over Jackson’s legacy, especially how to include his military achievements, the allure of the former president’s character more often tipped the scales in his favor.

In Washington, DC, the Polk administration also searched for the silver lining among Jackson’s more aggressive qualities. George Bancroft, acting secretary of war and secretary of the navy under President James K. Polk, noted that Jackson’s renowned temper was not a hindrance to his ability to govern, but rather helped keep his mind attune to the challenges of the presidency. Furthermore, Bancroft deemphasized Jackson’s aggressiveness in combat and instead noted the wisdom he exhibited in such battles, which guided him to victory.⁷² Jackson may have been an exalted warrior, but his wisdom and sagacity surpassed even his military strength. Bancroft’s letter demonstrates the extent to which, just fifteen years before the Civil War, military power needed to be deemphasized in favor of virtue and character, the tenets of pre-Civil War patriotism.

The remaining presidents of the Second Party System received warm remembrances that, if not as effusive as those of the Founding Fathers, remained steeped in the discourse of patriotism, although with some regional variance. In Northern Virginia, John Quincy Adams was remembered fondly for his long political service to the country, although Samuel Flagg Bemis, one of Adams’s biographers, noted that one of the few “sour notes” expressed following

⁷⁰ “Death of General Jackson,” *North American* (Philadelphia, PA), 17 June 1845.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² George Bancroft, “Letter to the Army,” 16 June 1845.

the president's death occurred when the Virginia Senate voted along party lines to not honor the former president.⁷³ Farther north, the *New York Herald* remarked on Adams's character and virtue: "In point of character, as a man and as a politician, none of the public men at Washington are approachable to what Mr. Adams was. . . . Mr. Adams, on all occasions, we believe, has been open, pure, and uncontaminated – as single hearted as a child or an angel."⁷⁴ In the Deep South, however, sectional differences manifested themselves to some extent. Following his presidency, Adams was elected to the House of Representatives and became an outspoken proponent of abolition. This turn in the latter portion of his career colored the *Southern Patriot's* remembrance of Adams: "In his later days his public course was not such as to conciliate the feelings of the South, but death robs us of all bitter recollections, and we will remember, in writing his obituary, only the good that he has done and the good he intended to do."⁷⁵ Despite political differences, the *Patriot* could put aside regional and partisan loyalties to honor the former president.

The case of James K. Polk is unique in the antebellum period by virtue of his death three months after he left office.⁷⁶ Polk served from 1845 to 1849 but died just three months after leaving office, 15 June 1849. His contemporaries grappled with how to adjudicate a presidency that had ended only months earlier. The greatest push for delaying negative remembrances originated in Massachusetts, where at least three newspapers – the *Daily Atlas*, the *Emancipator and Republican*, and *Salem Register* – called for the country to hold judgment until a later time. In particular, the *Salem Register* recognized the influence of time in determining Polk's legacy:

⁷³ "Death of John Q. Adams," *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, VA), 25 February 1848; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 541 note 58.

⁷⁴ "John Quincy Adams – His Death and Character," *New York Herald* (New York, NY), 25 February 1848.

⁷⁵ "Death of Mr. Adams," *Southern Patriot* (Charleston, SC), 26 February 1848.

⁷⁶ This chapter excludes the deaths of William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor, who both died while in office.

To all our other Presidents, who have fulfilled their term of office, has been allowed a sufficient interval, after the return of private life, for the subsidence of excited impressions, the obliteration or at least the abatement of all emotions that could bias the public judgment; Mr. Polk is placed immediately, as it were, at the bar of the earthly tribunal. . . . For ourselves, we abstain from expressing any opinion upon his public character and his official conduct, because we recognize the want of time for reflection upon them, with the aid of such results and consequences as will become manifest in the lapse of years.⁷⁷

Despite such considerations, Polk's death inspired mostly positive remembrances. The *Boston Post* embraced Polk's "devotion to the duties of his office, his deportment as a religious chief magistrate, and the general respectability of his administration, both socially and politically."⁷⁸ Likewise, in Macon, Georgia, Polk was regarded as a "pure statesman and patriot with a brilliant and glorious career. . . . A purer statesman never lived – a better man never died."⁷⁹ As was central to all positive remembrances of presidents before the Civil War, newspapers portrayed Polk's actions as being continuously motivated by the public good. The *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans was one paper that espoused such motivations, even amidst Polk's questionable guidance during the outbreak of the Mexican-American War. The paper called for partisan squabbles to give way to praise of Polk's "domestic virtues."⁸⁰ Polk's pure motives therefore made up for any negative actions. This is significant given Polk's controversial presidency, specifically the Mexican-American War, the origins of which historians still debate to this day. Nevertheless, it again seems that an established etiquette of presidential remembrances, that presidents be remembered fondly, more often than not overtook partisan passions.

Responses to Adams's and Polk's deaths also were caught up in the abolition debate, which inspired the most negative reactions to presidents' deaths during the period. African-

⁷⁷ "Death of the Late President," *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), 21 June 1849.

⁷⁸ "Death of Ex-President Polk," *Boston Post* (Boston, MA), 19 June 1849.

⁷⁹ "Death of Ex-President Polk," *Macon Telegraph Weekly* (Macon, GA), 19 June 1849.

⁸⁰ "Rumored Death of James K. Polk!" *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), 19 June 1849.

American newspapers considered Adams a hero to blacks for fighting for abolition. Frederick Douglass's *North Star* honored Adams's memory for his service to the cause of abolition, including supporting the right to petition, fighting the Texas annexation, and helping the Amistad captives: "They [African-Americans] remember, with characteristic gratitude, the heroic conduct of the deceased . . . These facts in the history of this great man, made him loved and venerated by the oppressed while living, and lead them to cherish and honor his memory, now that he is dead."⁸¹ Someone viewed as less supportive of the black cause, such as James K. Polk, received a different response in *The Liberator* upon his death. The paper strongly asserted that "Neither humanity, nor justice, nor liberty, has any cause to deplore the event [Polk's death]. He probably died an unrepentant man-stealer. His administration has been a curse to the country, which will extend to his posterity."⁸² The next month, *The Liberator* defended its critical stance on Polk's death, specifically its belief that Polk engineered the Mexican-American War as a means of expanding the power of the Slave South.⁸³

Despite such outbursts of vitriol, remembrances of presidents generally remained overwhelmingly positive. Beginning with George Washington's 1799 death, the country venerated its former leaders and upheld their patriotic qualities. The major political developments of the mid-nineteenth century, such as abolition, threatened to undo such sentiments; but still, from the available sources it seems that a general etiquette had emerged whereby presidents would be criticized during their lives, but remembered fondly for adhering to republican patriotism – virtue, morality, character – after their deaths, . However, the most significant political development of them all, the outbreak of the Civil War, would strongly

⁸¹ "John Quincy Adams," *The North Star* (Rochester, NY), 10 March 1848.

⁸² "Death of Polk," *The Liberator* (Boston, MA), 22 June 1849.

⁸³ "James K. Polk," *The North Star* (Rochester, NY), 13 July 1849.

influence a wider swath of critical remembrances. The Civil War ushered in a new era, both in terms of critical presidential remembrances, and of definitions of patriotism.

“Unwept, Unhonored, and Unsung”: The Civil War, Reconstruction, and Patriotism

John Tyler was dubbed “His Accidency” by his contemporaries. When the Whigs nominated Tyler to serve as William Henry Harrison’s running mate for the 1840 election, Tyler was never supposed to assume the presidency. Tyler was a former states’ rights Democrat who abandoned the party to protest the Jackson administration. However, unlike his political mentor, John C. Calhoun, Tyler did not officially return to the Democratic party after Jackson’s term ended in 1837. Seeing an opportunity to poach votes from a bloc of disenfranchised Democratic voters, the Whigs took advantage of Tyler’s amorphous political platform and nominated him as Harrison’s vice president. When President Harrison died just one month into office, however, the Whigs were stuck with Tyler, who quickly proved himself a menace to Whig ideals by vetoing the new Bank of the United States and blocking other party initiatives. Kicked out of the Whig party and not trusted by the Democrats, Tyler was a president without a party. Later in life, Tyler would be without a country.

When Virginia seceded from the Union in Spring 1861, Tyler stood with his native state. Called to serve his new Confederate government, the former president was elected to the first Confederate Congress. Tyler never served in that government, however, because he died in January 1862. Still, his name and intentions provoked scorn from the North. In Albany, Tyler was condemned for entering the “councils and confidence of the Rebels.”⁸⁴ The *Philadelphia Inquirer* grappled with Tyler’s legacy, trying to find some way to honor Tyler’s career before his turn to the Confederacy. However, the paper failed to find such a middle ground: “Under other

⁸⁴ “Death of Ex-President Tyler,” *Albany Evening Journal* (Albany, NY), 22 January 1862.

circumstances, a feeling of regret might have pervaded the entire country, but his treachery to the Union and its laws will prevent those persons in the North . . . from experiencing sorrow at his demise.”⁸⁵ One of the shortest remembrances of the former president may have been the most damning. A Jamestown, New York, newspaper curtly noted that “John Tyler, the traitor Ex-President, died at Richmond on Friday night last. Let his name rot.”⁸⁶

Such vituperative remembrances were largely restricted to the North in its time of war with the South. In his native Virginia, Tyler was hailed as a hero to his state and the Confederacy. The Rev. John Johns, in giving Tyler’s eulogy in Richmond on 21 January 1862, pointed out the qualities that routinely comprised positive presidential remembrances: “If personal virtues, cultivated intellect, a high order of eloquence . . . could charm the stern executioner, he would not have dealt the deadly blow. If public respect, warm personal friendship, the tenderest, strongest charities of domestic life could prevail, we would not be here in sorrow for our sore bereavement.”⁸⁷ With regard to Tyler, the North and South told two distinct and dissimilar stories, one reviling the former president, and the other revering his name.

Thus, the Civil War ushered in a new era in presidential remembrances. The scorn that met Tyler is certainly not surprising in the North, which would later mourn the passing of Martin Van Buren – whose native New York did not secede from the Union – with positive remembrances.⁸⁸ Still, Tyler’s death marks an important pivot point in considering presidents’ deaths. Amidst the horrors of the Civil War, the country’s perceptions of patriotism changed. Historian Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary has suggested that meanings of patriotism changed among soldiers after the Civil War, shifting from “citizen virtue and moral behavior . . . toward the

⁸⁵ “Death of a Conspicuous Traitor,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), 22 January 1862.

⁸⁶ *Jamestown Journal* (Jamestown, NY), 24 January 1862.

⁸⁷ Right Rev. J. Johns, D.D., “Funeral Address,” given 21 January 1862.

⁸⁸ Van Buren passed away in New York just six months after Tyler’s death, 24 July 1862.

celebration of male warrior heroism.”⁸⁹ During Reconstruction, these new meanings emerged in remembrances of presidents, specifically Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan. No longer was it enough for presidents to simply maintain virtue, wisdom, or a pristine private character. Presidents were increasingly expected to exhibit the warrior heroism of Civil War soldiers. Even for those presidents whose terms ended before this shift, new meanings of patriotism were applied ex post facto. The Civil War drastically changed the way in which the nation remembered its presidents after their deaths, and the shift in patriotic thought that runs through presidential remembrances is an important lens through which to view this evolution.

The critical remembrances of presidents provoked by Tyler’s death became commonplace during Reconstruction, when conflicting exchanges between various newspapers became standard. Following the death of former President James Buchanan on 1 June 1868, *The Sun* (Baltimore) regarded his passing with the belief that “there are few who will now be disposed . . . to deny the integrity of [Buchanan’s] purpose, at least, even in those political acts which were at the time most harshly judged.”⁹⁰ The *New York Evening Post*, however, attacked Buchanan’s motivations: “Suffice it that Mr. Buchanan must be remembered in history as a statesman incapable of patriotism or of any moral motive in public life.”⁹¹ In the case of Franklin Pierce, the 12 October 1869 *Atlanta Constitution* remembered his administration fondly, whereas the 30 October 1869 edition of *Harper’s Weekly* attacked it as “a conspiracy of four years against the rights of man and the honor and peace of the United States.”⁹² For Millard Fillmore, the 9 March 1874 *Critic-Record* (Washington, DC) asserted that he had served the

⁸⁹ O’Leary, “‘Blood Brotherhood,’” 54.

⁹⁰ “Death of Ex-President Buchanan,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 2 June 1868.

⁹¹ “Death of Ex-President Buchanan,” *New York Evening Post* (New York, NY), 2 June 1868.

⁹² “Franklin Pierce,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), 12 October 1869; “Franklin Pierce,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 30 October 1869.

office of the presidency with distinction, despite the *Daily Constitution's* (Middletown, CT) failure to see anything of note during his administration.⁹³

The preceding juxtapositions show that Reconstruction considerations of presidents were by no means completely one-sided. Indeed, some newspapers believed that Buchanan, Pierce, and Fillmore more than met the standards established by their predecessors. In Virginia, the *Alexandria Gazette* firmly affixed a patriotic label to Franklin Pierce, noting that “In these days, this is paying the highest tribute to his memory that we can bestow.”⁹⁴ Likewise, *The Sun* in Baltimore hailed Pierce for his administration’s purity, and therefore his patriotic character.⁹⁵ For some, Fillmore was routinely considered to have “proved himself in the presidency worthy in every way of that exalted position,” and maintained an “unblemished reputation as citizen, lawyer and statesman.”⁹⁶ At times, presidents could still be praised for their characters. However, a wave of criticism washed over presidents during Reconstruction.

Whereas criticisms of presidents had appeared in certain cases during the Second Party System (notably with Jackson and Polk), they lacked the vitriol of post-Civil War remembrances, as well as the notable shift in patriotic discourse. After the Civil War, critical remembrances appeared everywhere. The *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* staunchly refuted any consideration that Buchanan exhibited patriotism while in office. The very outbreak of the Civil War itself was testament to Buchanan’s lack of patriotism: “It is generally conceded by the American people that the late Ex-President Buchanan was a weak man, and a time-server rather than a patriot. Had he been a man of firmness, and truly patriotic, the rebellion which burst upon the country in

⁹³“The Dead Statesman: Death of Ex-President Fillmore,” *Critic-Record* (Washington, DC), 9 March 1874; “Obituary: Ex-President Fillmore,” *Daily Constitution* (Middletown, CT), 10 March 1874.

⁹⁴*Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, VA), 9 October 1869.

⁹⁵“Death of Ex-President Pierce,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 9 October 1869.

⁹⁶“The Dead Statesman: Death of Ex-President Fillmore,” *Critic-Record*, 9 March 1874; “Death of Ex-President Millard Fillmore,” *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, VA), 9 March 1874.

1861 would have been crushed in its first stages.”⁹⁷ James Buchanan was seen specifically as “weak,” not matching the strength embodied by Civil War soldiers. Such considerations were often supplemented with charges of selfishness. According to the *Albany Evening Journal*, “Selfish in his life, in his death he was left to himself.”⁹⁸ Such newspapers demanded stern action rather than the sound temperament that had previously been admired in presidents.

Other accounts of presidents’ deaths during Reconstruction attacked presidents’ perceived lack of intelligence and courage, drawing a stark contrast to their wise and brave patriotic predecessors and clamoring for action. In the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, the paper asserted that during the Buchanan administration, “imbecility – to use no harsher term – was enthroned at the White House . . . and the great mass of the Northern people were alike unable to inspire the Chief Magistrate with patriotism or even with an appearance of energy.”⁹⁹ In Texas, Buchanan’s refusal to use force to preserve the Union was seen as his “crowning act of pusillanimity.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Franklin Pierce was routinely assailed for his lack of intelligence and ability. Put simply by the *Albany Evening Journal*, Pierce displayed mediocrity in all that he attempted while in office.¹⁰¹ An editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* demonstrated a sharp and notable turn in opinions of presidents. The *Tribune* noted Pierce’s physical height, or lack thereof, and used it to demand more intensity from the commander-in-chief: “Had he [Pierce] been half a head taller morally, the great gust of resistance to slavery that swept over the North would have carried him along. But standing at his full height he was too low to feel a revolution. . . . Positive meanness would have dignified him. Selfishness would have increased his stature

⁹⁷ “Buchanan,” *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 4 June 1868.

⁹⁸ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Albany Evening Journal*, 1 June 1868.

⁹⁹ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 2 June 1868.

¹⁰⁰ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Flake’s Bulletin*, 2 June 1868.

¹⁰¹ *Albany Evening Journal*, 9 October 1869.

among men.”¹⁰² In the post-Civil War period, some newspapers were more than willing to eschew the typical virtues of wisdom and temperament in favor of a more commanding, even reckless, presence in office.

Questions regarding ways of remembering presidents emerged in Congress as well. The Senate received news of Fillmore’s death on 9 March 1874 and opened its session with a motion to adjourn for the day. Senator Sherman, however, questioned the precedents involved in adjourning for the death of a former president. The Senator made it abundantly clear that he would allow Fillmore the same respect afforded to his predecessors, but he did not believe Fillmore himself deserved the honor.

If there is no precedent for it I shall feel at liberty to vote against the motion. If, however, the Secretary . . . says that there is a well-established precedent of adjourning over in the case of the death of any one who has held the office of President of the United States, I certainly will not object in this case; for I would extend to the memory of Mr. Fillmore every consideration and every compliment ever extended to any one who has held that exalted office.¹⁰³

The Senate determined that such measures had been approved in the past, specifically citing the death of James Buchanan six years earlier, and adjourned for the day. Still, the episode exemplifies the shift in considering presidents’ lives and administrations. Congressmen grappled with how to match official pageantry, setting precedents for future presidents, with the country’s growing tendency to portray presidents negatively.

The preceding example from the *Congressional Record* emphasizes an important development in these post-Civil War presidential remembrances, that people and newspaper editors debated whether presidents should be criticized after their deaths. Buchanan especially was the subject of these debates. Editors of *Flake’s Bulletin* in Texas expressed their willingness to let history run its course with regard to Buchanan’s life, acknowledging that “charity suggests

¹⁰² “Franklin Pierce’s Memory,” *Chicago Tribune*, 16 October 1869.

¹⁰³ *Congressional Record*, 9 March 1874, p. 2078.

that a veil may be drawn over the succeeding events of his most imbecile and disastrous administration.”¹⁰⁴ In New York, the *Albany Evening Journal* noted that to ignore Buchanan’s failures would be uncharitable: “Right or wrong, it [Buchanan’s life] must be judged from the record.”¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* said that it would be “unjust to mankind” if Buchanan’s death prevented an honest judgment of his life.¹⁰⁶ Collectively, these remembrances, and others like them, suggest that the onset of the Civil War, and the ways in which it changed the nation’s perceptions of its presidents, forced newspaper editors to consider how they publicly remembered and eulogized presidents. From my sources, remembrances of presidents were overwhelmingly – and, indeed, quite surprisingly – positive, perhaps suggesting that an established etiquette held that presidents’ lives could be criticized while they were alive, but that their deaths should push aside partisan or personal differences of opinion. The Civil War, as seen in this chapter, changes this.

The Founding Fathers were held in the highest esteem, and, by and large, the second generation of presidents received similar accolades. Their virtue, private character, wisdom, and temperament earned the awe and respect of the country. With the Civil War, however, such considerations shifted. Meanings of patriotism began to change, and their appearance in newspaper remembrances throughout the nineteenth century make them a notable source base from which to examine the ways people related to and remembered their presidents. Post-Civil War patriotism settled on warrior heroism, rather than the purity and stoicism of antebellum patriotism. As such, Buchanan’s and Pierce’s pure character meant little when faced with remembrances that demanded decisive actions, even to the degree of recklessness, to squelch the rebellion. Remembrances of presidents during Reconstruction, though still certainly divided,

¹⁰⁴ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Flake’s Bulletin* (Galveston, TX), 2 June 1868.

¹⁰⁵ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Albany Evening Journal*, 1 June 1868.

¹⁰⁶ “James Buchanan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 June 1868.

featured scores more critical remembrances of presidents' lives and administrations. Presidents' legacies became contested terrain, as evidenced by the national debates over Buchanan, Pierce, and Fillmore, debates that never occurred to such an extent before the Civil War.

The contours of such a shift in patriotism and presidential remembrances require a closer examination. The cases of Buchanan, Pierce, and Fillmore are similar but also unique, as each president could still be judged based on his specific actions in office. The next chapter uses this idea to implement a closer examination of reactions to James Buchanan's death. In what specific ways did the evolution of patriotic meaning affect remembrances of his life? How did the new discourse of patriotism operate in local, state, and national contexts? And how did contested meanings of patriotism influence presidents, their families, and their legacies?

Chapter 2

“Launched on a Stormy Ocean”: The Defense of the Buchanan Administration and the Creation of Public Memory, 1861-1868

4 June 1868: Buchanan’s Funeral

On the day former president James Buchanan was laid to rest, “a light fleecy veil of floating clouds shut out the glare of sun-shine, a delicious breeze gave a bracing character to the atmosphere of early summer.”¹⁰⁷ A large group of mourners – including delegations from Washington, DC, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, as well as cities throughout Pennsylvania – flocked to Woodward Hill Cemetery in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to pay its final respects. According to the *Lancaster Intelligencer*, throughout the city flags were flown at half mast and also draped from public and private buildings. Scores of women and children crowded the streets to watch the funeral procession. Their numbers were so large that they “occupied every available point of observation.”¹⁰⁸ Reporters counted more than 3,000 people in the funeral’s procession line alone, many of whom were from Lancaster and the surrounding area.¹⁰⁹

At Buchanan’s request, the Rev. Dr. J. W. Nevin, president of Franklin and Marshall College, performed the funeral service and delivered the former president’s eulogy.¹¹⁰ In discussing Buchanan, Nevin linked the former president to politicians of an earlier age. Buchanan’s death therefore symbolized the end of the political era dominated by the likes of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Andrew Jackson, and John C. Calhoun.¹¹¹ Given the close

¹⁰⁷ “Obsequies of Ex-President James Buchanan,” *Lancaster Intelligencer*, 5 June 1868, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 1, Folder 32.

¹⁰⁸ “Obsequies of Ex-President James Buchanan.”

¹⁰⁹ *Daily Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), 5 June 1868.

¹¹⁰ James Buchanan had served as president of the board of trustees at Franklin and Marshall College.

¹¹¹ Rev. Dr. J. W. Nevin, “Eulogy for James Buchanan,” given 4 June 1868, reprinted in George Tickner Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan: Fifteenth President of the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), 681.

proximity between Buchanan's death, his administration, and the Civil War, Nevin expressed his unwillingness to place Buchanan's life and presidency into a larger historical context: "We stand too near the vast and mighty struggle through which we have just passed, and from whose surging billows we have not yet fully escaped, to understand it properly, or to estimate fairly its moral and political merits."¹¹² Despite declining to comment on Buchanan's place in history, Nevin believed that at the very least Buchanan remained "patriotically true" to the country throughout his life.

Despite the message within Nevin's eulogy, Buchanan's legacy became a popular target in the days following the president's death. Newspaper editors, politicians, and common citizens throughout the country debated the merits of his presidency. Although Buchanan's death ushered in a new opportunity to adjudicate his presidency, the struggle for control over his legacy was already years old. The events that rattled the country following Abraham Lincoln's 4 November 1860 election immediately affected considerations of Buchanan's administration. Buchanan sensed, especially in the aftermath of John Tyler's January 1862 death, that posthumous critique of presidents had become an accepted and increasingly prominent practice. Consequently, he spent his final years defending his legacy.

In fact, as soon as two months after leaving office, Buchanan had launched plans for a defense of his presidency. During the entire course of Buchanan's post-presidency, which spanned March 1861 to June 1868, he continually sought to vindicate his name. A planned biography, a two-month debate between himself and Gen. Winfield Scott, and finally the late-1865 release of *Mr. Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of Rebellion*, the first presidential memoir, served as vehicles for the president's intended vindication. Benjamin Hufbauer's *Presidential Temples* examines the modern presidency – dating from Franklin Delano Roosevelt

¹¹² Nevin, "Eulogy for James Buchanan."

– and asserts that the increasing power of presidents in the early twentieth century afforded them the opportunity to control their legacies once they left office. Hufbauer argues that the system of presidential libraries embodies modern presidents’ ability to practice “self-commemoration,” influence over how the public and history will remember them.¹¹³ This chapter argues, however, that the Civil War, which ushered in new meanings of patriotism, provoked presidential self-commemoration nearly seventy years before FDR took office.

James Buchanan’s efforts began the work of reestablishing his name and legitimacy, but reactions to his death illustrate the increasingly divided nature of memory and remembrances in the United States in the years following the Civil War. Contests over Buchanan’s legacy would continue long after his death, playing out locally and nationally, but always harkening back to his unprecedented personal defense of his administration. This defense helped establish a local memory of the president that continues to flourish today.

November 1860 to March 1861 – Understanding Buchanan’s Final Months in Office

The vast majority of criticism hurled toward James Buchanan after his presidency involved his final months in office, after the election of Abraham Lincoln incensed southern states, especially South Carolina, and incited the road toward secession. To understand on what grounds Buchanan defended himself – and why his opponents criticized him in the first place – it is necessary to briefly review the chaotic final months of the Buchanan administration.

The election of 1860 divided the nation along sectional boundaries. As David Potter puts it, by virtue of its victory, the North “became the government for ten states in which it had not even run a ticket.”¹¹⁴ On 20 December 1860, the South Carolina convention voted unanimously

¹¹³ Hufbauer, *Presidential Temples*, 3-8.

¹¹⁴ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 447.

for secession, and other southern states soon followed suit; by 1 February 1861 Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Florida had voted to secede.¹¹⁵ It was amidst this atmosphere that James Buchanan would remain until his successor took the oath of office on 4 March. In response to the secession movement radiating from the South, but before the first state had seceded, Buchanan delivered a message to Congress on 3 December 1860, in which he argued that although the states had no legal right to secede, the government had no Constitutional authority to prevent it. Buchanan's Cabinet disintegrated soon thereafter, with Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb (of Georgia), Assistant Secretary of State William H. Trescott (of South Carolina), and Secretary of State Lewis Cass (of Michigan) among those who resigned.¹¹⁶ Controversy also surrounded Secretary of War John B. Floyd, a Virginian, who had become involved in a bond scandal and had already been noted for his mismanagement of the War Department. Compounding issues, Floyd's position made him responsible for the administration of Southern forts, which became the powder kegs in the secession crisis, prompting damning allegations of duplicity from the media and political opponents.¹¹⁷

The standoff over these Southern forts suffered from confusion and poor timing. Major Robert Anderson sought reinforcements for Fort Sumter, Fort Moultrie, and Castle Pinckney, which Buchanan agreed to but delayed in deference to Floyd's request that he consult with General Winfield Scott first. In the meantime, Buchanan received word from South Carolina Governor William Henry Gist, via his Cabinet, that the Southern forts were in no danger, and Buchanan rescinded the reinforcement order. Throughout the next month the South Carolina

¹¹⁵ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 498.

¹¹⁶ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 536. Cass was the only Northerner to resign from Buchanan's Cabinet, doing so in response to Buchanan's refusal to reinforce Southern forts under the command of Major Robert Anderson. Cass's age and health, however, had rendered him a figurehead, with Assistant Secretary Trescott assuming most of Cass's responsibilities.

¹¹⁷ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 538.

forts remained the focal point of tension in the secession crisis: Gen. Scott's request for 300 troops was denied by Buchanan, who was waiting for the results of Congressional negotiations; Captain Foster requisitioned armaments from a federal arsenal in South Carolina, for fear of worker safety during construction at Castle Pinckney and Fort Sumter, infuriating the South Carolina government, which also viewed Major Anderson's movement to the more defensible Fort Sumter as a movement toward war; and Scott's and Buchanan's decision to send the *Star of the West* with men and supplies to Fort Sumter provoked more chaos when Anderson relayed (after the ship's launch) that he needed no reinforcements, and the *Star of the West* was fired upon off the coast of Charleston while a confused Anderson looked on, not knowing the ship was coming and not wanting to engage in battle without orders.¹¹⁸

Major Anderson continued to dismiss the need for reinforcements until the morning of 4 March, just hours before Lincoln's inauguration, when word arrived to Buchanan at the White House that the major would need no fewer than 20,000 troops to successfully garrison Fort Sumter. Soon thereafter, Buchanan and Lincoln were riding in a carriage together to the inauguration when Buchanan famously remarked, "My dear sir, if you are as happy in entering the White House as I shall feel on returning to Wheatland, you are a happy man indeed."¹¹⁹ But Buchanan's return to Lancaster would not be happy. His final years would be spent defending his legacy. Lincoln and other Republicans denounced the share of muskets that migrated South, the amount of money left in Southern forts, the scattered navy, and the failure to reinforce the Charleston forts.¹²⁰ As the war progressed, Buchanan became an ever more popular target, continually criticized for his failures to take necessary steps while in office. As Elbert Smith notes, "Buchanan needed his own self-assurances because unlike other former American

¹¹⁸ Smith, *Presidency of James Buchanan*, 169-184.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Presidency of James Buchanan*, 190.

¹²⁰ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 409.

presidents he was denied the full repose of an honored and respected retirement.”¹²¹ It would not take long to begin work on a biography.

Plans for a “Triumphant Vindication”

Not two months had past following the end of James Buchanan’s term as president before he had started formulating plans for the defense of his administration. In a letter written to his nephew, James Buchanan Henry, on 17 May 1861, the former president admitted his desire to influence the public’s memory of his administration, specifically his last four months in office.¹²² The beginning of Buchanan’s post-presidency had featured continued attacks on his administration’s actions during the secession crisis, specifically related to his inaction when confronted with South Carolina’s secession. Critics accused Buchanan of failing to garrison forts Moultrie and Pinckney, as well as giving armaments to the South. Initially Buchanan decided to let history run its course, to allow “the public & posterity to judge,” and he and his friends felt confident that the former president’s name would eventually be restored.¹²³ Still, there lingered an acknowledgment that some amount of time might be necessary to turn public favor, as acknowledged by Joseph Holt, Buchanan’s postmaster general and secretary of war.

You [Buchanan] will not have to live long to witness the entombment of the last of the falsehoods by which your patriotic career has been assailed. If you are not spared until then, you need have no fear but that History will do you justice.¹²⁴

Soon, however, Buchanan decided that his defense required more active exertion on his own behalf.

¹²¹ Smith, *Presidency of James Buchanan*, 193.

¹²² James Buchanan to J. B. Henry, Wheatland, 17 May 1862, in James Buchanan, John Bassett Moore, and James Buchanan Henry, *Works of James Buchanan comprising his speeches, state papers, and private correspondence* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1908), 192.

¹²³ James Buchanan to James Gordon Bennett, Wheatland, 11 March 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 166.

¹²⁴ J. Holt to James Buchanan, Washington, 14 March 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 167.

Tired of attacks coming from various cities, the most unsettling of which being the “violent, insulting, & threatening letters” from Philadelphia, Buchanan set into motion plans for his defense.¹²⁵ Unable to sit quietly any more, by 21 May 1861 he announced plans for a published account of his administration, one which he believed would justify his policies and end the attacks against his presidency.¹²⁶ Buchanan’s friends and former advisers praised his decision. Joseph Holt deemed the effort necessary to influence public opinion; meanwhile, Judge Jeremiah Black believed that a book along the lines Buchanan suggested would help resist the rampant slander surrounding his administration, and would also contain immense value for the country and its future.¹²⁷ Black was one of Buchanan’s closest friends and advisers, serving as attorney general until transitioning to secretary of state late in the administration; in February 1861, during Buchanan’s lame-duck phase, the president nominated Black to the Supreme Court, but the Senate failed to confirm the nomination. Black’s influence, as well as that of others, pushed Buchanan to act. By the end of June he had started the writing process, and on 20 July Buchanan wrote to Isaac Toucey, his secretary of the navy, that he had already put together an account of various parts of his administration’s final months.¹²⁸

Subsequent discussions with friends and former advisers focused on the timing of the publication as well as its content. Holt believed that the former president should wait to publish until the events at Fort Sumter and the outbreak of Civil War had diminished from the public’s attention.¹²⁹ Likewise, Edwin Stanton, who served as Buchanan’s attorney general starting in December 1860 and in January 1862 became Abraham Lincoln’s secretary of war, felt that “the

¹²⁵ From James Buchanan to Joseph B. Baker, Wheatland, 26 April 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 186.

¹²⁶ From James Buchanan to J. Holt, Wheatland, 21 May 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 194.

¹²⁷ From J. Holt to James Buchanan, Washington, 24 May 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 196; From J. S. Black to James Buchanan, Somerset, June 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 198.

¹²⁸ From James Buchanan to Gerard Hallock, Wheatland 29 June 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 207; From James Buchanan to Isaac Toucey, Wheatland, 20 July 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 212.

¹²⁹ From J. Holt to James Buchanan, Washington, 24 May 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 196.

public mind is too much excited on other topics to give attention to the past.”¹³⁰ Indeed, Buchanan’s defense would have emerged more quickly if not for the prevailing wisdom, here voiced by Toucey, that the public was not ready to relive the past, no matter how much Buchanan might have been:

A publication at this time is not expedient, because it would provoke attack; because it would not be heard; because the best time for it is at the moment when the tide of public sentiment begins to ebb and to set it the opposite direction, which will inevitably take place soon.¹³¹

Buchanan conceded these points and bided his time, waiting for a better moment to respond to the increasingly widespread criticism of his administration.¹³²

However, in October 1861 plans for a full-fledged Buchanan biography, Judge Black’s intended vehicle for Buchanan’s defense, collapsed when Buchanan publicly supported President Lincoln’s war policy. In a letter to citizens of Lancaster and Chester counties, Buchanan implored citizens to support the Union war effort.¹³³ Black, who had begun to write the book on behalf of Buchanan, refused to proceed on the grounds that Buchanan could not link his administration to Lincoln’s in such a manner. Specifically, Black believed that if Buchanan had not engaged the South with war following the attacks on the *Star of the West* and the takeover of Forts Moultrie and Pinckney, both of which occurred under Buchanan’s watch, the president could not logically support war following Fort Sumter: “If this war is right and politic and wise and constitutional, I cannot but think you ought to have made it. I am willing to vindicate the last administration [Buchanan’s] to the best of my ability, and I will do it; but I can’t do it on the

¹³⁰ From Edwin Stanton to James Buchanan, Washington, 16 July 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 210.

¹³¹ From Isaac Toucey to James Buchanan, Hartford, 31 July 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 215.

¹³² From James Buchanan to Gerard Hallock, Wheatland, 29 June 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 207.

¹³³ James Buchanan, “To a Committee of the Citizens of Chester and Lancaster Counties,” Wheatland, 28 September 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 222.

ground which you now occupy.”¹³⁴ With Black having bowed out, Buchanan considered the project dead. In a letter to his niece, and first lady, Harriet Lane, Buchanan noted, “I presume the Biography is all over. I shall now depend upon myself with God’s assistance.”¹³⁵

Buchanan made scant progress on the book during the next year, and he openly regretted his decision to sit idly by and accept continued criticisms.¹³⁶ In the middle of March 1862 Buchanan admitted to Toucey that rumors of his ongoing work on a defense of his administration were untrue. However, in October 1862, one year after Judge Black pulled out of the Buchanan biography and effectively prevented the project’s completion, Buchanan would be drawn into a national debate, relayed in newspapers across the country, over his administration’s final days.

“An Unexpected Attack”: Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott vs. James Buchanan

In October 1862 a letter that Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott had written in 1861 to incoming President Abraham Lincoln regarding the state of the military at the time of Lincoln’s inauguration appeared in newspapers across the country. After its publication, which Scott had not authorized, the general supplied a longer, more substantial account of the Buchanan administration’s final days. According to the *National Intelligencer’s* editors, Scott’s letter established “the patriotic anxiety of the wise and watchful General-in-Chief to prepare for the coming storm and his earnest efforts . . . to garrison and secure the Southern forts against every possible attack.” The editors continued, faulting Buchanan for his actions during the crisis. Indeed, Scott’s failures “resulted from the indecision of the Executive, misled doubtless by treachery in the Secretary of War [at that time, John Floyd], if not in other members of the

¹³⁴ From Judge Black to James Buchanan, York, 5 October 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 224.

¹³⁵ From James Buchanan to Harriet R. Lane, Wheatland, 6 November 1861, *Works of James Buchanan*, 226.

¹³⁶ From James Buchanan to Judge Black, Wheatland, 4 March 1862, *Works of James Buchanan*, 260.

Cabinet.”¹³⁷ Scott’s account specifically informed readers of his multiple efforts to secure Southern forts, efforts which, according to the general, were continuously rebuffed by Secretary Floyd and President Buchanan.

Newspapers printed copies of the *National Intelligencer*’s letters and commented on their contents. The *Public Ledger* in Philadelphia noted that Scott’s account proved his “earnestness and fidelity . . . in warding off danger from the Government, and the weakness and treachery of those to whom he was subordinate,” referring to Buchanan and his Cabinet.¹³⁸ Likewise, the *New York Herald* hailed Scott’s first letter as his “vindication,” and wondered how Buchanan would react to the charges.¹³⁹

For his part, Buchanan relished the opportunity to at last respond publicly to criticisms of his presidency. In his reply to Scott, the president noted that “It was highly gratifying. It has justified me, nay, it has rendered it absolutely necessary, that I should no longer remain silent.”¹⁴⁰ During the course of his impressively long rejoinder, Buchanan directly refuted a number of Scott’s claims. With regard to garrisoning the Southern forts, Buchanan claimed that Scott had informed him that no troops were within range and, regardless, that such an action would be perceived as an act of war against the South.¹⁴¹ Buchanan closed his response by looking back on his actions and asserting their legitimacy: “After a careful retrospect, I can solemnly declare before God and my country that I cannot reproach myself with any act of

¹³⁷ “Lieutenant General Scott’s Opinions,” *National Intelligencer*, 21 October 1862, reprinted in *Works of James Buchanan*, 294.

¹³⁸ “General Scott and the Rebellion,” *Public Ledger*, 22 October 1862.

¹³⁹ “Gen. Scott’s Vindication,” *New York Herald*, 22 October 1862.

¹⁴⁰ James Buchanan, “Answer to General Scott,” *National Intelligencer*, 1 November 1862, printed in *Works of James Buchanan*, p. 280.

¹⁴¹ Buchanan, “Answer to General Scott,” 281.

commission or omission since the existing troubles commenced.”¹⁴² He also expressed again his ardent hope that he would eventually be absolved in the eyes of the public.

The debate between Buchanan and Scott persisted throughout November and early December. On 12 November Scott published his response to Buchanan’s letter, in which he accused his former commander-in-chief of preventing the fortification of troops. According to Scott, Buchanan did not think that a few numbers of soldiers would make a difference in the face of Confederate troops: “He forgets what the gallant [Major] Anderson did, with a handful of men, in Fort Sumter.”¹⁴³ Scott followed by accusing Secretary Floyd of stealing more than 100,000 muskets and delivering them to the South on the eve of the Civil War, a topic which Buchanan specifically refuted in his next response. Buchanan noted that the order to move the weapons had actually been given almost one year earlier, in November 1859.¹⁴⁴ In December, Scott and Buchanan published their final comments on the matter, primarily reiterating their overarching comments on the matter. Today, historians remain divided over the beginnings of Buchanan’s defense, and specifically in the context of his debate with Scott. As noted in the Introduction, Jean Baker derides Buchanan for deflecting every ounce of culpability for the war, while Elbert Smith praises the president and notes Scott’s age and senility. In fact, the first time Scott is introduced in Smith’s work he is described as a man who had become “so enormously fat that mounting his over-burdened horse required the assistance of several aides.”¹⁴⁵ No matter their opinions, the contemporary press had been captivated by the exchange.

¹⁴² Buchanan, “Answer to General Scott,” 293.

¹⁴³ Winfield Scott, “Rejoinder,” *National Intelligencer*, 12 November 1862, printed in *Works of James Buchanan*, 304.

¹⁴⁴ James Buchanan, “Answer to General Scott’s Rejoinder,” *National Intelligencer*, 25 November 1862, printed in *Works of James Buchanan*, 310.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, *Presidency of James Buchanan*, 167.

So too was Congress. On 15 December 1862, just weeks after the conclusion of Buchanan's debate, Garrett Davis, Republican Senator from Kentucky, introduced a measure to censure James Buchanan for his conduct during the secession of South Carolina.

Resolved, That after it had become manifest that an insurrection against the United States was about to break out in several of the Southern States, James Buchanan, then President, from sympathy with the conspirators and their treasonable project, failed to take necessary and proper measures to prevent it: wherefore he should receive the censure and condemnation of the Senate and the American people.¹⁴⁶

The next day, the Senate considered Davis's resolution. Republican Senator Hale of New Hampshire provided Buchanan's most spirited defense. Hale professed that, although he considered Buchanan "the most overrated public man by the public generally that I ever knew," he would refuse to vote for a resolution that did not provide Buchanan a chance to respond to the allegations.¹⁴⁷ For his part, Buchanan scoffed at the resolution and condemned Republicans' efforts to censure a president who was nearly two years removed from office.¹⁴⁸ The resolution eventually failed, laid on the table by a 38-3 vote, because the body refused to bring charges against a private citizen. Still, the episode illustrates how Buchanan remained a controversial topic more than two years after Lincoln's election. Buchanan's two-month debate with Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott had put the former president firmly back into the public spotlight.

"On the Eve of the Rebellion": Buchanan Tells His Story

¹⁴⁶ *The Congressional Globe*, 15 December 1862, 83.

¹⁴⁷ *The Congressional Globe*, 16 December 1862, 101.

¹⁴⁸ From James Buchanan to Dr. John B. Blake, Wheatland, 16 December 1862, *Works of James Buchanan*, 324.

The confrontation between James Buchanan and General Scott emboldened the former president, who savored the opportunity to rehabilitate his image. Indeed, Buchanan admitted to his nephew that he was “much indebted to General Scott for his attack. My vindication against his charges has been of great service to me throughout the country south and west of New York. Of this I have daily evidence. My statements have not to my knowledge been attacked even by the Republican papers.”¹⁴⁹ More importantly, his exchange with the famous general inspired him to redouble his efforts to publish a definitive account of his administration’s final days. By January 1864 Buchanan told friends that he had completed his book, but again was waiting for the proper time to publish.¹⁵⁰ He withheld his publication until the conclusion of the 1864 presidential election, not wanting his account to affect either party.¹⁵¹ Finally, in November 1865, *Mr. Buchanan’s Administration on the Eve of Rebellion* appeared. It was the first presidential memoir and marked the apex of Buchanan’s personal defense of his administration. In the Preface, the former president addressed the reason for the book’s delay, citing his intention to not embarrass President Lincoln, especially during the escalation of the Civil War.¹⁵² Despite his worries, however, Buchanan’s readers would be hard-pressed to find disparaging remarks toward Lincoln in the 260-page book. Instead, *Mr. Buchanan’s Administration* meticulously dissects American history in search of the root causes of the Civil War.

For a presidential memoir, Buchanan himself is notably absent during the book’s opening chapters. Here, the president charted the history of hostilities between pro-slavery and antislavery factions. He vacillated and declined to criticize either side; instead, he portrayed both as equally culpable for the Civil War. For Buchanan, abolitionists tried to skirt the

¹⁴⁹ From James Buchanan to James Buchanan Henry, Wheatland, 7 December 1862, *Works of James Buchanan*, 328.

¹⁵⁰ From James Buchanan to Nahum Capen, Wheatland, 27 February 1864, *Works of James Buchanan*, 355.

¹⁵¹ From James Buchanan to Nahum Capen, Wheatland, 5 October 1864, *Works of James Buchanan*, 373.

¹⁵² Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan’s Administration*, xi.

Constitution's protection, or at least tacit acceptance, of slavery by creating anti-slavery societies bent on "agitation" via abolitionist material sent to post offices and newspapers. He especially derided the antislavery petitions sent to Congress for their role in slowly transforming the legislative branch into a vehicle for slavery debates, one which spent an exorbitant amount of time arguing over the subject.¹⁵³ It is into this toxic political environment that Buchanan entered the presidency in 1857, an environment that only worsened with the controversy in Kansas surrounding the dueling state conventions in anti-slavery Topeka and pro-slavery Lecompton. Buchanan believed that Congress again devolved into months of squabble followed by a sectional vote on the matter of Kansas statehood.¹⁵⁴ Finally, Buchanan pinpointed the influence of GOP leader William Seward, John Brown, and the *Impending Crisis* for bringing about "an entire new generation . . . in the South." Looking at them cumulatively, Buchanan noted that "This series of events had enflamed the southern mind with intense hostility against the North, and enabled the disunion agitators to prepare it for the final catastrophe."¹⁵⁵

Buchanan then turned back to US history during an examination of the origins of secessionist thought. He noted that secession actually grew out of the North, when John Quincy Adams supported such thought following Louisiana's admittance into statehood.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Buchanan noted South Carolina's nullification battle during the Jackson administration. However, the president observed that Congress passed a "Force Bill" to give more powers to President Jackson in order to coerce South Carolina into paying their tariffs, powers that expired after just one year. He criticized Congress for failing him to grant him similar powers despite his

¹⁵³ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*. 34.

¹⁵⁵ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 70-1.

¹⁵⁶ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 72. Adams initially believed that forming new states out of acquired territories sapped power from the original states.

repeated pleas for assistance.¹⁵⁷ Buchanan additionally noted the influence of newspapers that downplayed the ramifications of Southern secession despite the president's assertion that "the first cannon fired against either Fort Moultrie or Fort Sumter . . . would heal all political divisions amongst the Northern people, and would unite them as one man in support of a war rendered inevitable by such an act of rebellion."¹⁵⁸

Most of the remainder of Buchanan's book features his account of the last four months of his administration, including a sizeable portion devoted to rehashing the debates between himself and General Scott in 1862. Throughout, Buchanan continued to assert his inability to act without Constitutional authority to protect the federal government.¹⁵⁹ He also noted that President Lincoln's policies toward the South were "in the main, as conservative and forbearing as that of Mr. Buchanan."¹⁶⁰ The book ends not with a resounding statement of his life or legacy, but with two chapters devoted to matters unrelated to the Civil War, one for foreign and the other for domestic achievements. In truth, the nature of these two chapters, specifically their departure from the 200-page narrative of the Civil War's roots, seems to function more as appendices than any conclusion, fitting or otherwise, to Buchanan's overarching defense. His acknowledgment of the rest of his administration is therefore an afterthought, one which only underscores his desire to vindicate his legacy as the chief goal of the book.

Newspapers published excerpts from Buchanan's book. Nationally, responses – those that appeared outside Lancaster and Pennsylvania more generally – were of a decidedly mixed nature. In Massachusetts, the *Lowell Daily Citizen and News* directly refuted Buchanan's claims: "The plea of this book is that there was no lawful warrant for coercing a state, and

¹⁵⁷ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 78.

¹⁵⁸ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 83.

¹⁵⁹ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 135. Such a law does allow for the Executive to protect state governments from rebellion; however, the federal government is not included in this law.

¹⁶⁰ Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan's Administration*, 208-09.

congress was tardy in passing needed enactment. Fudge!”¹⁶¹ One of the sterner reviews came from the *New York Herald*, which asserted that Buchanan’s defense did little to make-up for his woeful patriotic shortcomings: “His vindication is, at best, but a quibbling apology for his lack of earnest patriotism, his lack of moral courage and his secession proclivities . . . It will only serve the future historian to place in a stronger light the secession of affiliations of his administration, his vacillations, his imbecility, his lack of hearty Unionism, and the deplorable consequences of his weakness and folly.”¹⁶²

Closer to home, by contrast, Buchanan’s publication received near unanimous acclaim, which indicates the stirrings of a local, positive memory of James Buchanan in Lancaster, one heavily influenced by the president’s having lived in the city for decades. The *Illustrated New Age* in Philadelphia took great pleasure in giving Buchanan a chance to tell his story: “His action, as President, has been subjected to harsh and unsparing criticism; a rash judgment by mischievous agency, has been passed upon it.”¹⁶³ Additionally, the paper sought out other positive reviews from across the nation to publish glowingly in its pages. In the days following its own review, the *New Age* published the thoughts of the *Albany Argus*, which praised the president’s ability to relate the truth of his administration’s final months, cutting through the obfuscating partisan press. Furthermore, the *New York World* expressed pleasure that Buchanan “lived to publish it himself, in time to receive from his contemporaries that justice which will be done him by history.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ “*Lowell Daily Citizen and News* (Lowell, MA), 27 November 1865.

¹⁶² “Mr. Buchanan’s Apology,” *New York Herald*, 24 November 1865.

¹⁶³ “Mr. Buchanan’s Book,” *Illustrated New Age* (Philadelphia), 18 November 1865.

¹⁶⁴ “Mr. Buchanan’s Administration,” from the *Albany Argus*, published in *Illustrated New Age*, 23 November 1865; “President Buchanan’s Vindication,” from the *New York World*, published in *Illustrated New Age*, 27 November 1865.

Buchanan himself expected criticism; he noted in a letter that “my little book has been launched on a stormy ocean. I thank God that I have lived to perform this duty. It will be severely criticized, but the facts and authorities cited cannot be demolished.”¹⁶⁵ Buchanan closely followed reviews of the book, writing in letters to his niece and his friends that papers in New York or other individual newspapers, such as *Beecher’s Independent*, tried to suppress the book’s message.¹⁶⁶ Despite his worries, he eagerly sent copies of the book to many of his friends, wanting to disseminate his thoughts at the very least to those who would listen to his arguments. In this way Buchanan intended to project his thoughts and let the country come to its own conclusions – ideally that Buchanan had done no wrong at the outset of the Civil War – regarding his administration.

Buchanan’s book represented the culmination of the former president’s personal efforts to rehabilitate his public image. It would seem that these efforts created a subset of Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory. *Lieux de mémoire* form a network of memory that operates underneath the surface of the larger national memory, what Nora describes as the movement of history. This network, “an unconscious organization of collective memory that it is our responsibility to bring to consciousness,” tries to maintain public consciousness of the moments of history that the national memory has failed to incorporate.¹⁶⁷ Buchanan, his family, and, as will be seen soon, groups within Lancaster comprised the core of a culture that defended Buchanan’s memory and tried to reincorporate it into the national public memory: “The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de mémoire* – that without commemorative

¹⁶⁵ From James Buchanan to Nahum Capen, Wheatland, 25 November 1865, *Works of James Buchanan*, 407.

¹⁶⁶ From James Buchanan to Harriet R. Lane, Wheatland, 30 November 1865, *Works of James Buchanan*, 408; From James Buchanan to Dr. John B. Blake, Wheatland, 19 January 1866, *Works of James Buchanan*, 411.

¹⁶⁷ Nora, “*Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 23.

vigilance, history would soon sweep them away.”¹⁶⁸ Buchanan’s letter exchanges and memoir operate as examples of Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, as would his funeral and eulogy. They are examples of a local culture grasping onto a “privileged memory” in order to project it outward at a later time. Lancaster’s overwhelming positive response to the publication therefore indicates the formation of a local memory – one based around the network of *lieux de mémoire* – within the city regarding James Buchanan; the president’s memoir served as a *lieux de mémoire* that united Lancasterians around the collective memory of Buchanan’s life and legacy.

Remembering Buchanan Locally and Nationally

The debates regarding Buchanan’s memoir illustrate the beginnings of the extent to which different narratives emerged locally near Lancaster, and also beyond the Lancaster and Pennsylvania area. When Buchanan next entered the public’s attention, following his June 1868 death, the contrasts would be drawn even more sharply than before. Throughout the nation, Buchanan was generally criticized for failing to meet post-Civil War notions of patriotism, although some nationally significant papers differed as to the degree to which to fault the president. *Harper’s Weekly* at first tried to look at the positives of Buchanan’s life and public service, ignoring the outbreak of the Civil War.¹⁶⁹ The *New York Times* was slightly more muted than other papers, but still derided the president for his lack of a patriotic response to secession, as well as his “feeble and inconclusive” memoir.¹⁷⁰ Despite some outliers, Buchanan received little support outside Pennsylvania and, to an extent, New York; papers in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Ohio routinely criticized the president’s administration following his passing.

¹⁶⁸ Nora, “*Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 12.

¹⁶⁹ “Ex-President Buchanan,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 20 June 1868. The next year, however, a *Harper’s Weekly* article regarding Franklin Pierce’s death would criticize both Pierce and Buchanan for their woeful presidencies.

¹⁷⁰ “Obituary: Death of James Buchanan, Ex-President of the United States,” *New York Times*, 2 June 1868.

The debate over Buchanan's legacy among supporters and opponents of the former president reveals the power structures that operated among local and national peoples in the creation of memory. John Bodnar notes that public memory is the amalgamation of official and vernacular cultural expressions that "in modern America has taken place not only on a national scale but in cities and towns in every region of the country." Bodnar goes on to assert the centrality of patriotism between the official and the vernacular: "Such language has the capacity to mediate both vernacular loyalties to loyal and familiar places and official loyalties to national and imagined structures."¹⁷¹ Thus, Bodnar acknowledges the existence of various memories, specifically local memories, beneath the surface of the national public memory. Within national public memory is a number of various local memories; that is, I argue that Lancaster and Pennsylvania developed a local memory with regard to James Buchanan, one that was sympathetic to the former president. This local memory operated underneath the surface of the greater, national public memory, what became the dominant memory of James Buchanan nationwide. Sometimes the national narrative interferes with that of the local. Alicia Barber's "Local Places, National Spaces," examines how the federalization of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, as a historical site brought national and local memory into conflict.¹⁷² The proceeding examples, especially those in Chapter Three, will look at how the local memory grappled with and tried to

¹⁷¹ John Bodnar, "Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John R. Gillis, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75-76.

¹⁷² Alicia Barber, "Local Places, National Spaces: Public Memory, Community Identity, and Landscape at Scotts Bluff National Monument," *American Studies* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2004), 35-64. Similar examples of contention between local and national stories are not limited to the United States. Other examples include England, David Cressy, "National Memory in Early Modern England," printed in *Commemorations*; Scotland, Jenny Macleod, "Memorials and Location: Local versus National Identity and the Scottish National War Memorial," *Scottish Historical Review* 89, no. 227 (April 2010): 73-95; Canada, Brian S. Osborne, "Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in its Place," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 33, Issue 3 (2001): 39-77; and France, David G. Troyansky, "Monumental Politics: National History and Local Memory in French *Monuments aux Morts* in the Department of the Aisne since 1870," *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 121-41.

alter the national memory, changing the way in which the entire country remembered James Buchanan.

Debates in Congress nicely illustrate how different perceptions of James Buchanan's patriotism interacted with one another. *The Congressional Record* recounts the debate within the House of Representatives over passing a resolution recognizing Buchanan's death, introduced 3 June 1868 by Representative George W. Woodward, a Democrat from Pennsylvania. The original text, though lengthy, tellingly contains numerous references to Buchanan's patriotism and character.

The House having received with sensibility intelligence of the death of James Buchanan, ex-President of the United States, at his country-seat at Wheatland, on the 1st instant, does hereby resolve:

1. That *whatever diversities of opinion may prevail* in respect to the administration of Mr. Buchanan as President of the United States, the members of this House can *cordially unite in honoring the purity of his private character, the ability and patriotic motives which illustrated his long career of public service, and the dignity which marked the retirement of the latter years of his life.*
2. That as a token of honor to the *many virtues, public and private, of the illustrious sage and statesman* whose death, in the ripeness of his age, has arrested the attention of the nation, the Speaker of the House is requested and authorized to appoint a committee of seven members to attend the funeral of Mr. Buchanan on behalf of the House, and to communicate a copy of these resolutions to the relatives of the deceased.¹⁷³ [emphasis added]

Passage of the resolution, however, proved difficult. The House argued over Buchanan's public service, refusing to pass a resolution that acknowledged Buchanan's patriotism. Republican John F. Farnsworth noted that Woodward "certainly cannot expect to get a unanimous vote of the House commending the 'patriotic motives' which animated Mr. Buchanan at all times in his public career. For one, I certainly cannot vote ay." The measure failed, but was reintroduced and passed later that day, with all references to Buchanan's patriotism or public and private

¹⁷³ *The Congressional Record*, 3 June 1868, 2810.

virtues removed from the text. Significantly, the final resolution praises the office of the presidency more than Buchanan himself:

The House of Representatives having received intelligence of the death of James Buchanan, ex-President of the United States, at his country seat at Wheatland, on the 1st instant, does hereby resolve, that as a mark of respect to *one who has held such eminent public station*, the Speaker of the House is requested to appoint a committee of seven members to attend the funeral of Mr. Buchanan on behalf of the House, and to communicate a copy of this resolution to the relatives of the deceased.¹⁷⁴ [emphasis added]

The story of the Buchanan resolution thus reveals how his patriotism, as well as his public and private character, became contested terrain following his death.¹⁷⁵ To the president's critics, Buchanan's inaction – bound as it may have been to a strict interpretation of the Constitution – became evidence of his perceived lack of patriotism. This is one way in which local memory, this time encompassing the state of Pennsylvania, tried to influence the larger narrative, though it failed in this case.

One of the more interesting remembrances of the former president came from the *Chicago Tribune*, which met Buchanan's death with an abundance of vitriol. The paper considered him a “weak, selfish, time-serving politician who . . . lowered his country's flag before the hostile cannon of armed traitors.” Significantly, however, the paper closed by noting the change in perception of Buchanan within Pennsylvania itself following his presidency.

This desolate old man has gone to his grave. Fortunately, he is the last of his race. No son or daughter is doomed to acknowledge an ancestry from him. If he had died soon after he left the Presidential office it is most likely that Pennsylvania would have denied him a resting place in her soil. The lapse of time has been favorable to him in this respect. Give him a little earth for charity.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ *The Congressional Record*, 3 June 1868, 2817.

¹⁷⁵ Such debates over the Buchanan resolution were not limited to Congressmen, as contemporary newspapers discussed its merits. Whereas the 4 June 1868 *Boston Daily Advertiser* noted that the debate made for “quite a scene,” the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* from the same day derided House Democrats' attempt to honor Buchanan's patriotism, calling it “a piece of impudence, almost unprecedented.” A similar debate following the death of Millard Fillmore centered on whether the former president deserved the same degree of recognition afforded to presidents such as Washington and Lincoln.

¹⁷⁶ “Death of James Buchanan,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2 June 1868.

The preceding editorial, derisive as it may be, actually hints at an important idea regarding the development of local and national memory. A careful examination of available newspaper sources shows that Buchanan's primary center of support came from Pennsylvania and New York, suggesting that nearby areas were more prone to favor Buchanan than those further away. Places where Buchanan had lived, or had lived nearby, therefore had different recollections of the former president than places where Buchanan had not developed a close relationship. The passage of time, as the *Tribune* noted, had begun to create a local, positive memory.

In Pennsylvania, Philadelphia featured the most varied responses to Buchanan's death. Of four newspapers examined in Philadelphia alone, Buchanan was received warmly by two papers (*Public Ledger* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*), negatively by one (*Daily Evening Bulletin*), and neutrally by the fourth (*American Presbyterian*).¹⁷⁷ At first, the *Daily Evening Bulletin* offered lukewarm responses, but it moved toward negativity in response to other newspapers' fawning over the former president. The *Bulletin* initially portrayed Buchanan as a figure unable to meet the challenges required of him; in contrasting his actions as president with his "fair character," the paper suggested that his demeanor required more severity in the face of rebellion.¹⁷⁸ The next day, however, the paper condemned not only Buchanan, but the political age in which he had lived: "The olden times were not the better times. They were the times of weakness in statesmanship and in patriotism; the times of groveling subserviency to a vile anti-republican system."¹⁷⁹ Elsewhere in Philadelphia, Buchanan fared better; his Cabinet received

¹⁷⁷ Using the *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers* database, along with other databases that compile early American newspapers, it is possible to study as many as fifteen statewide newspapers that addressed Buchanan's death, including three from his home of Lancaster. This source base demonstrates the variety of opinions throughout the state, as well as the overwhelming favorability toward Buchanan exhibited by Lancaster citizens. The database primarily contains papers from three distinct areas within Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Lancaster. Other cities included in the database include Erie, Waynesboro, and Columbia.

¹⁷⁸ "Death of James Buchanan," *Daily Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), 1 June 1868.

¹⁷⁹ "Statesmanship," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, 2 June 1868.

more blame, and despite some concession toward the president's actions, his death was viewed as cause enough to forgive his transgressions.¹⁸⁰

Elsewhere in Pennsylvania there still existed a mixed statewide reaction to the former president's administration. The *Erie Observer*, for example, remembered that "Posterity will do [Buchanan's administration] justice . . . that he was a true patriot, devoted to the welfare of the country, there can be no doubt."¹⁸¹ In Wellsboro, the *Tioga County Agitator* gave scant attention to Buchanan, but the little it noted could hardly be considered positive:

James Buchanan died at his residence near Lancaster, on the 1st inst., aged 78 years. It was his misfortune to be elected President of the United States in 1856, and to find himself unequal to the discharge of the duties of that high office. He is dead. We could find no words to praise him living, and will not censure him dead.¹⁸²

In Buchanan's Lancaster home, however, reactions were overwhelmingly positive. The 3 June *Lancaster Intelligencer* repeatedly portrayed Buchanan's life and presidency through patriotism. For the *Intelligencer*, "Mr. Buchanan made the most urgent appeals to the patriotism of the Legislature . . . The patriotism and great ability of Mr. Buchanan were recognized by the people . . . Mr. Buchanan always stood by the patriotic sentiments then expressed . . . History will yet do him ample justice, and the future will recognize in him one of our wisest and most disinterested patriots."¹⁸³ Likewise the *Lancaster Express* included in its coverage an anecdote from one of Buchanan's final law cases from the 1830s that portrayed the former president in an exceedingly positive and humble manner. Readers of the *Express* learned how Buchanan came to the aid of a widow threatened to be evicted from her property. He examined the case, delivered a "speech of great power and eloquence," and, following a favorable verdict, diverted

¹⁸⁰ "James Buchanan," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 June 1868; "Ex-President Buchanan," *Public Ledger*, 2 June 1868.

¹⁸¹ "Death of Ex-President Buchanan," *Erie Observer*, 4 June 1868.

¹⁸² *Tioga County Agitator*, 10 June 1868.

¹⁸³ "Death of Ex-President Buchanan," *Lancaster Intelligencer*, 3 June 1868.

all credit from himself and toward another lawyer working the case.¹⁸⁴ It was a story of duty, humility, and magnanimity that would not have failed to register with Lancasterians.

Indeed, the citizens of Lancaster themselves had much to say about the departed president, who spent his last years among them. The Lancaster Bar, of which Buchanan had been a member, honored the president's memory with a series of speeches. Judge Isaac E. Hiester noted Buchanan's numerous private qualities, which he believed even the president's bitterest opponents could not ignore. The other judges, as well as the district attorney, agreed to bestow "every honor which we can pay to the memory of Mr. Buchanan" and adjourned for the day in his memory.¹⁸⁵ Beyond the courtroom, the days preceding Buchanan's funeral featured a large town gathering called by Lancaster Mayor George Sanderson. The crowd was notable for its large number and mixture of powerful and ordinary citizens throughout the county. Besides making preparations for Buchanan's funeral, the meeting featured numerous speeches made by Lancaster citizens. One recurring theme in these speeches was the belief that history would vindicate Buchanan's name. Gen. J. W. Fisher asked that party feeling subside. Samuel Hepburn noted that "history will do him ample justice, no intelligent man can doubt. He has left the materials behind to set all that right. The sentiment here to-night shows that the people of Lancaster deeply feel the loss of him whom I mourn as a devoted friend."

The most significant speech came from Judge Hiester, who put the onus of maintaining Buchanan's legacy on the city and people of Lancaster.

It becomes the people of Lancaster city and county to honor the memory of James Buchanan, for through all his long and useful life he reflected honor upon them. He was proud of the people of Lancaster, proud to be called their representative, and proud to be known and recognized as the representative of Pennsylvania. He

¹⁸⁴ "Buchanan's Last Law Case," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, originally reported by the *Lancaster Express*, 5 June 1868.

¹⁸⁵ "Court Proceedings – The Death of Ex-President Buchanan Announced," *Lancaster Intelligencer*, 3 June 1868.

was most attached to this people, and they in turn honored and loved him. It is therefore our duty, as it is the pleasure of all present without regard to party, to bear testimony to the high character of the illustrious dead, and to unite in a lasting and fitting tribute of his memory.¹⁸⁶

Indeed, the city of Lancaster would play a substantial role in maintaining the memory of James Buchanan. In the face of various national and statewide public memories, that uniform local memory that evolved within Lancaster became a force as significant, if not more so, than those competing narratives.

In conclusion, with the Civil War came changes in the meaning of patriotism, from civic virtue to warrior heroism. As seen in Chapter One, the language of presidential remembrances has been steeped in the language of patriotism since the George Washington's death in 1799. As the meaning of patriotism evolved, so too did the way in which presidents were remembered by the public. James Buchanan, whose administration preceded the Civil War, bore the brunt of this criticism, as he was consistently faulted for helping bring about the war. These criticisms, however, soon compelled Buchanan to take unprecedented steps to defend his presidency, specifically through the publication of the first presidential memoir. Routinely criticized in national circles for his handling of secession, his home state of Pennsylvania, and specifically his city of residence, Lancaster, provided a significantly more positive account of Buchanan's presidency. Two distinct memories had emerged: first, the national public memory of Buchanan; and second, the local memory of the former president. Buchanan's defense and death revealed the rift between these two memories, but in the future the two would converge in surprising ways. Indeed, the battle for Buchanan's legacy had only begun, and the efforts of his family, the city of Lancaster, and the state of Pennsylvania would continue to influence the national public memory of President James Buchanan for more than 100 years.

¹⁸⁶ "Meeting of the Citizens of Lancaster to Take Action in Reference to the Funeral of Mr. Buchanan," *Lancaster Intelligencer*, 10 June 1868.

Chapter 3

Appealing the Verdict of History: Contesting Public Memory of James Buchanan in Biography, Monuments, and Historical Fiction

Introduction

On 30 May 1934, Memorial Day, Lancastrians remembered former president James Buchanan with two different ceremonies, the first secretive and the second public. Early that morning a small group, including the mayor and a local Boy Scout troop, traveled to Buchanan's grave at Woodward Hill Cemetery to participate in a ceremony of remembrance. It had become an annual tradition since 1926, at least to those who knew it existed. Frederic W. Hammond, a resident of Lancaster, addressed the gathering. According to one report, Hammond "expressed his gratification that each year finds an increasing interest in the simple ceremony which purposely is not advertised to draw the curious public, but does appeal to many of our citizens, regardless of party affiliations, who delight to do honor to *our* former townsman and *our* former President [emphasis his]."¹⁸⁷ After the speeches, those gathered laid a wreath at Buchanan's grave. This simple ceremony predates the annual wreath laying ceremony held at Buchanan's grave, which features representatives of the current president in attendance. Perhaps the current ceremony is the direct descendent of the early "pilgrimage." Regardless, in May 1934 nearly sixty-eight years had elapsed since Buchanan's death, but efforts to preserve his memory continued.

Later that night the city of Lancaster hosted the current president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. During his visit Roosevelt noted his interest in Pennsylvania's lone president, who had employed Roosevelt's father as secretary during Buchanan's tenure as minister to England in

¹⁸⁷ William Frederic Worner, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Lancaster," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 38, no. 3 (1934): 91.

the mid-1850s. Having arrived at night, Roosevelt hoped to return to Lancaster again during the daylight in order to see Buchanan's Wheatland home, just as Abraham Lincoln had in 1861 on the way to his inauguration.¹⁸⁸ As Roosevelt departed he was presented with an engraving of Buchanan, as well as a publication from the Lancaster County Historical Society that discussed the former president's life. Later, in talking with the mayor of Lancaster, the president expressed his appreciation for the gifts and reiterated his deep personal interest in Buchanan. Citizens of Lancaster thus received an opportunity to reach out to the current president and share tokens of Buchanan's legacy. Memorial Day 1934 provided a literal intersection of local and national memory regarding the life and administration of James Buchanan.

In the years and decades following Buchanan's death in 1868, Lancastrians became intensely devoted to their local hero. When asked whether the 1934 memorial committee had ever considered expanding their secretive service, the committee downplayed such ideas and instead chose to revel in the intimacy that its ceremony fostered: "The thought is that the greater value is in its beautiful simplicity, and in the appeal to those who appreciate the fact that we have in our keeping the dust of one of the truly great men of our country."¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, as Lancaster worked tirelessly to preserve the local legacy of James Buchanan, the city took advantage of opportunities to influence the national public memory, including a visit by the sitting president. The struggle for Buchanan's memory had begun as a personal endeavor, but it expanded over time. By Memorial Day 1934 Lancaster had become the focal point for memorialization for Buchanan's legacy, and the city and its residents strove to reach national audiences.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 79; H. Frank Eshleman, "Lincoln's Visit to Lancaster in 1861; and the Passing of His Corpse in 1855," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 13, no. 3 (1909): 74.

¹⁸⁹ Worner, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Lancaster," 91-92.

As seen in Chapter Two, memorialization efforts began with Buchanan himself. After his death, they transitioned to his family, specifically Buchanan's niece and ward, Harriet Lane (later Harriet Lane Johnston).¹⁹⁰ Lane worked tirelessly to ensure the publication of a complete Buchanan biography, and in her will she left more than \$100,000 for the creation of two separate memorials to Buchanan's life: the first erected at Buchanan's birthplace and the second constructed in Washington, DC.¹⁹¹ Memorials soon emerged within Lancaster. Monuments to Buchanan went up throughout the city, and the president's Wheatland home was purchased by a group committed to presenting it as a historic shrine. The Lancaster County Historical Society declared 1928 James Buchanan Year to honor the sixty-year anniversary of their native son's death, and devoted dozens of articles in its journal to Buchanan and his life, events both extraordinary and mundane. In later years, the national narrative was influenced by the Buchanan Memorial in Washington, DC, as well as new forms of memorialization, such as historical fiction, which reached audiences outside Lancaster.

This chapter examines three distinct examples of memorialization that emerged following Buchanan's death: biography, statues and buildings, and drama/historical fiction. Collectively, they demonstrate both how the struggle for Buchanan's legacy grew outward from the president himself, incorporating new parties and stakeholders, and the ways in which evolving forms of memorialization reached larger audiences. By their very nature, each form examined in this chapter could be the subject of its own larger study. Furthermore, Buchanan's supporters utilized other forms of memorialization, such as the aforementioned wreath ceremonies. As memory theorist Pierre Nora notes, sites of history – *lieux de mémoire* – include monuments,

¹⁹⁰ Harriet Lane married in 1867(?) and became Harriet Lane Johnston. Many books and articles refer to her by either name. To avoid confusion, I will refer to her throughout the chapter as Harriet Lane.

¹⁹¹ Buchanan's Birthplace is briefly discussed in the Introduction.

museums, performances, books, archives, and various other mediums.¹⁹² The following sampling is intended to demonstrate one particular thread through which to study the ongoing memorialization of James Buchanan. What began immediately following James Buchanan's presidency – the president's ardent and obsessive desire to control his legacy, described in Chapter Two – expanded over time to his family, his home, his state, and his country. Memorial efforts grew throughout the nation, and new forms of memorialization emerged to reach new audiences.

Family and Town – Biography as Memory

Following the death of James Buchanan, his niece, Harriet Lane, took it upon herself to provide for a comprehensive biography of the president's life. Difficulties arose, however, that delayed its publication until fifteen years following Buchanan's death in 1868. Three different authors had at one time begun work on the project until Lane and Buchanan's executors selected George Ticknor Curtis to complete it. In the meantime, Buchanan's voluminous collection of papers circulated from one author to the next, and Lane became increasingly concerned for its preservation. When in 1869 William Reed, identified in Buchanan's will as his biographer, was forced to back out of the project because of personal financial concerns, Lane worried about the location and maintenance of the papers.¹⁹³ Wanting to ensure they remained in good hands, Lane wrote Hiram B. Swarr, one of Buchanan's executors, asking him to assume possession of the collection. She expressed concern that the papers could be used by Buchanan's old political

¹⁹² Nora, "*Les Lieux de Mémoire*."

¹⁹³ Not including Judge Black's earlier efforts to write a definitive Buchanan biography – described in Chapter Two – Reed was the second author attached to the book. The first was James Shunk, Black's son-in-law, who in 1867 attempted to put the Buchanan papers into order but did not meet with Buchanan's satisfaction. Following Reed, a personal friend of Buchanan, the president's executors selected another acquaintance, Judge John Cadwallader, who died before he could begin the project.

enemies: “It is the most sacred obligation upon me, as having been so near & dear to him – as he was to me – & his fame is now a most cherished object of my life . . . Suppose they [Buchanan’s papers] were to fall . . . into the hands of the Republicans – who would pervert truth to falsehood, & try to condemn the pure & upright statesman by the perversion of the very evidence that shows his pure & lofty patriotism.”¹⁹⁴ Such concerns demonstrate how Lane had made it her mission to protect her uncle’s legacy.¹⁹⁵

In 1883 George Ticknor Curtis finally completed the two volume, 1,400-page *Life of James Buchanan: Fifteenth President of the United States*. Curtis’s book is equal parts Buchanan biography and a collection of various papers and speeches from the president’s life. The biography opens with a Preface, in which Curtis explains how the biography became his project.¹⁹⁶ He also describes his efforts to maintain impartiality, his attempts to balance his own opinions with the still-divided public opinion regarding Buchanan’s life. He argues he has come to the unbiased conclusion that Buchanan received too much blame for the Civil War. Curtis therefore sees his biography as the long-awaited truth regarding Buchanan’s life and presidency: “I believe that the time which he [Buchanan] anticipated has come; and that nothing more than a proper examination of the facts is now needed, to insure for him all the vindication that he could ever have desired.”¹⁹⁷ Curtis sees Buchanan as one of the most resolute men to hold the presidency, willing to stand for his beliefs rather than bend to the will of others. The failure of people to acknowledge this has doomed Buchanan to negative remembrances.

¹⁹⁴ Harriet Lane Johnston to Hiram B. Swarr, Baltimore, 31 December 1869, reprinted in Homer T. Rosenberger, “Protecting the Buchanan Papers,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 72, no. 3 (1968): 143-44.

¹⁹⁵ Admittedly, this is an oversimplification of the efforts of Buchanan’s family and executors to secure a biography. Rosenberger’s article outlines struggles that arose between Harriet Lane Johnston and Buchanan’s brother, Edward Buchanan, over the maintenance of the papers, the cost of the project, and the selection of a biographer.

¹⁹⁶ Unlike authors previously assigned to the biography, Curtis had not known Buchanan personally.

¹⁹⁷ George Ticknor Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan: Fifteenth President of the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), vi.

The life and influence of James Buchanan appears in other local publications, most notably the *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*. Founded in 1896, the *Journal* initially contained the speeches and papers presented at meetings of the historical society, and throughout its run – which continues today – James Buchanan has remained a popular topic. Tellingly, however, the manner with which Buchanan is treated has changed over time. For the publication’s first thirty years, Buchanan was typically mentioned in passing. For example, in 1911, the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Civil War, the *Journal* looked back at famous local citizens from the Civil War era, including Buchanan, to see what Lancastrians living at that time thought about slavery.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, various articles examine the response of Lancaster citizens to the deaths of presidents, including William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor. As one of the more prominent Lancastrians, Buchanan delivered eulogies in Lancaster for both presidents and was praised throughout the city for his efforts.¹⁹⁹

Buchanan became a more prominent figure in the annals of the *Journal* in 1928, James Buchanan Year. *Journal* issues for 1928 provide numerous selections on Buchanan, including copies of speeches given at various events commemorating his life, as well as newly discovered letters that had not been included in Moore’s *Works of James Buchanan*. Buchanan remained in vogue in the following years, as did the publication of new letters, especially in the twelve issues that comprised the 1932 volume. Beginning in the 1950s, *Journal* writers started to focus on different aspects of Buchanan’s life. A 1952 article by Oliver S. Sprout examined Buchanan’s heretofore unappreciated influence on railroad development, while in 1955 Phillip Shriver Klein

¹⁹⁸ W.U. Hensel, “The Attitude of James Buchanan Towards the Institution of Slavery in the United States,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 15, no. 5 (1911): 142-159.

¹⁹⁹ William Frederic Worner, “William Henry Harrison in Lancaster: Observance of his Death,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 27, no. 10 (1923): 167-170; William Frederic Worner, “Visit of Zachary Taylor to Lancaster: Observance of his Death,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 27, no. 10 (1923): 171-175.

– a Buchanan biographer and frequent *Journal* contributor – explored the president’s engagement to Ann Coleman. In the latter example, Klein compares Buchanan’s relationship with Coleman to his term as president of the United States, a comparison that future writers, including John Updike, would adopt: “In 1861, as in 1819 [when his engagement with Coleman was broken], James Buchanan became the central figure in an emotional story which became only the more violent when he applied to it the strongest traits of his own character, self-respect, self-restraint, and a hyperconscientious devotion to civic duty.”²⁰⁰ Starting in 1968, one hundred years after Buchanan’s death, the former president again emerged as a popular figure in the *Journal*, but the increasing influence of national women’s movements in the early 1970s resulted in greater interest in Harriet Lane. Various articles during the decade consider Lane’s potential influence on Buchanan’s presidency, her charitable contributions to the development of children’s hospitals, and her efforts to memorialize her uncle.²⁰¹

Throughout the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Pennsylvanians produced the vast majority of biographies of James Buchanan, from Curtis’s *Life of James Buchanan*, authorized by the Buchanan family, continuing through the next century with Phillip G. Auchampaugh’s *James Buchanan and His Cabinet On the Eve of Secession* – published privately in Lancaster – and Phillip S. Klein’s 1962 *President James Buchanan: A Biography*. Pennsylvania publications would also include the litany of Buchanan-related articles published in the *Journal of the*

²⁰⁰ Philip Shriver Klein, “James Buchanan and Ann Coleman,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 59, no. 1 (1955): 20; see also Oliver S. Sprout, “James Buchanan, ‘Big Wheel’ of the Railroads,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 56, no. 2 (1952): 21-34.

²⁰¹ For examples, see Homer T. Rosenberger, “To What Extent Did Harriet Lane Influence the Public Policies of James Buchanan?” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 74, no. 1 (1970): 1-22; Homer T. Rosenberger, “The Passing of a Great Lady: Mrs. Harriet Lane Johnston,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 75, no. 1 (1971): 1-18; Homer T. Rosenberger, “Harriet Lane Johnston: Pioneer Advocate of Special Care for Children with Chronic Diseases,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 76, no. 1 (1972): 1-29; Homer T. Rosenberger, “Harriet Lane Johnston: Founder of St. Albans School for Boys,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 76, no. 3 (1972): 136-153; Homer T. Rosenberger, “Two Monuments for the Fifteenth President of the United States,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 78, no. 1 (1974): 29-48.

Lancaster County Historical Society. New biographies arose in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries about Buchanan, including Elbert B. Smith's *Presidency of James Buchanan* (1975) and Jean Baker's *James Buchanan* (2004). These works, previously examined in the Introduction, were produced as part of two separate series, the University Press of Kansas's "American Presidency Series" and Times Books' "American Presidents Series," respectively.

It still stands, therefore, that most biographies published on Buchanan, which are independent of a larger series, have emerged from close connections to the Buchanan family and the town of Lancaster. As such, the primary actors in creating such memorializations are limited to a small, intimate subset of people. Beyond biography, however, other memorials soon emerged that incorporated new stakeholders. Individuals and groups behind the establishment of monuments throughout the city of Lancaster worked to broaden interest in the specific Buchanan monuments by emphasizing Buchanan's connections to the larger state of Pennsylvania and to antebellum American culture. As writers and publishers local to Lancaster produced numerous biographies, other memorial efforts sought to reach out to larger audiences.

Building a Physical Legacy for Buchanan: Local and National Monuments

Biographical works on James Buchanan emerged in both local and national contexts, but monuments more clearly illustrate the intersections between local and national memory of the former president. During the past century numerous monuments and memorials to the former president have appeared in Lancaster, thereby altering the city landscape as a tangible symbol of the area's commitment to preserving Buchanan's memory. These efforts, however, were not limited to Lancaster itself. Interpretations of and publicity for the monuments often tried to

incorporate national ideals as well, such as antebellum history. A couple of choice examples show how local memorial efforts intersected with and influenced the national memory of James Buchanan.

One of the earliest monuments to appear in Lancaster was the James Buchanan Monument erected in Buchanan Park, near Franklin & Marshall College, in 1928. The memorial is simple: a statue of Buchanan standing and tilting his head in his peculiar manner.²⁰²



Image 5: James Buchanan Monument in Buchanan Park, Lancaster, PA. Photo by author.

The city held a ceremony to unveil the memorial on 1 June 1928, sixty years to the day following Buchanan's death. Speakers at the ceremony included the Hon. J. Hay Brown, former chief justice of Pennsylvania, and Sen. Robert L. Owen, a former US Senator from Oklahoma. Brown remembered Buchanan as a "statesman of the highest and most patriotic order," whereas Owen asserted that "the obduracy of the contending parties can never take away from James Buchanan the honor to which he is entitled as a great public servant who loved his fellow men and gave a

²⁰² One of Buchanan's eyes was nearsighted and the other farsighted. He therefore often kept his head tilted at an angle to see more easily.

life of intense devotion to their service.”²⁰³ The program for the ceremony also included a historical sketch of the former president that highlighted Buchanan’s career, but curiously contained little mention of his presidency. Still, the sketch asserted that “History records him as a man of unimpeachable honesty, of the highest patriotism and of great ability.”²⁰⁴

The monument itself was presented to the public as not just a celebration of Buchanan, but also as a testament to the entire state of Pennsylvania. The sculptor was a Pennsylvanian, Charles Grafly, who prepared for the monument’s four-year construction by examining various publications and pictures of the former president. Furthermore, the memorial was funded by Dulon F. Buchmiller, a Lancastrian who lived from 1860 to 1922 and was a longtime admirer of Lancaster’s preeminent citizen. According to the counsel for the Buchmiller estate, John N. Hetrick, who spoke at the unveiling ceremony, Buchmiller left money for the sculpture in order to maintain Buchanan’s memory for future generations: “As his [Buchmiller’s] father before him was an admirer of James Buchanan, so was he an admirer, and he intended to perpetuate his memory . . . so that those who came after him could see that those who honored him in his lifetime had not forgotten his memory.”²⁰⁵ The Buchanan Monument is therefore an example of a monument that was intended to represent both the city of Lancaster and the state of Pennsylvania; indeed, it was, as the program noted, “peculiarly a Pennsylvania monument.” Other efforts to memorialize Buchanan soon fought for additional national significance.

During this pivotal time period, the late 1920s and early 1930s, the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland was busily pursuing the purchase of the

²⁰³ “Former Supreme Court Justice and Senator Laud Buchanan,” *Lancaster New Era*, 1 June 1928.

²⁰⁴ “Historical Sketch of James Buchanan,” *Dedication of the Monument to James Buchanan, Fifteenth President of the United States*, Program, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 2, Folder 47, “Dedication of James Buchanan Monument.”

²⁰⁵ “Dedicates Memorial to the 15th U.S. President,” Unidentified Lancaster Newspaper, 1 June 1928, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 2, Folder 47, “Dedication of James Buchanan Monument.”

president's Lancaster home. Following Buchanan's death, Harriet Lane inherited the home, but she later sold it to George B. Wilson in 1884. Wilson in turn maintained Wheatland until his death in 1929, and his niece, Miss Mary Rettew, inherited the home.²⁰⁶ Purchasing the Wheatland property became a collective effort on the part of Lancastrians, as the Buchanan Foundation solicited donations for what would eventually become a \$40,000 purchase in 1936.

The Wheatland Foundation portrayed the purchase of the home as essential to preserving not just the famous home of James Buchanan, but a place that doubled as a national shrine. The Foundation believed that "Through the medium of Wheatland as a Shrine, our people may be assisted to a rightful appreciation of the life of a man who bore the trying responsibilities resting upon him in perhaps the most perplexing period of our history with a high sense of duty and patriotism."²⁰⁷ The Foundation asserted that looking at Wheatland as a shrine ensured that the home would be acknowledged for its role in constructing the nation. Such focus on Wheatland's national importance continued through the twentieth century, as it became clear that the Foundation hoped to assert Wheatland's centrality in local, state, and national history. A pamphlet on Wheatland the Buchanan Foundation issued in 1941 exemplifies such variability, noting that "Preserved in its original beauty – a monument to the dignified life of ante-bellum America – Wheatland has become a shrine for the nation, but more especially for Pennsylvania as a home of the only Pennsylvanian who has become president of his country."²⁰⁸ In this

²⁰⁶ "Wheatland, Home of James Buchanan, President of the United States, 1857-1861," Pamphlet, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 2, Folder 59, "Wheatland."

²⁰⁷ The People of Lancaster City and County, Pennsylvania, and the Nation – The James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland Inc., *A National Shrine, A Patriotic Movement*, Mid-1930s, Brochure, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 2, Folder 60. The brochure is undated, but must have been printed before Wheatland was purchased in 1836, and likely after George B. Wilson's death in 1929.

²⁰⁸ Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland, "Sketch of Buchanan," *Visit the Historic Home of President Buchanan at Lancaster, Pennsylvania*, 1941, Lancaster Historical Society (LHS), James Buchanan Collection, Box 2, Folder 59, "Wheatland."

example, the foundation attempted to reach beyond Lancaster itself to encompass statewide and national attention, while depicting Wheatland as a symbol of antebellum society.

Multiple other works examine the efforts to maintain presidents' homes, including Washington's Mount Vernon and Jefferson's Monticello. Both cases are examples of the various local and national interests inherent in sites of memorialization. For example, the establishment of Mount Vernon was as much about promoting women's rights as it was preserving Washington's legacy, whereas Uriah Phillips Levy purchased and maintained Monticello because of his admiration for Jefferson. He and his descendents fought against national control over the site for nearly 80 years until financial constraints compelled them to sell the area to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.²⁰⁹ Similarly, the establishment of a memorial in Indiana recognizing Abraham Lincoln's birthplace was as much an homage to Lincoln, someone who experienced an "elevation to the pantheon of American heroes," as it was to the state of Indiana itself, where the 1916 state centennial celebration inspired the memorial.²¹⁰ In much the same way, the creators of monuments to Buchanan, especially in Lancaster, tried to link the former president's life to larger stories, including antebellum America.

Local and national interests collided in Congress in 1918 as the Senate debated whether to provide land for a James Buchanan Memorial in Washington, DC. Upon her death in July 1903, Harriet Lane left \$100,000 for the development of two memorials to her uncle: a stone pyramid located at his Stony Batter birthplace, and a statue in Washington, DC. Lane's funds provided for the creation of the memorial, but Congress had to appropriate a piece of land in the District for it to reside. The Buchanan Memorial, unveiled 26 June 1930 in Washington, DC's,

²⁰⁹ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1999); Marc Leepson, *Saving Monticello: The Levy Family's Epic Quest to Rescue the House that Jefferson Built* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Melvin I. Urofsky, *The Levy Family and Monticello, 1834-1923: Saving Thomas Jefferson's House* (?: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, 2001).

²¹⁰ Cite

Meridian Park, was therefore the culmination of Harriet Lane's two-part memorialization effort.²¹¹ It was completed sixty-two years after Buchanan's death, twenty-seven years after Harriet Lane died, and twelve years after it finally received Congressional approval. Delays aside, however, it stands as an unlikely subject for a national memorial considering Buchanan has not been remembered as fondly as the likes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln, who each have monuments in Washington.

The most heated debates surrounding the Buchanan Memorial occurred in the Senate, where Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican, led the opposition to the statue. Lodge did not hold Buchanan in high esteem; he believed that the former president, although not a traitor to his country, had engaged in traitorous acts. Disloyalty on the part of Buchanan was an ongoing theme in Lodge's lengthy speech. He noted that "there are some here [memorialized in Washington, DC] who seem to me to be too obscure to have found a place in this Capital City; some who are remembered by failures; but there is not one, great or small, on whom the shadow of disloyalty ever rested for a moment. That shadow rested on Buchanan at the time; it has rested on him ever since."²¹² Lodge went on to say that the former president had had only a serviceable political career and, before his presidency, was best known for writing the Ostend manifesto, which called for the forced acquisition of Cuba. Lodge specifically believed that, considering World War I and the United States' mission to preserve European countries' independence, erecting a statue to Buchanan would send the wrong message to the country and the world. He also hoped that Lane's donation could instead be used for bonds to support the

²¹¹ The first was the Stony Batter monument described in the Introduction.

²¹² *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 17 June 1918, 7881.

country's war effort, a fund in Buchanan's name that would better serve to rehabilitate the former president's legacy.²¹³

Lodge had additional qualms with the proposed Buchanan Memorial. The Senator feared that erecting a statue for Buchanan would be equivalent to requesting a statue of former Vice President Aaron Burr, who killed Thomas Jefferson in a duel and was later tried but acquitted in a plot to steal land from the United States, or Benedict Arnold, who defected to the British military during the American Revolution. Acknowledging that the money for the Buchanan Memorial came from Harriet Lane, and not from Congressional funds, Lodge nevertheless bristled at the thought that any wealthy benefactor could buy a statue in the Washington. Indeed, Lodge considered that the permanence of statues, and the meanings they would have for future generations of Americans, gave Congress greater responsibility in approving their construction: "Statues remain; we pass. . . . They all certainly ought to represent a man worth representing not only because of his achievements but also because of his character." Lodge continued, "It [a portrait sculpture] is designed to teach a lesson to coming generations. Our children and grandchildren will look upon it, and many others after them. We seek the lesson it teaches, and that lesson at least should be fundamentally sound and true."²¹⁴

Lodge was not alone in his opinions. Wisconsin Senator Irvine Lenroot, a Republican, said that a monument to Buchanan would cheapen monuments to Lincoln, Grant, and other "great statesmen and great warriors," and would honor a man who oversaw the "destruction of this Republic."²¹⁵ Likewise, Republican Senator Porter James McCumber, of North Dakota, refused to vote to support "the northern copperhead."²¹⁶ But Buchanan had a number of

²¹³ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 17 June 1918, 7877.

²¹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 17 June 1918, 7881.

²¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 17 June 1918, 7885.

²¹⁶ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 17 June 1918, 7887.

supporters in the Senate as well. Senator Gallagher noted that, although Buchanan had made mistakes in office, his weaknesses alone could not justify accounts of the former president that considered him a traitor. Pennsylvania Senator Philander C. Knox brought his home state into the argument, pointing out to the Senate that Pennsylvania had embraced the former president. After weighing Buchanan's errors and virtues, Knox believed that Pennsylvania had embraced Buchanan, citing Pennsylvania's approval of the Buchanan Birthplace Memorial in 1911, the first component of Harriet Lane's memorialization of her uncle.²¹⁷

The primary rationale used to support construction of a memorial for Buchanan was the "inevitable" nature of the Civil War, which explained Buchanan's failure to prevent the long-brewing conflict. In effect, Buchanan could not be blamed for a conflict over which he, and no one else, had any semblance of control. One such example comes from the Senate. Considering Buchanan's controversial presidency, it is not surprising that approval of the monument was hindered by debates regarding the merits of celebrating Buchanan in the nation's capital. In the Senate, Maryland Democrat John Walter Smith spoke passionately in Buchanan's defense and pinpointed the insurmountable challenges he faced during his presidency: "Imagine the responsibility! Imagine anyone, whatever his ability, postponing indefinitely, much less averting entirely, that strife!"²¹⁸ Such an argument carried the day for Buchanan's supporters. Despite stiff resistance led by Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, the Senate approved the measure 51-11.

The same argument emerged during the unveiling ceremony. Despite containing a sketch on Buchanan's life and career, the event's program contained no mention of his presidency, except to note that Buchanan hosted the Prince of Wales (later King Edward) at the White House during his administration. Still, President Herbert Hoover's remarks echoed Senator Smith's

²¹⁷ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session 17 June 1918, 7888, 7883.

²¹⁸ Homer T. Rosenberger, "Two Monuments for the Fifteenth President of the United States," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 78, no. 1 (1974): 41.

sentiment. Hoover noted that “no human power could have stayed the inexorable advance of a great national conflict . . . [Buchanan] played his part with a dignity and courage that only now are received the recognition they deserve.”²¹⁹ Hoover also noted the difference between Buchanan’s nationalism and that of the “younger men” who swept the country toward Civil War, men “representing a more aggressive conception of the Nation’s duty.”

The memorials that emerged in the early-twentieth century in Lancaster and Washington, DC – and Stony Batter, for that matter – juggled different agendas and methods of reaching out to city, state, and nationwide interests. James Buchanan’s personal attempts to rectify his legacy inspired his family to continue the cause, and the entire city of Lancaster soon followed. Still, although interpretations of the monuments sought to connect with national narratives of historic shrines and antebellum society, their fixed locations prevented all but residents and visitors from seeing the memorials and remembering the former president’s life and legacy. Later in the twentieth century, however, a new, diffuse method of memorialization arose from an unlikely source.

The Pulitzer and the President – Reinforcing Buchanan’s Memory in Modern Times

Pennsylvania author John Updike became one of the most popular and acclaimed authors in American literature during the second half of the twentieth century. Updike was a prolific writer, doubtless best known for his long-running series of books chronicling the life of Rabbit Angstrom. Beginning in 1960, Updike released a new Rabbit Angstrom novel roughly every ten years, and for the latter two titles – *Rabbit is Rich* (published 1981) and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990) – received numerous awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes. Updike built his legacy on this series, which tackles issues of family, marriage, sex, and infidelity throughout the twentieth century.

²¹⁹ Herbert Hoover, “Remarks at the Dedication of a Statue of James Buchanan,” 26 June 1930.

Considering Updike's infatuation with these themes, his simultaneous obsession with President James Buchanan seems oddly out of place. Nevertheless, Updike's award-winning career was interspersed with two works that brought Buchanan's life and legacy to a wider national audience.

Fresh off publishing his second Rabbit Angstrom book, *Rabbit Redux* (1971), Updike completed the drama *Buchanan Dying* in 1974. True to its title, the three-act play opens with Buchanan lying on his deathbed and being tended to by his long-time servant, Miss Hetty. From there, Buchanan's reflections – or, quite possibly, hallucinations – conjure up the memories of significant life events, including his broken engagement to Ann Coleman, his tenure as minister to Russia, and his presidency. In some ways *Buchanan Dying* bears strong similarities to Kurt Vonnegut's satiric *Slaughterhouse Five*. To paraphrase Vonnegut, it is as if James Buchanan has become unstuck in time; his memories do not occur in order, especially in the circuitous opening act. Only the second act, which primarily covers his presidency and the outbreak of the Civil War, offers a relatively linear narrative of Buchanan's life. The play then closes with Buchanan emerging from his hallucinations and dying at his Wheatland home.

Updike tries to influence public memory of Buchanan through imagery and dialogue that explain and justify Buchanan's administration. For example, in the opening act Buchanan remains mostly – if not completely – bedridden and the audience is not yet accustomed to the play's rapid temporal movement. Here, a nearly 10-page section features an extended argument between Buchanan and some of his detractors: Robert Coleman, Ann Coleman's father, who accuses Buchanan of breaking his daughter's heart; John Forney, a journalist who helped Buchanan win the presidency but desired a better appointment in the Buchanan administration; and John Slidell, one of Buchanan's political contemporaries. As these men condemn

Buchanan's actions and presidency, the president tries to deflect each criticism and defend his actions, prompting Slidell to wonder aloud, "Not Lincoln, not yourself, not us, not them; then who? Who bears the blame? A world in agony cannot be innocent?"²²⁰ The exchange epitomizes opinions of people who demanded that someone be held accountable for the Civil War. Yet, it also humanizes Buchanan. In the scene, the former president, who is literally surrounded and berated by his enemies, can barely defend himself on one count before another charge is brought forth.

Furthermore, the nature of the play allows Buchanan to have a voice of his own, a voice that Updike routinely uses to present Buchanan's thoughts and rationales. Following Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election, Buchanan delivers a soliloquy, nearly four pages in length, which expresses his opinions on secession and war. The rapid temporal movement experienced throughout the remainder of the play, the flurry of entering and exiting characters – with one actor often playing multiple characters, adding to the confusion of both the play and of pre-war political squabbles – are absent as Updike gives his tragic hero a chance to assert his strict Constitutionalism without rebuke.²²¹ Indeed, such moments allow Buchanan to continually place himself above the political fray that emerged between North and South in the build-up to the Civil War. Buchanan pridefully notes that "the South and North beat upon me as two raging oceans, and I held."²²² Likewise, Buchanan opens the play by describing to Miss Hetty a hallucination in which he was flying above the country, literally and figuratively remaining above the sectional bickering of the pre-Civil War period: "Beneath me lived a vast humming, which became a murmurous cry, a subdued and multitudinous petitioning for mercy; while above me a profound silence obtained, a silence as crystalline and absolute as a ladle of water from my

²²⁰ John Updike, *Buchanan Dying* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1974), 26.

²²¹ Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, 111-14.

²²² Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, 25.

corner spring.”²²³ Thus, in Updike’s portrayal, Buchanan viewed his job as president to maintain the equilibrium between the ground and the sky, to prevent sectionalism from corrupting the quietude and serenity of the sky and of Buchanan’s life.

Updike goes to great pains to explain the reasons for writing *Buchanan Dying* and for portraying James Buchanan as he did. The play includes an 80-page afterword in which the author deconstructs his methodology and inspiration for tackling a subject like Buchanan. From the outset Updike considered his play a “closet drama” with little chance of being produced.²²⁴ Still, such an admission should not dilute Updike’s passion and determination to write a play on the life of Pennsylvania’s only president. In fact, Updike’s fascination with Buchanan stems mostly from a sense of state pride, with *Buchanan Dying* serving as both a personal pet project and an homage to the Keystone State. Updike had long maintained a desire to write a book based on a historical figure, and Buchanan soon fell within his sights. The author also notes his own sense of discovery with regard to Buchanan’s deeds and legacy, his questioning of why Buchanan’s administration had ended in disgrace. Updike also expresses a childlike fascination in historical work. He tells, for example, of his experiences reading a book about Henry Clay at the British Museum: “Its pages had never been cut, I had to slice them with the edge of a credit card. Startled British faces looked around at the tearing sound. I wanted to explain, I was innocent, more than innocent; I was the prince whose kiss this book had been awaiting, asleep, for over a century.”²²⁵ In much the same way, Updike hoped that his efforts in writing a Buchanan play – borne of an attempt to write a historical novel – was the kiss that Buchanan’s legacy had so sorely needed for more than a century.

²²³ Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, 6-7.

²²⁴ Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, v.

²²⁵ Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, 226.

Despite the seemingly limited appeal of such a work, Updike's *Buchanan Dying* was performed on at least one occasion, debuting at Lancaster's Franklin and Marshall College. News reports during the summer of 1974 noted Updike's hope to bring the play to the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, or the Lincoln Center in New York City, but both venues considered the three-act drama too long, and Updike refused to trim his manuscript.²²⁶ Lancaster therefore became, as it had at the beginning of the twentieth century, the staging ground for the latest round of Buchanan memorialization efforts. *Buchanan Dying* premiered on 29 April 1976 and ran at Franklin and Marshall until 8 May, and the premiere was followed by a reception at nearby Wheatland.²²⁷ Reviews of the play – both the production and Updike's manuscript – are scarce, although one local report credits historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., with calling the play less than historically accurate but nevertheless “an abundant, opulent creative act.”²²⁸ *Buchanan Dying* was thus produced on at least one occasion, an occasion that seemed to meet, if not exceed, Updike's modest expectations. It would have seemed that his infatuation with the former president had ended, especially considering the way in which he concluded the play's afterword:

Here is Buchanan, I am rid of him, and this book, a mosaic with more tesserae than matrix, constitutes, I trust, my final volume of homage to my native state, whose mild musty doughy middleness, between immoderate norths and souths, remains for me, being my first taste of life, the authentic case.²²⁹

Fewer than twenty years later, however, Updike was again drawn to Buchanan's life and legacy.

²²⁶ Charles Shaw, “Updike Writes Buchanan Play, Wants Premier Here,” *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal*, 14 June 1974.

²²⁷ “Tickets Now On Sale: Gala Preview—Reception Planned for ‘Buchanan Dying,’” *The Sunday News* (Lancaster, PA), 4 April 1976.

²²⁸ Jack Brubaker, “Tale of Misfortune at Wheatland – Updike Writes Play: ‘Buchanan Dying,’” *New Era* (Lancaster, PA), 14 June 1974. The passage from Schlesinger's review is noted as having come from the June issue of *Atlantic Monthly*.

²²⁹ Updike, *Buchanan Dying*, 259.

In 1992 Updike was two years removed from winning his second Pulitzer for fiction, for his fourth and final Rabbit Angstrom novel, *Rabbit at Rest*.²³⁰ His next full-length work was *Memories of the Ford Administration*, a novel that, despite its title, is as much about the life of James Buchanan as it is anything related to President Gerald Ford and American society during his administration. Updike's premise is that Alfred Clayton, a professor at a New Hampshire junior college, is tasked by a historical organization with penning a short recollection of the Ford Administration. Clayton's recollections, however, are not exactly what one would expect. His response is split between an Updikian story of infidelity and sex, and with excerpts from Clayton's unfinished book on James Buchanan, which he grappled with during the years of the Ford Administration. Clayton speaks to historians – ostensibly the readers of his reflections – about his interests in finding new truths regarding Buchanan's life: “You know how it is, fellow historians – you look for a little patch not trod too hard by other footsteps, where maybe you can grow a few sweetpeas.”²³¹ Clayton notes that it was during the Ford Administration that such “sweetpeas” began to flourish.

One cannot help but wonder how much of Updike is projected from Clayton. Updike himself had hoped to write a book on Buchanan, but settled for a dramatic play when confronted with the constraints of navigating through historical texts and sources in order to tell a historically accurate story. In *Memories*, Clayton has a similar problem, having wrestled with a book on Buchanan for nearly ten years before Ford took office. Clayton's troubles are alleviated, however, when an English professor at his college introduces him to postmodernist theory, the notion that “all history consists simply of texts: there is no Platonically ideal history

²³⁰ Updike would return to the world of Rabbit Angstrom in 2000 with a short novella, *Rabbit Remembered*. Source info needed.

²³¹ John Updike, *Memories of the Ford Administration* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 13.

apart from texts, and texts are inevitably indefinite, self-contradictory, and doomed to a final aporia. So why not *my* text, added to all the others?"²³²

Embracing this new methodology, Clayton allows himself to be more creative in telling the story of Buchanan's life, to reconstruct events, discussions, and people based strongly on historical fact, but containing degrees of poetic license. Perhaps Updike himself used such liberating methods – let alone the strategy of his unorthodox narrative framework in *Memories* – to free himself and finally approach Buchanan as a character in a novel, rather than a play. Furthermore, the Buchanan who emerges in *Memories of the Ford Administration* is not unlike his counterpart in *Buchanan Dying*. In the novel, Updike focuses more on Buchanan's humanizing qualities, specifically the events and aftermath of his engagement and estrangement from Ann Coleman. As well as humanizing Buchanan, the examples serve as a foil for Clayton's and his wife's shared infidelity and the sexual culture of the 1970s.

Popular reviews for Updike's *Memories* were mixed.²³³ But if Updike's execution was perhaps deficient, his intent cannot be denied. Updike's memorializations of Buchanan are significant in two ways that emphasize the themes of this chapter. First, they represent new methods of memorialization heretofore absent among Buchanan supporters. *Buchanan Dying* and *Memories of the Ford Administration* reached new audiences that might not be inclined to visit Lancaster or search Washington's Meridian Park for the Buchanan Memorial. In his use of drama and literature, Updike found a method of memorialization that easily diffused throughout the country.

The second significant factor regarding Updike's works is the manner with which he brings Pennsylvania interests to a national audience. The stakeholders of the physical memorials

²³² Updike, *Memories of the Ford Administration*, 35.

²³³ Paul Gray, "Gerald Ford Redux," *Time* 140, no. 19, 80; David Lipsky, "Memories of U," *National Review* 1 February 1993, 58-60; "Brief Reviews," *Atlantic* 271, no. 1 (January 1993), 125-26.

in Lancaster sought to garner support and interest by stretching beyond its city and state borders. Similarly, Updike took Buchanan beyond the narrow confines of historians and local citizens and pushed the president's story to more people.

The memorial efforts described in this chapter have spanned more than 100 years, from Curtis's *Life of James Buchanan* to Updike's *Memories of the Ford Administration*. Over that time, biographies, statues, and historical fiction have all served as mediums of memorialization, forming Nora's network of *lieux de mémoire* that continues to give life to the local memory of James Buchanan and still reaches newer and larger audiences. Contests over the public memory of Buchanan's memory have therefore occurred since Buchanan's death, and even started, as noted in Chapter Two, with Buchanan's own efforts. The local memory in Lancaster that coalesced around a positive remembrance of Buchanan's life and presidency continually sought to influence the national public memory, which routinely considered Buchanan more negatively. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, memorialization of James Buchanan reached audiences outside Lancaster and Pennsylvania, including the rest of the nation in the struggle over the memory of the country's fifteenth president.

Conclusion

James Buchanan has never fared well in presidential rankings conducted throughout the twentieth century. In the most famous example, the Schlesinger Poll conducted by historian Arthur Schlesinger in 1948 and again in 1962, and then repeated in 1996 by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Buchanan never ranked higher than “below average.” In 1948 he ranked “below average,” and the fourth worst president of all time, just ahead of Franklin Pierce and avoiding the “failure” category occupied by Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding.²³⁴ Fourteen years later he still ranked “below average,” this time ahead of only Grant and Harding.²³⁵ By 1996, the new Schlesinger poll placed Buchanan second worst among all presidents, only besting Warren G. Harding, after he fell to the “failure” category.²³⁶ Schlesinger, Jr., attributed this drop to the Civil Rights Movement that had come and passed since the previous Schlesinger Poll. The nation’s passage through the 1960s precipitated “the nation’s belated awakening to racial injustice,” which possibly explained why certain presidents, including Buchanan, received a greater number of “failure” votes than in previous polls.

Schlesinger, Jr., himself notes many of the potential pitfalls in ranking presidents. Some presidents, including Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, questioned the ability of anyone to judge presidents who had not themselves served in the office. Furthermore, the rules of the poll stipulated that historians focus only on a president’s term in office, and not his achievements before or after his administration. But, according to Schlesinger, some historians could not ignore, for example, John Quincy Adams’s prolific diplomatic career before his

²³⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Historians Rate U.S. Presidents,” *Life* 25, no. 18 (1 November 1948), 65.

²³⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Our Presidents: A Rating by 75 Historians,” *New York Times Magazine* 29 July 1962, 12.

²³⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “Rating the Presidents: Washington Clinton,” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 2 (Summer, 1997): 179-190. The Schlesinger Poll asked historians to rate presidents on the following scale: Great = 4 points; Near Great = 3; Average = 2; Below Average = 1; Failure = -2.

presidency, or his prominent anti-slavery voice in the House of Representatives after he left office.²³⁷ Interestingly, in his consideration of President Bill Clinton, who at the time of the 1996 poll had not yet started his second term, Schlesinger, Jr., notes that in order for Clinton to move up toward the top of the list, he should exhibit a political daring that few presidents have evidenced. Indeed, “only boldness and creativity, even if at times foiled and frustrated, will earn him [Clinton] a place among the immortals.”²³⁸ James Buchanan’s contemporaries levied a similar criticism toward the fifteenth president, that his strict Constitutionalism prevented him from executing a bold policy of action against the seceding South.

Regardless of the reasons for their rankings, presidential historians, at least those polled throughout the various Schlesinger polls, continually rate Buchanan as one of the worst presidents in US history. But by looking at the rankings themselves, one can see that presidents from different eras tend to rank in similar areas. The Founding Fathers, for example, rank extremely well. In 1996, Washington ranked second overall, only behind Lincoln. Jefferson ranked as a “near great” president, and John Adams and James Monroe ranked in the “high average” group. James Madison ranked the worst among the Founding Fathers, but still led the group of “average” presidents.²³⁹ Presidents in the Second Party System also fared generally well, though not quite as well as their predecessors. In 1996, Jackson and Polk ranked “near great,” and John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren ended up in the top half of the “average”

²³⁷ Schlesinger, Jr., “Rating the Presidents,” 183.

²³⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., “Rating the Presidents,” 188.

²³⁹ Schlesinger, Jr., “Rating the Presidents,” 189. The Founders fared well in the first two Schlesinger polls, as well. In 1948, Washington and Jefferson ranked among the “great” presidents, John Adams “near great,” and Monroe and Madison were solidly “average.” The 1948 poll did not identify “high average” presidents, but Madison and Monroe were two of the top four “average” presidents. In 1962, Washington and Jefferson again ranked “great,” with Adams “near great,” and Madison and Monroe again “average,” with Monroe beginning to drop to the middle of the “average” pack.

presidents.²⁴⁰ These rankings mirror the range of remembrances for each president following their deaths in the early nineteenth century. As noted in Chapter One, the Founding Fathers were routinely considered nearly immortal figures, and presidents of the Second Party System received similarly positive, though generally less effusive, remembrances. It seems, at least based on these rankings, that little has changed in considerations of their presidencies since their deaths.

The comparison only intensifies when Buchanan, Fillmore, Pierce, and even John Tyler, whose loyalty to Confederate Virginia earned him the first large wave of negative remembrances, are included in the survey. As noted earlier, Buchanan sits second-worst in the 1996 poll. He is joined by Pierce, also a “failure” in the 1996 poll, and Fillmore and Tyler, who just edged the “failure” category, instead rounding out the grouping of “below average” presidents.²⁴¹ The presidents who were first to be routinely criticized following their deaths remain, 150 years later, the first grouping of presidents to fail to reach as high as “average” in the Schlesinger polls. Again, as with the Founding Fathers, it would seem that little has changed over the course time. It could be questioned, then, to what degree did memorialization efforts during the last 150 years influence public memory and work to appeal the verdict of history that many newspapers delivered following Buchanan’s 1868 death? What of the influence of any other memorialization efforts on the behalf of a former president? What do these rankings tell us, especially considering that few presidents have improved their statures since their nineteenth-century deaths?

²⁴⁰ Again, these rankings are consistent with earlier Schlesinger Polls. The 1948 poll actually labeled Jackson “great,” with Polk “near great,” and John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren in the top half of the “average” presidents. In 1962, Jackson assumed a “near great” label with Polk, with Adams and Van Buren again occupying the top half of the “average” presidents.

²⁴¹ Once more, these rankings ring true throughout the Schlesinger Polls. Both the original 1948 Poll and its 1962 sequel placed all four presidents in the “below average” grouping.

The preceding presidential rankings tie together the various strands that have been laid throughout this thesis. Before the Civil War, presidents were measured after their deaths by how closely they adhered to early-nineteenth century conceptions of patriotism, which demanded civic virtue, morality, and wisdom. With the Civil War came new meanings of patriotism, which followed the heroism of Civil War soldiers. Presidents Buchanan, Fillmore, and Pierce, and also John Tyler, were the first presidents to be compared to these new patriotic ideals. The subsequent negative portrayals that appeared in newspapers, starting with John Tyler in 1862, compelled presidents and their families to take unprecedented steps toward the preservation of their legacies. James Buchanan in particular tried to use the first presidential memoir, published four years after he left office, to influence public opinion and rehabilitate his image. What his publication did, however, was reveal the outlines of a local memory of Buchanan, one that operated out of Lancaster and considered the former president as a positive figure, and a national memory, generally more negative, that dominated nationwide remembrances of the former president. Proponents of the local memory toiled over various forms of memorialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including biography, statues, and historical fiction.

These memorials to Buchanan sought to refute the verdict of history that had been etched following his 1868 death, to overcome his perceived patriotic deficiencies so that history, and historians such as those who participated in the Schlesinger polls, might consider him more favorably in the future. More than 100 years later President Richard Nixon would say of the presidential rankings, "History will treat me fairly. Historians probably won't. They are mostly on the left."²⁴² It is not known whether Buchanan had in mind any such distinction; it is more likely that he was interested in convincing whoever might listen to his version of the events of

²⁴² Schlesinger, Jr., "Rating the Presidents," 180.

his administration. But the Schlesinger polls call into question the amount of influence Buchanan's memorials had on shaping how history regarded the former president.

One possible answer is that the preceding examples of memorialization have not tried to directly influence historians' opinions, and have instead attempted to influence the public. From historic statues and buildings in Lancaster and Pennsylvania, including Buchanan Birthplace State Park, Buchanan Park in Lancaster, and Wheatland, to the biographies and historical fiction that arose throughout the twentieth century, these various forms of memorialization serve to remind the public of the fifteenth president. How one measures this influence upon the public, however, is the topic of another study altogether. For example, Lancaster continues to have various events to honor Buchanan's life, from annual wreath-laying ceremonies to living history exhibits at Wheatland on President's Day, where visitors could hear from Buchanan himself about his life and presidency. Oral history would be one way in which to measure how these various activities influenced the public. Who regularly attended these ceremonies? Why did they attend? What did they hope to hear and see, and what did they walk away thinking about the legacy of James Buchanan? This thesis has tried to explore the early development of presidential memorialization and self-commemoration, but a future study could use oral history interviews to dig deeper into Lancaster itself, trying to find themes and trends among Lancastrians regarding their annual and everyday interactions with James Buchanan.

Future research can also look more closely at the deaths of presidents and how the country has reacted throughout history. There are a myriad of unanswered questions: When did cities end the practice of each holding funerals for a fallen president? What reasons specifically led to the growth of the state funeral system for presidents, which before the mid-twentieth century had generally been reserved for presidents who died in office? Using patriotism as a

starting point, what other cultural values are revealed during remembrances of presidents? There simply is not enough scholarship that charts the relationship between the president and the country, and how that relationship plays out following a president's death. As the presidency has become more powerful during the twentieth century, it is even more important to look back to the early days of the presidency for the ways in which today's precedents were set.

For the time being, though, this thesis has tried to examine the ways in which presidents' deaths affected the country. From that simple question came the rest of this research, the links between the presidency and national meanings of patriotism, the post-Civil War changes in patriotic ideology that compelled presidents to try to defend their own legacies, and the various forms of memorialization that operated on local and national networks, trying to affect public memory. Successful or not, James Buchanan's personal defense of his administration, provoked by changes in patriotic meaning that negatively affected perceptions of his administration, ignited a series of memorials that eventually expanded to reach stakeholders throughout the country. How memorials to James Buchanan evolve in the next 150 years is anyone's guess, but as local memory continues to try to influence national memory of the former president, the memorialization network will doubtless strive to expand even further.

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APPENDIX A – LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1 (page 2) – Exterior of the James Buchanan Restaurant and Pub, located at one of James Buchanan’s childhood homes in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Photo by the author.

Image 2 (page 2) – Exterior of the Lane House, birthplace of Harriet Lane. Lane was James Buchanan’s niece and served as his First Lady during his presidency. The Lane House sits across the street from the James Buchanan Restaurant and Pub. Photo by the author.

Image 3 (page 3) – The Buchanan Birthplace Memorial at Buchanan Birthplace State Park in Stony Batter, Pennsylvania (just outside Mercersburg). This was the first of two memorials to James Buchanan paid for by funds left in Harriet Lane’s will. Photo by the author.

Image 4 (page 3) – The cabin in which Buchanan was born in lived for the first five years of his life. Currently, the cabin sits on the campus of Mercersburg Academy. Photo by the author.

Image 5 (page 75) – The James Buchanan Monument in Buchanan Park, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The monument was unveiled to the public in 1928, Buchanan Year in Lancaster. Photo by the author.