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"A Nation's Wail their Requiem!": Memory and Identity in the Commemoration of the American Civil War Dead, 1865-1870

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"A NATION'S WAIL THEIR REQUIEM!"

Memory and Identity in the Commemoration of the American Civil War Dead,
1865-1870

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

Diana Williams Bell

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APPROVAL SHEET

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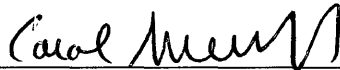
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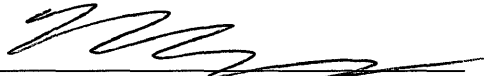
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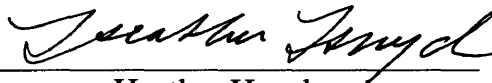
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To Mom, Father, and Jeff, who now know more
about Civil War reburial than they ever desired

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Confederate surrender in 1865 ended the armed conflict of the American Civil War. However, four years of war left unparalleled human carnage, and the dead of both sides still littered battlefields, prisons, and hospitals. Decisions of how to handle these remains would define and reflect postwar attitudes among both northerners and southerners about the war's legacy and its implications for citizenship, memory, and identity.

The shared experience of war transformed the North. To harness resources and manpower, northerners had to achieve quickly a degree of national cohesiveness nonexistent in the antebellum years. This successfully consolidated northern national identity remained largely unaltered in the postwar years and clearly marked federal commemoration of the war dead. Starting in 1862, the federal government established the first national cemetery system in modern history. After Confederate surrender, reburial agents scoured the South for Union remains and moved them to vast new national cemeteries, where the bodies would remain ever associated with the nation. However, the nation as defined by reburial excluded southerners and segregated African Americans. In addition to establishing the limits of citizenship, reburial allowed the government to control interment and commemoration, traditionally intimate family responsibilities. Northerners voiced a range of opinions on this shift in government's role. Some expressed anxiety and concern, while others saw reburial as fulfillment of reciprocal obligation.

Largely in response to federal exclusion, southerners assumed responsibility for the Confederate dead. Though devastated by war, white southern communities organized "Ladies' Memorial Associations" to raise money for reburial. Assuming the same role as the federal government, these "vernacular" groups became the South's "official" commemorators. They sought to justify the deaths of three hundred thousand men for a failed cause and in so doing drew upon and created a collective white southern memory of the war. This version of the conflict presented the South as more unified than the Confederacy had ever been and consolidated white southerners against perceived contemporary threats of federal occupation and black empowerment. Segregated commemoration between 1865-1870 thus led to divergent northern and southern public war memories and helped thwart reconciliation during a critical period.

"A NATION'S WAIL THEIR REQUIEM!"

INTRODUCTION

> National memory...is constituted by different, often opposing, memories
> that, in spite of their rivalries, construct common denominators that
> overcome on the symbolic level real social and political differences to
> create an imagined community.[1]

During the last years of his life, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Union hero of

Gettysburg, president of Bowdoin College, and four-term governor of Maine, recorded

his memoirs of the last year of the Civil War. Recounting the Army of the Potomac's

return from Appomattox Court House to Washington, DC, in April 1865, Chamberlain

detailed a macabre scene, one that had lived in his memory for over fifty years. Camping

one night near Hanover Court House, Virginia, close to the battlefields of the Seven Days

of 1862, Chamberlain rose to calm an agitated horse. He wrote:

> Before I reached him my foot crushed through the breast-bones of a body
> half buried by the fallen pinecones and needles so long undisturbed, now
> gone back mostly ashes to ashes. I found that the horse, pawing the earth
> within the scope of his picket-rope, had rolled out two skulls and scattered
> the bones of bodies he had unearthed, and was gazing at the white skulls
> as if lost in doubt...In the morning the men got to looking around among
> the bodies and relics, and by initials cut into the breast-plates or other
> marks or tokens, identified the remnants of bodies of comrades long left
> among the missing...they asked permission to gather up these mournful
> remnants and pack them...to be sent to friends who would gladly cherish
> even such tokens of the fate of the unreturning brave.[2]

Chamberlain's experience was not unusual. The high mortality rates of the Civil War had

made pre-existing burial practices obsolete, and the majority of the dead of both sides,

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[1] Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 1399.

[2] Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 308-309 (page citations refer to the reprint edition).

according to journalist James Russling, "still [lay] on the fields where they fell, or near the hospitals or prison pens where they died."[3] During the war, neither government had established procedures for systematic interment, and so the victor of any given battle assumed burial responsibilities. Usually, the enemy dead fared worst, and if buried at all, they were often relegated into shallow pits or trenches.[4]

At the war's conclusion, these corpses posed a problem for both northerners and southerners. Their presence demanded attention. Not only did they threaten a potential public health crisis; decisions about how to deal with them perpetuated wartime fissures and revived wartime questions of citizenship and identity. The United States government offered one solution to the problem by reburying the northern slain in the modern world's first national cemetery system, and thereby nationalizing their deaths. Yet, this new project reserved commemoration for Union victors, and cast the northern public memory of the war—and vision for the future—in sectional terms. Subsequent southern reburial efforts further polarized the postwar nation and encouraged the development of divergent regional commemorative practices.

The Civil War was the bloodiest conflict in American history. According to Gerald Linderman, "No one would ever comprehend the war's 623,026 deaths or 1,094,453 casualties," though all "were still stunned by the scale perceptible to them."[5] Americans had never experienced such mass death and destruction. In the North, six percent of men eligible to fight were dead, in the South, a staggering eighteen percent.[6]

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[3] James F. Russling, "National Cemeteries," *Harpers Monthly Magazine* 33 (1866): 313.
[4] See Drew Gilpin Faust, *'A Riddle of Death:' Mortality and Meaning in the American Civil War* (Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College Press, 1995).
[5] Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 125.
[6] Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Riddle of Death*, 8.

The sheer numbers of corpses dwarfed the body counts of prior conflicts. According to one post-battle observer at Gettysburg, "Upon the open fields…in crevices of the rocks, behind fences, trees and buildings; in thickets, where they had crept for safety only to die in agony; by stream or wall or hedge, wherever the battle had raged or their wakening steps could carry them, lay the dead."[7]

Americans had dealt with war death and epidemic disease before. The American Revolution claimed approximately 4,435 American lives, and the Mexican War another 13,283. Diseases like yellow fever, malaria, cholera, smallpox, and dysentery were not strangers, especially in the South.[8] The Cholera Epidemics of 1832 and 1849 took nearly 150,000 lives, and diseased corpses received only minimal attention from gravediggers. In New York in 1849, according to Charles Rosenberg, the dead, much like those of the Civil War, "were deposited in a wide trench some hundred yards in length, one body on top of another."[9] Still, the scale of Civil War death—from both disease and battle—made burial an unprecedented concern. While approximately 185,000 soldiers died in battle, another 435,000 succumbed to disease, and all required burial.[10] Soldiers usually died far from home, but death touched nearly every city and town. The care of the dead was a pressing nationwide issue, and it brought about unparalleled changes in commemoration. Yet, reburial became a sectional responsibility.[11]

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[7] John W. Schildt, *Roads From Gettysburg* (Chewsville, MD: John W. Schildt, 1979), 23, quoted in Gregory A. Coco, *A Strange and Blighted Land: Gettysburg: The Aftermath of the Battle* (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1995), 86.

[8] Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, revised ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003), 103.

[9] Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 112.

[10] See Theo. F. Rodenbough, ed., *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, Vol. 1: *Armies & Leaders* (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1983, reprint 1989 ed.), 148.

[11] Historians have debated the effects of large-scale death on postwar Americans. See John R. Neff, "Heroic Eminent Death: The Redefinition of American Nationality in the Commemoration of Abraham

During periods free of war and epidemic disease, death in Victorian America was

a private, family ritual. More than during the previous two centuries, the physical

remains of the deceased carried great significance for survivors. Rural "garden"

cemeteries replaced crowded churchyards, and Victorians began to develop a

romanticized culture of death characterized by elaborate mourning rituals replete with

emotional symbolism.[12] For both northerners and southerners, the body provided a

medium through which to grieve and allowed families to participate in the burial. In the

North, according to Gary Laderman, "The rite of passage from life to death, deathbed to

grave, allowed the survivors an opportunity to pay their last respects and to make certain

that collective action repaired the rupture to the social fabric."[13] Among Appalachian

Southerners, the body proved equally significant to mourning ritual. James Crissman

writes, "The funeral, especially when the deceased is displayed, is therapeutic for

everyone present…It also helps the survivors to openly express their feelings and deal

with their grief."[14] Death during the Civil War and subsequent changes in burial

procedures broke with these traditions. With most soldiers dying far from home, and

nearly half of the corpses unidentified, Civil War death presented new fears and

anxieties. For soldiers and civilians of both sides, Gerald Linderman writes, horror of

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Lincoln and the Civil War Soldier Dead" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 1998). Neff stresses the "institutionalization of death," or large-scale, impersonal handling of the dead, which prevented people from grieving in traditional cultural patterns. This, he argues, perpetuated postwar hostility on both sides. Drew Gilpin Faust, in *A Riddle of Death*, emphasizes the centrality of the Civil War as a process by which American perceptions of death changed forever. The unparalleled "deaths and slaughter of the Civil War…inaugurated the loss of innocence, [and] the threat of meaninglessness that characterize modern life." (26).

[12] For more on the garden cemetery movement, see Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement," *American Quarterly* 26 (1974): 37-59.

[13] Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 32.

[14] James K. Crissman, *Death and Dying in Central Appalachia: Changing Attitudes and Practices* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 77.

death "was accompanied by a fear, no less oppressive, of anonymous death."[15] In the

postwar struggle to commemorate the dead, each side would seek, with varying degrees

of success, to reconcile war death with family and community tradition.

Sectional postwar reburial and commemoration is best understood in the context

of wartime nationalism. For both sides, conflicting national visions influenced

projections of and responses to the dead. Historians have emphasized the increasing

centralization of the federal government as a result of the Civil War, which, according to

Eric Foner, "reflected the birth of the modern American state."[16] Accompanying this

change in the role of government was a redefinition of national identity. In order to

mobilize northerners against the southern foe, nation builders made concerted efforts to

minimize localism and solidify a shared sense of distinctiveness in a country with a shaky

basis for nationalism. Sanitary Fairs, war bond drives, and Union Leagues, as Melinda

Lawson describes, "Depict[ed] the nation in more traditional, historical, and cultural

terms...[and] along with a renewed commitment to a revitalized American ideology,

helped forge a new American national identity and patriotism."[17] This portrayal naturally

raised questions of citizenship and reciprocity between individuals and the government.

For the first time, American men were conscripted into the service of their country, and

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[15] Linderman, 248.

[16] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 10-11. Also see James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 859, where he states, "the old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the average citizen except through the post-office gave way to a more centralized polity that taxed people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect these taxes, drafted men into the army, expanded the jurisdiction of federal courts, created a national currency, and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare—the Freedman's Bureau."; Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging A New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 181, "The war had profound centralizing effects on the nation's politics and economics: it gave rise, in effect to the modern American nation-state."; and Richard Franklin Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[17] Lawson, 4. Lawson describes how instead of being founded on shared history, language, or culture, the United States was founded on an idea. New interpretations of the nation depicted it "as an entity existing independent of the idea." (13).

to justify ultimate sacrifice, individuals had to be given a direct link to the idea of a

shared past worthy of that sacrifice. This solidified northern national identity extended

largely unaltered into the immediate postwar period and would help define the boundaries

of "national" commemoration. [18]

Unlike in the North, the Confederacy's story was largely one of failed attempts at

consolidating nationalist sentiment. Many historians of the wartime South have noted the

Confederacy's inability to create a strong national identity and solid patriotism as a

reason for defeat. For a nation founded on the tenets of states' rights and decentralized

power, the national purpose and the need for unified action often proved contradictory.

Yet, by giving meaning to their dead within the context of lingering regionalism and

exclusion from northern definitions of citizenship, southerners would create and project a

public memory of national unity that had never existed during the war.[19]

The history of Civil War reburial is one of contested memories and identities.

Recently, historians have expressed increased interest in the relationship between history

and memory. Beginning with French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs's identification of a

"collective memory," scholars have understood commemoration in terms of local,

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[18] Phillip Shaw Paludan also examined the underlying foundations of American nationalism, saying that at base, "the image of the nation had always been a belief in a higher and transcendent purpose for America." Yet, it was the arrival of the war that allowed the North to come to terms with industrialization and cement a national image that embraced the changes of previous decades, "A People's Contest:" The Union and the Civil War 1861-1865 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

[19] For the failure of Confederate nationalism, see Richard E. Beringer et al., Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," The Journal of American History 76 (1990): 1200-1228; The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); and Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979). Also see Gaines M. Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4, where he states, "the Confederacy never displayed the unity of purpose its postwar celebrators recalled and may never have achieved the goal of creating a true nationalism."

regional, and national group memories.[20] Some, like Kenneth Foote, claim that groups

do not commemorate their shared remembrances "until there is a past worthy of

commemorating."[21] Others disagree, arguing that the act of memorializing is in itself a

construction of memory and identity.[22] John Bodnar explains that public memory and

commemoration always exist in a tension between official and vernacular interpretations.

Cultural leaders project official memory, which allows them to "restate what they [think]

the social order and citizen behavior should be." Vernacular memory is "derived from

the lived or shared experiences of small groups, unlike official culture which [is]

grounded in the power of larger, long-lasting institutions."[23] Reburying and

commemorating the Civil War dead required a negotiation of both official and vernacular

memories, and at times blurred distinctions between the two.

Despite scholarly interest in public identity and memory, few historians have

highlighted the role of contested memory in immediate post-Civil War reburial and

commemoration. This study attempts to use reburial as a lens through which to view

issues of national identity, citizenship, and war memory in the five years after

Appomattox. As postwar interment, like wartime burial, remained a sectional

responsibility, this investigation examines reburial from both northern and southern

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[20] See Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968).

[21] Foote, 29.

[22] See John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[23] John E. Bodnar, *Remarking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 13-14; 247. See Confino, 1402, for a critique of Bodnar's dichotomy. He states, "In the real world, things are not as neat. Not only is vernacular memory not as saintly and official memory not as brutal, but they constantly commingle." For more on memory, see Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire, Vol. 1: La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). Nora ties together memory and place and identifies "memory sites" that for the modern world have become physical embodiments of group memory. For an overview, see David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1989), 1117-1129. Thelen emphasizes that memory is a construction rather than a replication.

perspectives and seeks to understand the regional and national struggles that accompanied commemoration.[24]

Chapter One positions exclusionary federal reburial policy in the context of lingering wartime nationalism. The creation of the United States National Cemetery System marked the first time in modern history that a government had assumed burial responsibility for all ranks of its fallen soldiers. Yet, nationalizing the dead in this way set limits of citizenship, clearly excluding southerners from the national vision, and marginalizing African Americans. An official/vernacular discourse accompanied the construction of new national cemeteries, and northerners had to reconcile conflicting public and private ideas of the citizenship and nation to come to terms with a national vision for the future.

Chapter Two examines southern reburial as a response to exclusionary federal policy. Unlike in the North, where official and vernacular interests debated the meaning of the dead, southern commemoration is not as easily dichotomized. With no national government to act as officiate, southerners arranged reburial within their own vernacular women's associations. However, by acting as their region's commemorative leaders, select southerners assumed the same role as the federal government in the North and projected a memory of the war that described the past less than it responded to present concerns. Southerners also faced different realities than their northern counterparts

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[24] See William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Blair uses the concept of memory to understand reburial and commemoration in the postwar South. He focuses mainly on commemorative ceremonies such as Emancipation Day celebrations and Memorial Day gatherings, and he extends his study into the early twentieth century. Neff also examines reburial and memorialization, and he focuses on both northern and southern perspectives from the end of the war until the twentieth century. However, he looks less at memory than scholarly concepts of nationalism. Civil War commemoration and remembrance becomes especially prevalent (especially in the South) from the mid-1880s until the First World War, and most scholars focus on this period. However, the five years following surrender provide a precedent for future commemoration and cannot be ignored.

because of their proximity to the remains of the dead. Direct involvement in reburial work caused southerners to experience reburial much more tangibly.

The epilogue illuminates points of contact between northern and southern commemorators and shows how cemeteries became contested ground in the postwar South. Though sectionalized, reburial provided a forum for interaction and conflict. While northerners and southerners shaped divergent memories of the war, contemporary commemorative encounters further polarized visions of the past.

Ultimately, divergent reburial practices from 1865-1870 lay the groundwork for sectional public memory well into the twentieth century. Certainly, many factors besides reburial thwarted reconciliation; yet, this one pressing issue provides an avenue to approach larger questions of nationhood and citizenship. Symbolically, reburial and memorialization perpetuated sectionalism and conflict in the minds of the living. By attaching importance to the war dead, postwar Americans negotiated public memories of the war and thereby created differing visions for the future.

CHAPTER I

"THE INTERMENT OF OUR HEROIC DEAD:"[1] DISCOURSE OF REBURIAL AND THE PERPETUATION OF NORTHERN WARTIME IDENTITY

In the summer of 1865, Northern journalist John Trowbridge toured the defeated

Confederacy. Working for a Connecticut publisher, he sought to report the state of

southern battlefields to the northern public. He recounted the condition of the Union

dead at Chickamauga, writing:

> Some [corpses] had been buried in trenches, some singly, some laid side
> by side and covered with a little earth, leaving feet and skull exposed; and
> many had not been buried at all. Throughout the woods were scattered
> these lonely graves...Many graves were marked with stakes, but some
> were to be discovered only by the disturbed appearance of the ground.[2]

Trowbridge's descriptions and those of other journalists and military officials spread

through the North in the months following Confederate surrender. The battles were over,

but northerners, usually residing far from the front lines, desired news of their dead.

While most still lay, either poorly buried or completely exposed, on battlefields or near

hospitals and prisons where they died, the Quartermaster Department had begun interring

the fallen in new national cemeteries. Journalists described these new burial grounds

with special detail, and the public expressed great fascination, for no one had seen such

cemeteries before.

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[1] House Committee on Military Affairs, "National Cemeteries in Tennessee," Letter from the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1866, Misc. Doc. 127, 11.
[2] John T. Trowbridge, *The Desolate South, 1865-1866: A Picture of the Battlefields of the Devastated Confederacy*, Ed. Gordon Carroll (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1956), 139-140.

Prior to the Civil War, army unit and post commanders bore the responsibility of burying soldiers who died under their command. They often sent officers' bodies home for burial, whereas they interred enlisted men at post cemeteries or on battlefields. In 1850, Congress made provisions for Mexican War dead, approximately 750 of whose bodies still lay along the road to Mexico City, to be gathered under a common monument. But the large-scale destruction of the Civil War challenged established procedures and led to a reconceptualization of the government's responsibility to its fallen soldiers.[3]

During the Civil War, the federal government made some provisions to deal with the ever-increasing number of fatalities. In 1862, Congress gave Abraham Lincoln the power "to purchase cemetery grounds, and cause them to be securely enclosed to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."[4] This law led to the formation of twenty-two such cemeteries, most located near northern hospitals or in areas of federal control. Coalitions of northern states also worked to provide interment for Union soldiers at Antietam and Gettysburg. However, until after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, in April 1865, most southern battlefield dead resembled those Trowbridge encountered, poorly buried and unidentified.

Drawing from these wartime beginnings, the war's conclusion brought major efforts by the United States federal government to provide permanent and appropriate burial for several hundred thousand Union soldiers. This nationalist drive came out of

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[3] For more on pre-Civil War soldier burial, see Kelsey R. Cass, "'None Else of Name': The Origin and Early Development of the United States National Cemetery System" Ph.D. diss, Claremont Graduate University, 2001; Edward Steere, "Genesis of American Graves Registration 1861-1870," *Military Affairs* 12 (1948): 149-161.

[4] Section 18, Statute II, (1861-1862), Public Acts, *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1865), 596.

shared wartime experience and drew support from within the government and military, the northern press, and the northern population at large. With the South under federal control, the Quartermaster Department deployed burial agents to scour the region for Union graves and arrange reburial. Only Union soldiers benefited from this recovery and identification operation, and contemporary observers often commented on the "opened graves, from which the bodies of Union soldiers [had] been removed, and graves where [slept] undisturbed the rebel victims of the strife."[5] Bodies were marked by long, neat rows of identical wooden headboards, differentiable only by the name and regimental affiliation carved on them. Forty-two percent bore merely the inscription, "Unknown U.S. Soldier." By 1870, more than 300,000 northern soldiers lay buried in seventy-two new cemeteries.[6]

Still, not all were completely comfortable with the triumph of nationalism. Not only was this new form of burial a departure from existing federal policy, it differed greatly from death at home. Most family members did not possess the remains of the dead, and they could not perform the rites of preparing the corpse, transporting it to the gravesite, and entombing it. Because, on the northern home front, according to Gary Laderman, "The former living being who had inhabited the body continued to be

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[5] *New York Herald*, November 20, 1863. Although this is a wartime example, postwar federal reburial policy also excluded Confederate dead.

[6] For unique nature of the United States National Cemetery System, see James Stevens Curl, *A Celebration of Death: An Introduction to Some of the Buildings, Monuments, and Settings of Funerary Architecture in the Western European Tradition* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1993), 317-18. Examining the reburial of dead soldiers, Curl notes, "The American Civil War was the first war of modern times in which proper cemeteries for all ranks were laid out." However, this marked the beginning of an international trend, as the dead of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) received similar attention. Curl explains this phenomenon, saying "in the course of Victorian times, respect for the dead, like compassion for the underdog, became usual, and demanded that all the dead in battle should be buried and properly commemorated." For more on body identification, see Steere, 154-155. He describes how burial agents looked for personal effects to identify corpses. For the first time, primitive dental records helped this process.

associated with the remains," the identity of the corpse was important.[7] Most northerners also felt disconnected from the reburial process and helpless to prevent remains from being desecrated or made anonymous. With so many graves in national cemeteries labeled "unknown," the chasm between federally funded reburial and antebellum ritual was vast.

Perpetuating this fissure, religious rites that usually accompanied death in peacetime became impractical during war. Often, battlefield burials either received no religious ceremony at all, or only quick prayers pronounced by friends. Large-scale relocation into national cemeteries was equally devoid of sacrament. In 1864, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, responding to complaints over this deficiency, made some provisions for chaplains to be on duty at Arlington and Alexandria Cemeteries. Plans called for "interments [to] be made at certain hours two or three times a day...and the service could be thus performed over several bodies at a time."[8] Still, chaplains did not provide religious services at all cemeteries, and where they did, they had no time to give individualized attention to the dead.

The Civil War transformed the North. An elusive antebellum national identity had been largely solidified and realized to wage war successfully. Part of this process was the creation of a shared public memory. In the case of northern wartime identity, individuals struggled to balance personal, private memory with the development of an increasingly significant national memory. People were transformed by their personal memories of the war, and as Phillip Paludan writes, "Soldiers brought home war

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[7] Laderman, 32.
[8] M.C. Meigs to E.M. Stanton, June 16, 1864, series 3, volume 4, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, published under the direction of the Secretary of War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), 434, hereafter WOTR.

memories and were different men because of what they had seen and done."[9] By placing

these individual changes into the context of the larger national transformation, the shared

experience of war in the development of a northern national memory cannot be

overlooked.[10]

Considering new federal burial practices in light of a wartime shift in national

focus reveals its consistency with this transformation. In a sense, reburial was yet

another nation-building exercise, though now practiced after the war. The establishment

of organized reburial in national cemeteries by the federal government reflected and

perpetuated the shared northern memory of the war and the sense of northern national

identity created during it. This required a renegotiation of both official and vernacular

memories, and presented a challenge to traditional death practices. Northerners, once

asked to sacrifice their lives to the national cause, were now asked to sacrifice the

individual identities of the dead to that nation. They entered into discourse, public and

private, over the fate of the remains, and reacted to this nationalization of the dead with

mixed expressions of anxiety, gratitude, and increased expectations of the government.

In his 1863 Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln imbued the dead with national

significance and encouraged the living to continue the struggle for which "they gave the

last full measure of devotion."[11] This vision remained largely unchanged in the

immediate postwar period. National cemeteries came to serve as national memorials that

consolidated and immortalized the northern sense of national identity created during the

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[9] Paludan, 382.

[10] See Bodnar. For more on public memory and commemoration, see Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument," in Gillis, ed, where he reminds, "public monuments do not arise as if by natural law to celebrate the deserving, they are built by people with sufficient power to marshal (or impose) public consent for their creation." (135).

[11] For more on the Gettysburg Address, see Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

war. However, by excluding southerners from the nation in this very tangible way, the

federal government discouraged unity during a pivotal period for reconciliation.[12]

Projections of the war's meaning and the role of the dead in embodying that

meaning came in many forms. News of reburial from government sources, public

oratory, newspapers and journals, and from accounts of journalists traveling through the

South bombarded northerners. No American conflict had even been as well publicized as

the Civil War, and northern journalists reported postwar occurrences almost as avidly as

the battles. Generally, public sources extolled the United States government's care for

the dead and invoked the same sort of patriotic feelings aroused during the war. Though

some media sources critiqued government handling, such projections largely portrayed

the dead in a nationalistic light, depicting them with images of martyrdom and

sanctification. Nationalistic projections of the dead stemmed in part from a continuing

wartime mentality. Confederate surrender ended armed conflict, but the ideology behind

the northern war machine remained largely unaltered. According to Melinda Lawson, the

war "increased public consciousness of the nation."[13] This heightened awareness led the

northern public to expect and seek out detailed information from an increasingly active

press. Lincoln's wartime government had exerted more control and censorship over the

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[12] For different interpretations of the significance of federal reburial policies, see Neff, who looking at northern responses to the soldier dead, described what he termed a "shield of myth" created in the postwar North. This unifying outlook was a counterpart to the southern "Lost Cause," and explained that northern deaths ultimately served the higher good. Through commemoration they would ever remain in the public conscience, and would never loose their symbolic value. However, he sees this ideology as an independent postwar development rather than an extension of the sense of nationalism constructed during the war. Edward Steere emphasizes the significance of federal reburial policy as the first modern attempt at body identification and grave registration, Steere, 149-161. Drew Gilpin Faust argued that national cemeteries helped to give meaning to the slaughter characteristic of the Civil War. Burying the Union dead together, "affirmed that both they and their deaths belonged to the Union, and that they had not died in vain, had—in dying that their nation might live—in some sense not died at all," *A Riddle of Death,* 26.
[13] Lawson, 181.

press than ever before, and while journalists still found much room for expressive

freedom, the link between the national cause and the media remained strong.[14]

Many government and media sources often nationalized images of the dead,

equating them to the Union cause. An 1866 *New York Times* article credited the new

cemeteries with embodying the Union message and carrying forward this version of

American nationalism for future generations:

> The National Cemeteries throughout the South are a more eloquent
> sermon than could be spoken, to present and future generations,
> inculcating patriotism and self-devotion, warning of the evils of disunion,
> inspiring to virtue and threatening with justice. They are the legacy which
> this generation will leave to posterity along with the national integrity they
> purchased to teach them the worth of what they enjoy.[15]

Still, the idea of the nation equated with these cemeteries was limited to the North. An

1866 *Harper's Monthly* article also criticized the Gettysburg National Cemetery because

it was still directed by a coalition of states rather than the federal government. Such a

cemetery "is in no true sense a 'National Cemetery,'…it should have been the work of

the nation to consecrate its precious soil to freedom and the fallen now and forever."

This insistence on nationalization and centralization still, unquestioningly, excluded

southerners from the national vision.[16]

Descriptions of the dead juxtaposed with images of the American flag allied their

identity with the nation and its core ideals. At the 1865 dedication of Andersonville

National Cemetery, "The Stars and Stripes were hoisted in the center of the cemetery,

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[14] Paludan, 239-240; For more on the northern media during the Civil War, see Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), 165-181.
[15] *New York Times,* September 16, 1866
[16] Russling, 316.

when a national salute was fired and several national songs sung by those present."[17]

According to one report, "The heart swells up in holy ecstasy as the eye looks upon that

banner of beautiful blue, which waves in billows of red and white crested with stars, from

the staff at the cemetery's center."[18] The published proceedings from a fifth anniversary

ceremony of the battle of Antietam also included associations with the national banner:

> Lift high the granite shaft for all
> That fell where duty summoned them;
> Their country's star-gem'd flag their pull,
> A Nation's wail their requiem![19]

A common theme in this nationalistic rhetoric was the sanctification of the dead

as martyrs to the national cause. Publications encouraged northerners to recognize that

the dead gave their lives so that survivors could carry on the national vision. One

journalist proclaimed, "These brave men died for us…they sacrificed all for the benefit of

us, their survivors."[20] Another reacted similarly, writing, "Through the sacrifices and

blood they shed, and the lives they rendered up, the Union has been preserved…and our

Government is strengthened."[21] James F. Russling, imparted this sense of sacrifice in an

1866 poem.

> Four hundred thousand men,
> The brave, the good, the true,
> In tangled wood, in mountain glen,
> On battle-plain, in prison-pen,
> Have died for me and you;
> Four hundred thousand of the brave
> Have made our ransomed land their grave
> For me and you,

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[17] J.M. Moore to M.C. Meigs, September 20, 1865, series 3, volume 5, WOTR, 319-22.

[18] *New York Times,* November 4, 1865.

[19] *History of Antietam National Cemetery: Including a Descriptive List of All Loyal Soldiers Buried Therein: Together With the Ceremonies and Addresses on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Grounds, September 17, 1867* (Baltimore: J.W. Woods, 1869) hereafter HANC.

[20] "Our National Cemeteries," *Nation: A Weekly Journal Devoted to Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 8 (1869): 237-238.

[21] HANC, 21.

Good friends, for me and you.[22]

In recognizing the dead as martyrs to the Union cause and almost Christ-like in their

sacrifice for their fellow man, the government and media placed the meaning of the war

within a familiar religious framework to garner popular support for national

commemoration. Perhaps in some way compensating for the lack of traditional religious

ritual in death, public sources endowed the dead with sacred purpose, not as martyrs to

Christianity, but as saints of their nation. By gathering their bones into national

cemeteries, the government thereby created national shrines.

Having made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the survival of their nation, the dead

bodies required recognition. It was therefore the responsibility of the living, through

supporting their government's reburial policy, to show their gratitude to the dead. The

citizen's duty was, according to one 1867 observer, to "honor and keep green the memory

of the loyal volunteer."[23]   Asking for public backing for the cemeteries, James Russling

wrote,

> We submit that the nation, with united voice, should call for these
> scattered dead of the Union army...to be disinterred from the places where
> they lie, and brought speedily together into great national cemeteries,
> where they may repose in peace and dignity beneath the aegis of the
> Republic while time endures.[24]

The public's duty to the dead became inextricably linked to duty to the nation. Just as the

slain died for the northern national vision, their remains would be forever tied to it. That

northerners constructed this "nationalism" in response to rebellion did not alter its

extension into peacetime.

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[22] Russling, 313.
[23] HANC, 21.
[24] Russling, 321.

Reports of southern atrocities toward the dead spurred anxiety and anger among northerners. This allowed propagandistic journalists and military and government officials to play off public fear to further consolidate feelings of northern unity in the postwar years. The resumption of plowing and farming in the South, where the dead lay scattered, proved particularly frightening. One 1865 *New York Times* article questioned, "Shall these graves be given over to the plows and the wagon wheel, the trampling of animals and the feet of the passer-by?"[25] A northern journalist visiting South Carolina in autumn of the same year described the state of Union graves in Florence. "The half-acre of ground occupied by these known and numbered graves is not enclosed, and vagrant cows wander at will over the low mounds."[26] John Trowbridge recounted a particularly troubling story of a Maryland farmer who, while plowing, "Every time he came to a grave he would just reach over his plough, jerk up the headboard and stick it down behind him again as he ploughed along; and all the time he never stopped whistling his tune."[27]

Even more troubling than the threat of plow damage was that southerners were selling northern bones for profit. Many destitute southerners, particularly newly freed slaves, made a meager living by scouring battlefields for horse bones. These remains could be sold to glue or fertilizer factories. Russell Conwell, another northern journalist traveling through the South, "Met several Negroes, with large sacks, collecting the bones

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[25] *New York Times*, June 20, 1865.

[26] Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War: As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 200.

[27] Trowbridge, 26. For more accounts of destruction by the plow, see "Journal of a Trip Through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia for the Purpose of Locating the Scattered Graves of Union Soldiers," ca. 1866, 1 vol., Record Group 92, Entry 685, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Washington, D.C., 109; Henry Hodges to Rufus Ingalls, September 7, 1870, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Richmond," NARA.

of dead horses which they sold to the bone-grinders in Richmond."[28] Trowbridge

encountered a similar scene with his guide, Elijah. Elijah explained, "Every place ye see

these big bunches of weeds, that's whar tha' hosses or men buried…these holes are whar

the bones have been dug up for the bone factory at Fredericksburg [sic]." Trowbridge

inquired as to whether human bones ever went to the factory. Elijah replied, "Not unless

by mistake. But people ain't always very partic'lar about mistakes if thar's money to be

made by [sic]."[29] Accounts like Conwell's and Trowbridge's reached wide audiences in

the North, first as weekly newspaper installments and later as bound volumes. Such

narratives, though often sensationalized, helped to further polarize northerners in favor of

government reburial.

Published accounts also solicited northern anger and indignation toward

southerners by recounting wartime abuses. Comparing northern humanity toward the

enemy dead with southern barbarity, postwar northerners further distanced themselves

from reconciliation with the South. Photographer Alexander Gardner remarked in 1866

that "it speaks ill of the residents of…Virginia that they allowed even the remains of

those they considered enemies, to decay unnoticed where they fell."[30] Conversely,

according to northern accounts, when Union soldiers assumed responsibility for southern

dead, "We religiously buried the Confederate dead..[and] we marked their graves as

carefully as our own."[31] Southerners carried their offenses one step further by "stripping

such dead as fell into their hands…render[ing] it impossible to identify large numbers."[32]

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[28] Russell H. Conwell, *Magnolia Journey: A Union Veteran Revisits the Former Confederate States*, arr. Joseph C. Carter, orig. pub. 1869 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 23.
[29] Trowbridge, 70.
[30] Alexander Gardner, *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War, 1866* quoted in Brooks Johnson, *An Enduring Interest: The Photographs of Alexander Gardner* (Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum, 1991), 36.
[31] Russling, 313.
[32] Trowbridge, 6.

Southern mistreatment of prisoners of war proved an especially sore spot for northerners. Knowing of the wretched treatment of the living, reports of abuse of the dead stirred lingering anger. Journalist John Richard Dennett reported the situation at Salisbury, North Carolina. He found that "often the burial was done so carelessly that the limbs were not covered, yet no room was taken up by coffins, which were never used...There must be few acres of ground more dismal than this, or fitter to arouse emotions of painful melancholy tinged with harsher feelings."[33] A September 1865 report from General J.M. Moore at Andersonville, Georgia, revealed similar findings. There, the dead were "buried without coffins or the ordinary clothing to cover their nakedness."[34] The prison in Florence, South Carolina, was also disturbing. It seemed to Dennett "as if mercy and humanity had fled the land...There was no pity or respect for the dead even; they were buried as you'd bury an old horse." These repeated accounts kept war wounds from healing and forced northerners to relive the war daily. They now feared for the dead as they had feared for the living during war.[35]

Given this psychological continuation of the war, few questioned the logic of excluding southern dead from the new national cemeteries. Describing the cemetery at Gettysburg, one northern journalist exclaimed, "None but loyal soldiers of the Union lie here; and would that all such who fell upon this high field of nation's honor might have been gathered into this most honorable sepulcher." Yet he went on to praise growing nationalism, stating, "This intermingling of states in the ashes of their dead, without

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[33] John Richard Dennett, *The South as it is: 1865-1866*, Henry M. Christman, ed., (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 124.

[34] J.M. Moore to M.C. Meigs, September 20, 1865, series 3, volume 5, WOTC, 319-322. Clara Barton, nurse and later founder of the American Red Cross, undertook the project of identifying the dead at Andersonville after the war. Of the more than 13,000 men buried there, she and her assistants identified all but 1,004.

[35] Dennett, 228.

regard to sectional divisions, is itself a symbol and prophecy of the reality and the

perpetuity of that Union which was here redeemed and sealed by so much precious

blood." While the lack of division by northern states in the cemetery proved positive to

this journalist, the idea that southerners should benefit from national burial as well

seemed beyond consideration.[36]

Antietam National Cemetery, formed by the Maryland State Legislature and a

coalition of other northern states before being later turned over to federal authority, was

only one of a few national cemeteries that allowed Confederate burials.[37] Because

Maryland, a border state, sent troops both North and South, state officials chose to inter

the dead of each side. Still, the cemetery design segregated Confederates from "loyal"

soldiers. Its charter provided for "the remains of the soldiers of the Confederate army to

be buried in a part of the grounds separate from those of the Union Army."[38] However,

when the federal government assumed responsibility for the grounds, this measure

seemed too generous to some northern officials. In a report to the House of

Representatives by H.D. Washburn of the Committee on Military Affairs, he proclaimed

that the coalition of states that decided to permit Confederate reburial at Antietam were in

error, but "such discussion comes too late to remedy the evil."[39] Marylanders had

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[36] "The National Cemetery at Gettysburgh," *Hours at Home: A Popular Monthly Devoted to Religious and Useful Literature* 2 (1865-1866), 183.

[37] Other national cemeteries did include some Confederate graves, usually those of prisoners of war. Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira, New York, contained a majority of Confederate graves. However, such burial grounds often suffered from administrative neglect. At Woodlawn, according to an 1872 report, "Grass and weeds [were] growing rank over this lot, [and]...owing to some difficulty in regard to his pay, the keeper of this cemetery [had] not taken care of these two lots since June 1, 1870." In United States Senate, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, "Letter of the Secretary of War: The Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries of the United States for 1870-71," Ex. Doc No. 79, 8.

[38] *A Descriptive List of the Burial Places of the Remains of Confederate Soldiers who fell in the battles of Antietam, South Mountain, Monocacy, and other points in Washington and Frederick Counties, in the State of Maryland* (Hagerstown, MD: Free Press, n.d.), 3.

[39] House Committee on Military Affairs, report prepared by H.D. Washburn, 40th Cong., 2d sess., 1868, Report 61, 2. John Trowbridge offered one of the few voices of protest to this exclusionary system of

experienced a different war than many in the North, and national cemetery establishment

there required a negotiation of national and local memories.

Southerners, left on their own to arrange burials, were surely not to be defined as

martyrs to the nation and thereby as citizens worthy of its benefits. But official reburial

also diminished the contributions of some who had sacrificed a great deal for the Union.

Twenty percent of African American soldiers who fought for the North died during the

war. Yet, their remains often did not merit burial alongside white comrades. Rather,

policy and practice dictated that African Americans be segregated within national

cemeteries and sometimes even moved to smaller, poorly maintained black cemeteries.

For example, Lebanon Cemetery in Pennsylvania held 339 African American soldiers.

All had been disinterred from white cemeteries and placed in this smaller, poorly

maintained lot.[40] This neglect reveals the African American exclusion from the northern

national vision. Though nearly two hundred thousand blacks fought for the Union, by

denying them full commemoration, the government marginalized their sacrifice, thereby

symbolically writing off their claim to the advantages of citizenship.

Despite glaring discrepancies such as the treatment of African Americans and the

complete exclusion of southerners, when rare northern voices of disapproval surfaced,

they addressed the aesthetics of the cemeteries themselves or reports of government

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burial. Walking through the dense and tangled undergrowth of the old Wilderness battlefield with his guide, Elijah, Trowbridge came upon two unburied skeletons. "I knew that scores of such sights could be seen here a few weeks before; but the United States Government had sent to have its unburied dead collected together in the two national cemeteries of the Wilderness; and I had hoped the work was faithfully done. 'They was No'th Carolinians; that's why they didn't bury 'em,' said Elijah, after a careful examination of the buttons fallen from the rotted clothing...North Carolinians they may have been; yet I could not believe this to be the true reason why they had not been decently interred. It must have been that these bodies, and others we found afterwards, were overlooked by the party sent to construct the cemeteries. It was shameful negligence, to say the least." (73)

[40] Senate Committee on Military Affairs, "Letter of the Secretary of War: The Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries of the United States for 1869," report prepared by L. Thomas, 41st cong., 2d sess., 1870, Executive Document 62, Ex. Doc No. 62, 11; Faust, 'Riddle of Death,' 8.

mishandling of the dead rather than offering opposition based on ideological concerns.

One northern reporter, visiting the Seven Pines National Cemetery in October 1866,

expressed reservations about the cemeteries. There he found "one of those cemeteries

with which the Government is disfiguring, I might almost say desecrating all the battle-

fields of the war. These cemeteries...are repulsive in the biggest degree." Unlike

traditional rural cemeteries in the North, that suggest "the sweeping lines of eternity,"

Seven Pines offered "not a shrub or blade of grass—nothing but the yellow earth and

glaring white boards and fences—it is a site to hurry from."[41]

Some found the management of reburial disturbing. Journalist Russell Conwell

wrote in 1869, "It has been supposed that the Union dead were all buried in the

cemeteries by the government and that all the respect due the dead was now shown. But

this is far from the case." At Cold Harbor, he found 631 soldiers buried in a single grave

with another grave containing three hundred bodies. As soon as burial corps employees

completed reinterring the dead, they departed and left the cemetery unattended. Since

that time, vandals dug up the remains, leaving "skulls, ribs, legs, and arm

bones...scattered about in fearful array."[42]

Other complaints stemmed from reports of negligence by burial corps workers.

The burial corps comprised a diverse collection of individuals and varied from place to

place. Burial agents, who traveled through the South seeking information about grave

locations and body identification, were usually officers in the Quartermaster Department.

They often hired locals to perform the gruesome task of digging up the remains and

moving them to their new permanent locations. These individuals were sometimes

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[41] *New York Times*, October 26, 1866.
[42] Conwell, 23.

former slaves or Confederate veterans, often working side by side, such as in Fredericksburg. In some cases, United States Colored Troops, facing discrimination themselves in burial, drew the unpleasant task of grave digging.[43]

Impressions of African American labor varied in the North, and often existing stereotypes and racist convictions led to clichéd characterizations. One northern journalist portrayed black workers as frightened and childlike, writing, "All the superstition of the African was roused at the sight of the mouldering dead. They declared that the skulls moved, and started back with shrieks. An officer, to encourage them, unconcernedly took the bones from a grave and placed them carefully in a coffin."[44] Others sensed that African Americans had greater sensitivity to the work than whites. One burial corps agent, searching the Kentuckian countryside for corpses in 1866, noted, "Most all the information gained was from negroes who, I was told by parties at Mt. Sterling pay more attention to such matters than the white people."[45]

Some northern witnesses to reburial expressed horror over the way burial corps employees performed their work. A group of New Hampshire women, visiting Richmond in 1866, wrote their minister, R. L. Stubbs, after viewing the men at work. Stubbs then forwarded the letter, which he threatened to publish, up the chain of command in the Quartermaster Department. The women raged,

> Our noble dead are not receiving so decent a burial by Government as
> They did at the hands of their murderers!! the bodies were pitched into the
> ground by scores in a state of nudity—they are each found in a separate

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[43] See Russling, 316; "The Colored Teamsters" to War Department, January 1, 1867, Record Group 92, Entry 225: Consolidated Correspondence File, NARA; Fredericksburg Burial Corps to Andrew Johnson, May 29, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Fredericksburg", NARA; "Journal of a Trip Through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia for the Purpose of Locating the Scattered Graves of Union Soldiers," ca. 1866, 1 vol., Record Group 92, Entry 685, NARA.
[44] Trowbridge, 139.
[45] "Journal of a Trip Through Parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia, etc." NARA.

box...<u>now</u> they are being dug up, the boxes opened, and those that are in a fit state to warrant reburying...are being filled up with the contents of two others...the bones rattled with a reproving sound as they dropped from the workmens [sic] shovels.[46]

James M. Moore, presiding officer over reburial in Richmond, wrote to Secretary of War Stanton, defending his employees, and stating, "The sad and horrible rights which necessarily attend the exhumations of the battlefield should not be made subject of publication."[47] Just as Moore sought to limit the spread of negative accounts, General George Thomas responded to similar allegations of government-funded mishandling by publishing a reassuring letter in the *New York Times*. Dispelling rumors, he wrote, "The evidence obtained as to the mutilation through carelessness or wanton cruelty...shows the greatest care to have been used in removal, and all due respect shown the remains."[48] Certainly, officials hoped to minimize negative accounts to maintain public support for the national burial. If the government was responsible for the same sorts of mistreatment associated with the former Confederates, it could prove damaging to commemorative efforts and thereby to the nationalistic memory of the past these efforts encouraged.

Faced with varying published accounts of reburial, ranging from exaltation of the dead and the Union cause to reports of government carelessness, northerners, especially those with friends and relatives among the dead, wrote to the Quartermaster Department. Many did so in response to newspaper announcements such as one that appeared in September 1866, in the *Chicago Tribune,* announcing the removal of bodies from Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Burial agents asked that "all

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[46] Frederick Smyth to E.M. Stanton enclosing letter from Rev. R. L. Stubbs, December 30, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576, "Richmond," NARA.

[47] James M. Moore to E.M. Stanton, December 31, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576, "Richmond," NARA. Since the dates of this letter and of Smyth's are so close together, I believe that one must be a copy of the original, for otherwise there would not have been adequate transit time.

[48] *New York Times*, May 8, 1867.

persons possessed of any information that may be of use in identifying the dead are requested to send them."[49] Public responses received in the months following the article addressed not only this specific appeal, but touched on broader issues of government-sponsored reburial. They revealed both acceptance of public projections and individual anxieties over the changes that reburial embodied. Reactions varied but shared common themes of generalized sadness and mourning, desire to be near the dead, anxiety over reburial, continued sectional hostility, and finally expressions of patriotism and gratitude to the federal government. In the level of familiarity and openness individuals used to express their concerns and demands, they drew upon a sense of shared memory and reciprocity created during the war.

The foremost purpose for the majority of these letters was to share information regarding grave locations and physical descriptions necessary in identifying the dead. By asking for this information, the government engaged the public in an open dialogue, and showed interest in the individual identities of the dead and individual losses of the survivors. At the same time that standardized burial and nationalization of the dead minimized individualism, this concession to public desires encouraged a growing sense of a reciprocal duty between government and citizen, and strengthened the new sense of national identity that had developed among northerners during the war.

Those with information sent descriptions of burial sites and bodies. John Barr of New London, Iowa, wrote in October 1866 regarding his son, William. William "was

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[49] *Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 1866. It should be noted that the sources used to gauge northern reaction to reburial are not necessarily representative of the northern population as a whole but are the only measure abundantly available. The bulk of these letters are responses to a newspaper ad published by the Quartermaster Department throughout the North, asking for information regarding burial locations. Therefore, the vast majority of correspondents are relatives of deceased soldiers who had information regarding the site of their relatives' graves. These were individuals who could not afford or chose not to have remains brought home, but who were literate and spoke English.

killed by a twelve pound shot passing through his left breast and was buried in his

uniform." His comrades interred him near Griswold Station, Georgia, with two or three

others in the same grave. Barr wished to "be informed what cemetery he will be removed

to and the number of his grave."[50] Ann E. Chandler of Douglas, Massachusetts, wrote to

give the location of her husband's grave near Corinth, Mississippi. He was buried "1/2

mile north of the residence of Mrs. Clark and Widow Hopkins...there are 4 burried [sic]

in the same grave with a division of earth between them my husband was first in the

north side of the grave."[51] One grieving mother even included a carefully preserved lock

of her son's hair, hoping it might be useful in identifying his remains. Sharing personal

memories of the dead along with information they had gleaned from friends of the

deceased and company commanders, northerners put their last hopes of identifying the

dead in the hands of the government.[52]

Throughout these letters, writers imparted a sense of personal sadness and loss.

One despairing father wrote, "I miss my son more than I can express."[53] L.S. Dilley of

Canton, Ohio, described his dead brother, asking the recipient to "excuse me if I speak

with warmth. I loved the boy."[54] The willingness of these individuals to share their

personal grief displays a level of confidence in and assumed familiarity with the officers

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[50] John Barr to E.B. Whitman, October 2, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence Relating to Buried Soldiers, 1864-1890, NARA. Most of the letters cited were addressed to E.B. Whitman. Major Whitman served as the Superintendent of National Cemeteries for the Department of the Tennessee, and newspaper ads requesting grave locations and descriptions gave him as the contact for disinterment in that portion of the country. Apparently, he kept careful records, since the National Archives contain a great number of the letters he received.

[51] Ann E. Chandler to E.B. Whitman, June 9, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

[52] Mrs. Pope to E.B. Whitman, n.d., Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA. Mrs. Pope's letter still contains the lock of her son's hair that she carefully enclosed. As it fell into my hand as I read her letter, I felt an immediate, physical connection to her and to her loss. Perhaps this was the sense she hoped to impart to Whitman.

[53] James R. Goodrich to E.B. Whitman, August 10, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

[54] L.S. Dilley to E.B. Whitman, December 24, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

handling reburial. Perhaps they hoped, through private expressions, to impart a sense of the humanity of their dead loved ones.

As the war separated mourners from the deceased and created a rupture in traditional grieving patterns, many correspondents expressed the wish in their letters to the Quartermaster Department to be near the dead. Often, they lamented that they could not afford to have corpses sent home. H.H. Bennett of Grand View, Indiana, wrote, "I would cheerfuly come and Help Moove the Remains of my friends if I had the means [sic]."[55] A grieving mother bemoaned, "O i would give worlds ware it in my posession if i could have him brought whare i could viset his grave [sic]."[56]

Some tried unsuccessfully to have the corpses returned to them. Embalming, a new practice developed during the war, allowed the possibility, for those who could afford it, of staving off decay and permitting transportation. Bradford Phillips's corpse had been stored in a cask of alcohol to preserve it for later removal to Wisconsin. But when his widow tried to have it sent home, she was unable to contact anyone who could help her.[57] Another Wisconsin widow sent money unsuccessfully and thought of traveling south herself to claim her husband's body. She wrote, "I have thought of coming after my Husbands [sic] body this Fall but it seems quite an undertaking to go alone and with child not three years old. I know of no one to send the means to I have furnished the Money once and do not like to lose again."[58] J. Daggy of Illinois grew suspicious of sending money for removal to unknown sources.

> I received a letter from an Undertaker at Murfreesboro proposing that if I
> would send him $105.00 he would forward the remains of my son in a

[55] H.H. Bennett to E.B. Whitman, September 25, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[56] Mrs. Pope to E.B. Whitman, October 24, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[57] Ms. Bradford Phillips to E.B. Whitman, October 18, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[58] Henrietta L. Palmer to E.B. Whitman, September 16, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

metalic [sic] case__he gave no evidence of identification, and I declined his offer. [59]

Having failed to retrieve remains through personal effort, and harboring suspicion of swindlers, many northerners had no choice by to put their hope in the government's reburial plan.

However, other relatives had less faith in government body identification and reburial, and felt that they alone could positively identify the dead. Mrs. C.A. Osborne, a self-described "heartbroken mother" from Michigan, pleaded, "I think that I could recognize his remains much better than any one else could, and the hope of finding some trace of him, urges me to make the trial."[60] For these individuals, like Richard M. Devens, who argued, "To positively identify his remains I would have to be personally present,"[61] their confidence in reburial extended only so far. Ultimately, many were hesitant to bestow entirely the commemoration of their loved ones on the government.

Uncertainty over the fate of remains and the treatment of the dead created anxiety among surviving relatives. Most citizens who wrote to the Quartermaster Department regarding the dead expressed some sense of worry or fear. Many of these, like Richard Devens and C.A. Osborne, doubted the ability of the government to identify the dead. Mrs. Pope, of Unionville, Ohio, expressed this sentiment as well. "I have wurryed a grait deal since I hurd that poor John was going to be taken up for fear they could not tell one

[59] J. Daggy to E.B. Whitman, September 10, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA. Some northerners, unable to have remains brought home, requested that burial agents recover mementos from the dead to be sent to them. See Lizzie Heazlitt to E.B. Whitman, November 6, 1866, "if it were possible in making the change, that you could obtain some relic of the lost one, we would feel more grateful than words can express." Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[60] Mrs. C.A. Osborne to E.B. Whitman, September 13, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[61] Richard M. Devens to E.B. Whitman, September 15, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

from the other I hope they will be carfle [sic]."[62] In Devens's letter, he included a short

ode, reminding burial corps employees to use care:

> Take him up tenderly,
> Hoist him with care:
> Fashioned so delicately
> Young and so fair. [63]

Surely, much of this anxiety stemmed from accounts of mistreatment of the dead and the

inability to supervise death in a traditional fashion.

Lingering feelings of anger and hostility toward southerners mingled with sadness

and anxiety. Many letters reflected wartime northern patriotism coupled with continued

sectionalism, demonstrating the perpetuation, on both a public and personal level, of

bitterness toward the South. These citizens, having lost relatives to the war, often found

forgiveness even more difficult. Margaret Harn, whose brother, John, died just a week

before Lee's surrender, railed, "If the hand of man fails to Punish vengence is mine thus

sayeth the Lord and I will repay evry traitor to the goverment and may there Punishment

bee equel to there sin the deeds of traitors have filled the land with mourning with

widows and orphans [sic]."[64] Others rejoiced in the formation of national cemeteries

because they allowed for the dead "to sleep among those who fell for our common cause,

and where the foe and stranger will not tread."[65] Gathering the dead together under

federal protection thus safeguarded them from the southern "foe." Ann Chandler of

Douglas, Massachusetts, who lost her husband to the war, proclaimed, "Our Government

is doing a noble work in thus gathering together the remains of its fallen sons and if my

prayers prevail it would never again be imperiled by traitors at home or foes from

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[62] Mrs. Pope to E.B. Whitman, n.d., Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[63] Richard M. Devens to E.B. Whitman, December 2, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[64] Margaret Harn to E.B. Whitman, October 1, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[65] M.S. Poe to E.B. Whitman, October 21, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

abroad."[66] For many of these northerners who felt the pain of war most acutely, faith in the government and the nation still excluded the South.

Like these correspondents, who expressed northern nationalistic identity along with their animosity toward the South, many others cast their approval of reburial in widely used terms of patriotism and gratitude. Consolation came with knowing that the dead would rest among their fallen comrades. Ann Chandler took comfort that even though her husband's grave would be far from home "he rests with the noble dead who gave their lives in the same glorious cause."[67] Another widow, concerned that her husband's corpse would not be found, asked that if "you rear monuments for the fallen heroes will you not place his name with the rest?" When the burial corps did locate his body, she took comfort that "he ha[d] been honored by a national burial, by the Government he so nobly died for."[68] The sister of one fallen soldier wrote, "I am the sister of a brave hero who gave his life for his country," she and her family's "hearts [were] big with love and kindness toward those who under our glorious old 'Stars & Stripes' bore arms in defense of our grand & long Established Government."[69] Translating their relief into the language of patriotism, these women revealed the continued vitality of northern national identity.

Confederate surrender allowed the wartime goal of reunion to be accomplished physically, but lingering hostility kept reconciliation from being realized. Had reunion been truly achieved, consolidation into national cemeteries would not have been

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[66] Ann E. Chandler to E.B. Whitman, March 1, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[67] Ann E. Chandler to E.B. Whitman, February 3, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[68] Sarah R. Whipple to E.B. Whitman, January 31, 1866, October 6, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.
[69] Sallie A. Craft to E.B. Whitman, May 4, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

necessary to protect Union dead from the southern foe. One northern mother echoed this sentiment in her response to reburial:

> If to have under its control the burial places of those who died to preserve it, the government finds it necessary to remove from rebellious communities all such hallowed evidence of glorious sacrifice to principle...then have been made in vain all these great sacrifices; if they have failed to preserve to the government the power to protect the graves of soldiers who died in its defense, wherever the honored spot may be![70]

Thus, the handling of the physical remains of dead soldiers both represented and perpetuated this failure.

Rather than using the postwar reburial program as a reconstructive tool, the government and media treated it as another wartime nation-building program. By glorifying and nationalizing the dead, presenting them as martyrs to the nation, and playing off citizen anxiety and war memory to further consolidate northern public opinion, officials strengthened wartime national identity and cemented northern nationalism as the basis for American nationalism.

The official/vernacular discourse that accompanied public commemoration of the northern dead reveals the redefinition of citizenship that accompanied the war. With the increased civic duties required of average citizens came the expectation of reciprocation. In many ways, government-sponsored reburial was a step toward fulfilling this obligation, albeit more fully bestowed upon white veterans than black. However, as was evident in the varied responses of northern citizens to reburial, tension still persisted between individual and national tradition, memory, and identity.

. [70] A.S. Cumier Brown to E.B. Whitman, September 28, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 575, NARA.

Ultimately, the northern vision, solidified by war and bolstered by victory,

persisted as the American national vision. The dead of the war served as martyrs to the

Union, and their graves as shrines. As James Russling suggested in 1866:

> Shall we not at once gather their remains tenderly together into great
> national cemeteries, few in number but centrally located…and solemnly
> commit them to posterity as a part of the precious price our generation
> paid for the Union, to be the republic's legacy and the nation's inheritance
> for evermore?[71]

The price the North paid for the Union was carefully commemorated, but that

commemoration ironically undermined the cohesive nationhood northerners

fought to preserve.

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[71] Russling, 314.

CHAPTER II

"MARTYRS OF A FALLEN CAUSE:"[1] SOUTHERN COMMEMORATIVE
DISCOURSE AND REGIONAL PUBLIC MEMORY

On March 31, 1866, an editorial, signed simply "Nathalie," appeared in the

Norfolk Virginian. The author contrasted northern and southern commemoration and

responded to the new national cemeteries the federal government was establishing

throughout the South.

> Since the war the people of the North have been long in doing honor to
> their dead—Stately monuments have been erected; tablets have been
> placed on famous battle-fields; beautiful cemeteries have been
> designed...But as the splendid shaft rises above the Northern dead, how
> sad and painful to think of the unmarked ground that holds the ashes of
> those dearest to us...Alas! It is a sad contrast.

"Nathalie," remarking on the sad condition of the Confederate dead, urged fellow

southerners to "gather up our dead tenderly, and place them in sacred enclosures, and

raise above them monuments of earthly love and the emblems of eternal hope."[2]

As the United States government undertook the vast project of establishing the

new national cemetery system during and immediately after the Civil War, southerners,

ravaged by war and possessing limited resources, approached reburial later.[3] A

Fredericksburg, Virginia, woman wrote in 1866, "In a land...desolated and impoverished

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[1] "Ladies Association to Commemorate the Confederate Dead," "Three Odes," June 16, 1866, Manuscripts Department, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, hereafter USC.
[2] *Norfolk Virginian,* March 31, 1866.
[3] Most southern reburial work began in the spring of 1866, almost a year after surrender.

as ours, we cannot without aid guard these graves from exposure and possible

desecration."[4]

Like their northern counterparts, Confederate soldiers had made limited efforts to inter

their fallen comrades during the war, whether burying them hastily on battlefields or near

the hospitals and wayside homes where they died. Near Fort Harrison, Virginia,

Confederates buried several thousand troops who fell in the engagement on one farmer's

twenty-acre plot. Yet southern reburial was far from complete. On fields across the

South, Confederate "bones [were] bleaching beneath the sun and the storm beside those

of the beasts of burden." The vast majority of the southern dead lay in shallow graves or

unburied, and most survivors had few resources for funding their interment.[5]

When many white southerners did attempt reburial, individual communities,

especially women's charitable groups, responded to the needs of the dead locally. For

many southerners, unlike northerners, unburied bodies lay literally at their feet. The

urgency of the situation was evident. Those individuals located far from major

battlefields learned the state of the dead through newspapers and public correspondence.

One Alabama editorialist explained, "The battle is over, but the dead are unburied...They

are lying where they fell in the valleys of Virginia and Tennessee...The ploughshare is

striking them from the soil which their blood sanctified."[6] A report on the Confederate

dead at Resaca, Georgia, described them "as having been very hastily buried, and many

lying in a neglected condition."[7] Another correspondent, reporting for the *Daily*

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[4] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg Records, 1866-1967," misc. microfilm reel 534, Library of Virginia, hereafter LVA, Richmond, May 24, 1866.
[5] Trowbridge, 31; *Montgomery Mail*, April 11, 1866.
[6] *Montgomery Mail*, April 11, 1866.
[7] Miss M. J. Green to the Ladies Memorial Association of Montgomery Alabama, July 3, 1866, "Ladies Memorial Association Records, 1866-1929," Alabama Department of Archives and History, hereafter ADAH.

Richmond Examiner, traveled north to Gettysburg, where he found that "the graves of hundreds of Confederate dead who fell, and constitute the heights at Gettysburg...had been ploughed over and the headboards scattered around."[8]

In these reports of the fallen Confederates, federal reburial operations did not go unnoticed. While urging southern participation in reburial, one Virginia editorialist responded directly to the federal government's neglect of the southern dead. The anonymous writer reminded readers "that Congress cares neither for our living nor our dead, and it behooves us...to do that for our martyrs that Congress is doing for those who fell upon the same fields, but in a different uniform." The writer continued, stating more bluntly, "The nation condemns our dead. They are left in deserted places to rot into oblivion."[9] A Georgia woman, writing on behalf of her reburial society, also recognized government exclusion in her call for action. "Legislative enactment may not be made to do honor to their memories," she wrote, "but the veriest radical that ever traced his genealogy back to the deck of the Mayflower could not refuse us the simple privilege of paying honor."[10] In many such instances, southerners coupled pleas for community-funded reburial with acknowledgement of federal neglect.

Federal policy promoted reburial as a northern nation-building program, encouraging regional cohesiveness at the expense of reunion. In this context, select southerners, realizing that the northern-led national government would not rebury their dead, assumed the roles of official commemorators, projecting meaning onto the dead at

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[8] *Daily Richmond Examiner*, May 5, 1866; See also *Montgomery Mail*, April 3, 1866, January 19, 1866, for similar editorials. As in the North, the plow threatened to destroy the graves of the Confederate dead. However, southern references to plowing seem to be used more as a motivation for involvement in fundraising and reburial work than as a means to instill fear in the public.

[9] *Daily Richmond Examiner*, May 5, 1866.

[10] Mary Anne Williams to Mary Ann Phelan, March 12, 1866, in Marielou Armstrong Cory, *The Ladies' Memorial Association of Montgomery Alabama: The Origin and Organization: 1860-1870*, (Montgomery: Alabama Printing Company, 1902), 50.

the same time that they negotiated these meanings within their own vernacular communities and associations. John Bodnar's official/vernacular dichotomy is thus blurred when applied to the postwar South. Southerners directly funded and planned reburial of their dead. This active involvement in the process differed from the distance and detachment most northerners faced and allowed southerners to experience less disconnect with traditional grief. Imbuing their dead with southern "national" significance through a combination of postwar action and rhetoric, white southerners responded to federal exclusion and occupation by creating their own public memory of the conflict. In this way, government policy reinforced and perpetuated the development of separate regional identities based on war memories.

Historians have long noted the significance of a white southern cultural movement termed the Cult of the Lost Cause. This interpretation of the war, revitalized annually in memorial celebrations and cemetery gatherings, presented the rural South as struggling hopelessly against the more powerful, industrial North to preserve states' rights rather than the institution of slavery. By completely ignoring slavery as a causative factor, white southerners, rich and poor, could share a common war memory and maintain illusions of white solidarity. This vision would also eventually ease reunion with the North, as white Americans north and south disregarded African Americans—both as wartime agents and as disenfranchised citizens—in favor of white cooperation. Some historians have viewed this movement as a "civil religion" that helped white southerners cope with defeat. Others have stressed its temporary utility during a time of social change. Almost all see the cult as a late-nineteenth century development. However, examining immediate-postwar reburial work reveals that segregated southern

commemoration directly laid the foundation for the Cult of the Lost Cause during a much

earlier period.[11]

Southerners shaped a regional public memory of the war, in part, through their

active commitment to reburial work. By 1866, many communities sought means to inter

the Confederate dead. The wounds of war were still fresh, and reburial was necessary

and urgent, lest the shallow graves and rotting corpses wash away or decay beyond

recognition. To raise funds for this endeavor, women throughout the South, usually with

the assistance of male community leaders, formed "Ladies Memorial Associations."

Some states, like South Carolina and Alabama, each had over one hundred active

women's groups during the war. Members stitched uniforms, rolled bandages, and

packed food for the Confederacy. The officers of these groups were usually from

prominent families, while general membership proved more inclusive. Often these same

associations formed again under different names, now with honorary male members, to

accomplish a new mission.[12] The women of the former Sisters of Mercy Society of

Portsmouth, Virginia, became the Ladies' Memorial Society. Many women of the

Ladies' Hospital Association of Montgomery, Alabama, joined together in a newly

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[11] See Foster, 11-78; and Bodnar, 5, "it would be several decades after the war before the South began to celebrate the nobility of the 'Lost Cause.'" For scholarly debates on the significance of the cult, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980). Wilson interprets the Lost Cause as the civil religion of white southerners. Propelled by activist clergymen, the Lost Cause became a way to understand defeat. For Foster, the Lost Cause was neither myth nor civil religion. Rather it had "temporary cultural importance" during a time of transition to the New South. (8) William A. Blair shows how Lost Cause memorial celebrations provide a window to view southern political turmoil that marked the postwar years. See also, Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). Savage shows how southern elites used Lost Cause monuments to promote white supremacy. Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003) 1-4, does argue that immediate post-Civil War reburial work marked the beginning of the Cult of the Lost Cause, but she gives this period only brief attention in her larger study of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

[12] See George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 139.

recognized Ladies' Memorial Association. The Greenville Ladies' Association of South Carolina also continued its work, keeping its wartime president and changing its name to the Greenville Memorial Association. Southerners thus showed great continuity in their transition from wartime to postwar work. However, the memories they would project of the war period bore little resemblance to the conflict they experienced.[13]

Members of the Ladies' Memorial Association of Petersburg, Virginia, gathered in early May 1866, to record their mission.

> Whereas A mysterious Providence has desolved [sic] in us a duty, which would otherwise have been a nation's pride to perform; we the ladies of Petersburg now assume our share of the melancholy yet grateful task of doing honor to the remains of her noble sons.

The Confederate dead they recognized as "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, [rising] a specre band before us, demanding a christian, an honorable sepulture."[14] Women in Fredericksburg vowed "to perpetuate best as can be, the names of those Confederate dead, whose remains lie buried, in & around Fredericksburg, to protect & decorate their graves."[15] Knoxville, Tennessee, women gathered to assure that "the graves of the Confederate soldiers who [were] buried there should not be neglected." [16] Assuming the same role as the federal government in the North, these grassroots women's groups drew the designs for locally based southern reburial programs.

White southerners emphasized the particularly feminine nature of memorial work. While men obviously performed the heavy and unpleasant labor, ritualized mourning and commemoration fell largely within the feminine sphere. In "An appeal for the

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[13] Virginia S. Staples, *History of the Ladies' Memorial Aid Society*, Portsmouth, Virginia, 1866-1895, unpublished manuscript, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va., hereafter MOC; Cory, 52; James W. Patton, *Minutes and Proceedings of the Greenville Ladies' Association in Aid of the Volunteers of the Confederate Army* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1937), 70.

[14] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg, VA: Records, 1866-1912," May 6, 1866, LVA.

[15] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," LVA, August 23, 1866.

[16] "Handwritten history of the Ladies' Memorial Association of Knoxville, Tennessee," ca. 1900, MOC.

Unrecovered Dead," women from Fredericksburg demanded, "What nobler work for the hearts & hands of southern women than upon [the memorable plain of Fredericksburg] to rear a monument to the unrecorded Confederate dead? Which through all time shall testify to the gratitude of the people for whom they so gloriously died."[17] Women also proved more in tune with spirituality and bereavement. At one celebration, a memorial ode embodied this message:

> Daughters of Alabama weep,
> On this our celebration day;
> Your fathers, husbands, brothers sleep
> On the distant fields away.
>
> Their loveliest mother earth
> Enshrines the fallen brave;
> In her sweet lap who gave them birth
> They find their tranquil grave.[18]

Even the feminized "mother earth" was fulfilling her duty by mourning the dead. Memorial work also seemed a natural fit for women because of their wartime experience with fundraising and society organization. The infrastructures of these groups were already set, and women could simply alter their purposes. One South Carolina woman, writing a brief history of women's work during the war, proclaimed, "There is work for us still to do, and let us do it, with that faith and devotion which has never failed in woman."[19] A final significant benefit of female leadership in reburial was that federal authorities were less likely to view women's associations as potentially rebellious or

[17] "An appeal for the Unrecovered Dead," in "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," May 24, 1866, LVA. The idea that reburial work allowed women to show their gratitude to the dead is somewhat ironic given recent scholarship that credits declining female patriotism as precipitating the end of the war. See Rable; and Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," and *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

[18] *Montgomery Mail*, May 2, 1866; For more on the feminized religious sphere, see Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 143, 215-16; Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

[19] Lottie Smith, "Southern Women During the War," [typescript], July 9, 1869, MOC.

dangerous organizations. Even though men acted as members and even officers in these groups, insisting that they were female projects made them less threatening. As one woman later wrote,

> No disloyalty should be attached to this idea, that it was a movement principally by the ladies of the South, and that heart must be dead to all the feelings of humanity which would object to the ladies of the South showing by this simple act that they venerate the memory of their fathers, brothers and friends.[20]

In this context, the feminization of southern reburial can be seen as a response to federal occupation. Though southerners proclaimed such work the natural choice for women, the gendered nature of reburial societies differed strikingly from the federal government's male burial corps. Men, of course performed the physical labor of reburial on both sides, but southern women held a prominent place of authority. Furthermore, feminized commemoration in the South laid a solid foundation for later organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which would expand and shape the white public memory of the Confederacy even further.[21]

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[20] Mrs. William J. Behan, ed., "A History of the Confederated Memorial Associations of the South," in Cory, 73.

[21] The UDC formed in 1894. For a recent study of the UDC, see Cox, who argues that the UDC "raised the stakes of the Lost Cause by making it a movement about vindication, as well as memorialization." (1) See also W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "A Duty Peculiarly Fitting to Women: Southern White Women, Public Space, and Collective Memory, 1880-1920," (paper presented at the Lyon Gardiner Tyler Lectures in History Series, Williamsburg, Virginia, March 28, 2005). Brundage argues that late-nineteenth-century female commemoration in the South was part of an international trend in the creation of national public memory. Though organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy had weak roots in memorial societies, later commemoration was based less on these early beginnings and more on contemporary needs. Also see Foster, 26-33, where he argues that female memorial work served to uplift defeated southern manhood. See also Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Silber looks at reunion in terms of gender, recognizing that northerners imposed feminized concepts on the South to come to terms with reconciliation, imagining a marriage between the masculine North and feminine South. In these terms, northern acceptance of female commemoration fits regional gendered mentalities.

To accomplish reburial, women's associations set out to raise money.[22]

Petersburg women appointed "a committee of young ladies...to solicit subscribers and donations at auction."[23] Others planned gatherings and bazaars. In Montgomery, Alabama, members of the local memorial association hosted a "May Day Offering" during which they provided food and entertainment consisting of tableaux vivants, concerts, and recitations. Florida women also hosted a fair, selling handcrafts and participating in tableaux. They raised over $1,000. In Charleston, members of the Ladies' Mutual Aid Association raised $1,000 selling homemade "Preserves, pickles, syrups, jellies, wines, and cordials."[24] These community events served not only to raise money for reburial; they allowed white southerners to participate directly in the project and to gain a level of connection with the work they helped support. Unlike many northerners, who felt estranged from government-sponsored reburial, southerners had many outlets to contribute to the project. Such gatherings, like later Memorial Day celebrations, also provided outlets for unified community action and allowed white southerners to situate their memories of war in terms of postwar displays of consensus.

Groups often arranged for dead soldiers to be interred in new sections of existing local cemeteries. This proved economical and convenient. Women of the Hollywood

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[22] Some southerners argued that funds would be better spent in charities benefiting the living. Responding to one such complaint, Montgomery, Alabama, women wrote in the local paper, "It is not true that our people have neglected or are neglecting the wants of the living in order to indulge in sentiment for the dead. They have been ready and are still ready to do justice to both. They can bury the dead but once; they are feeding the poor daily." *Montgomery Mail,* May 20, 1866; Others, like the Sisters of Mercy in Portsmouth, Virginia, vowed "to assist the widows and orphans of our soldiers," as well as "care for...the graves of our brave men," Staples, MOC.

[23] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," May 6, 1866, LVA.

[24] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," April 18, 1866, ADAH; *St. Augustine Examiner* March 16, 1867. Also see February 9, 1867, where another group presents "tableaux vivants, charades, and other entertaining and beautiful spectacles, too numerous to mention." The tableaux vivant consisted of fancily dressed women enacting still scenes, often representing moments in history or famous works of art. For more, see Faust, *Mothers of Invention,* 26-28; Unknown newspaper clipping, June 16, 1865, pasted in scrapbook in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers,* USC. Also see Foster, 39, where he discusses the importance of bazaars and other festivities to the fundraising efforts of Ladies' Memorial Associations.

Memorial Association in Richmond, Virginia, designated one sloping field of Hollywood

Cemetery for the interment of 18,000 Confederates.[25] Petersburg women chose to fund

interment in Blandford Cemetery rather than purchase land for a new burial ground.

Usually, when remains could be identified, southerners preferred burial by state. At the

Franklin battlefield, according to Alabamian John McGavock, "The order of interment

[was] by platoon, fifteen in each, and each state...to itself."[26] Whereas many northern

national cemeteries, such as Arlington and Gettysburg, dispensed with the practice of

separate state burial, southerners projected memories of the Confederacy in the way they

interred the slain. They imagined a cohesive nation not only by grouping Confederates

together in cemeteries, but also by burying them near the graves of southern civilians.

Yet, they continued to emphasize states' rights by segregating corpses by state. Though

internal conflict between the states and Richmond, and within the civilian population,

probably hastened the Confederacy's downfall, the tangible remains presented a picture

of unity among all southerners.

Occasionally, memorial groups, such as the Ladies' Memorial Association of

Montgomery, Alabama, sought primarily to finance interment for the dead of their own

state. In this way, they symbolically perpetuated a decentralized vision of the

Confederacy. Montgomery women worked not "to bring home all the Alabama dead and

bury them in Alabama," but to "raise the necessary funds to have the remains...collected

together...in public burial grounds contiguous to the several great battlefields where

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[25] "Our Confederate Dead: This souvenir is authorized by the Ladies' Hollywood Memorial Association of Richmond, Virginia," (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson Printers, 1916), 9.

[26] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," May 10, 1866, ADAH; John McGavock to Mary J. Baldwin in *Montgomery Mail*, May 23, 1866.

they…[lay] scattered."[27] Despite their emphasis on commemorating the Alabama dead, to achieve their goals, members of the Montgomery group soon engaged in a far-reaching correspondence, offering aid to associations across the South where Alabamians fell. Most groups, however, especially those close to battlefields, worked to rebury all Confederates, regardless of state origin. Though they recognized states' rights as an important tenet of Confederate nationhood, they found that in commemoration, as in war, unified action usually proved more effective.

In areas closer to battlefields, societies sought out local men to perform cemetery work. Petersburg women called for volunteers, requesting "mechanics and young men…to make and paint headboards," and asked for help "moving bodies" to Blandford Cemetery.[28] In Fredericksburg, women charged a local doctor with finding men to "adopt some durable mode of marking the graves of the confederate dead…be[ing] particularly careful to take an accurate copy of every inscription."[29] African Americans performed many of the exhumations and reburials, just as they did within the United States Burial Corps. The Petersburg women recorded in their budget "for hire of negro $.50."[30] Unfortunately, little of the work completed by freedmen was documented.

In addition to hiring local men to perform cemetery labor, associations also maintained a public dialogue with their communities. Fredericksburg women published one thousand copies of a circular containing "an address to the Public setting forth the plans & purposes of the association & requesting the co-operation and aid of all who sympathize in our enterprise." They also asked that "those persons residing in the

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[27] *Montgomery Mail*, April 27, 1866.
[28] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," August 9, 1866, LVA.
[29] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," October 1866, LVA.
[30] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," treasurer's report for 1866, LVA.

vicinity of the Battlefields be earnestly requested to report...all information respecting

the graves of Confederate dead buried on their land."[31] Members of the Petersburg

association lobbied the staff of local railroads, "asking free transportation of the bodies of

our soldiers." They later reported that "favorable answers [had] been received."[32] In

Richmond, women of the Hollywood Memorial Association printed and distributed flyers

to local residents to announce upcoming Memorial Day activities.[33]

Women carried out some work themselves. Careful record keeping proved

especially important. Petersburg women formed a committee "to visit every burial spot

within our reach, to mark more distinctly the names."[34] The recording secretary of the

Fredericksburg group kept "a list of the names of all Confederate dead in this vicinity,

their places of burial and other facts relating to them, as far as such facts, places, and

names can be arrived at."[35] Alabama women also maintained careful lists of dead

Confederates' identities and places of interment.[36] Unlike in the new national cemetery

system, where the burial corps created official rosters, southern memorial association

women, to a large extent, became the guardians of the individual identities of the dead

and transitively guardians of their memory.

Though evolving locally, memorial associations soon assumed a trans-regional

character. The members of the Montgomery, Alabama, society engaged in an especially

far-reaching correspondence. In May, 1866, the society "resolved that the Secretary of

this Society correspond with influential ladies in different parts of the State, and urge

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[31] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," May 24, 1866, LVA.

[32] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," 1866, LVA.

[33] "Our Confederate Dead," 8.

[34] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," May 6, 1866, LVA.

[35] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg, August 23, 1866, LVA.

[36] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," June 8, 1866, ADAH.

them to organize Societies similar to ours." They also wrote to women in Georgia and

Virginia, offering financial assistance to those groups located close to battlefields.[37] In

September of that year, Fredericksburg women received a letter from Samuel Cox,

honorary member of the Ladies Memorial Association of Montgomery, stating, "In a

work of such magnitude and cost it cannot be expected that your association should bear

the burden alone. I am authorized to pledge our Society to a hearty and liberal co-

operation with you to the utmost extent of our ability."[38] Similarly, Alabamians wrote to

a Jonesboro, Georgia, association "to ascertain whether a joint action could be had to

procure a burial ground at or near Jonesboro for the interment of the remains of those

who fell in the engagement there."[39] Women from Shenandoah County, Virginia, wrote

the Alabamians seeking financial assistance in burying the dead of the Valley Campaign.

They received a favorable response.[40]

Women's groups throughout the South spread news of their work looking to

establish connections and gain financial support. Petersburg, Virginia, women realized

that Confederate reburial could only be accomplished through region-wide alliances and

cooperation. They hoped that their work would "set a noble example to our sister states

as being the only possible way in which the object of our organization can be reached."[41]

They must have realized their goal, at least in part, as news of their "Calico Ball"

fundraiser reached as far as Florida.[42] Southerners read of reburial and memorial projects

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[37] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," May 10, 1866, June 8, 1866, July 26, 1866, ADAH. Also see November 16, 1866, where the society "resolve[s]—That $400.—be forwarded to the "Ladies Memorial Assoc." of Richmond, and $600. to the Association at Fredericksburg, to be appropriated to the burial of our dead upon the various battlefields near those cities."
[38] Samuel K. Cox to "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," September 6, 1866, LVA.
[39] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," June 8, 1866, ADAH.
[40] "Ladies Memorial Association Records," July 26, 1866, ADAH.
[41] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," May 8, 1869, LVA.
[42] *St. Augustine Examiner*, February 16, 1867.

in newspapers. St. Augustine, Florida, residents learned of women's memorial projects in Savannah, Georgia, and Memphis, Tennessee.[43] Some established societies in response to news of other groups. The women of Smyth County, Virginia, learning of the situation in Fredericksburg, formed the "Smyth County Memorial Association [as] auxiliary to the Association at Fredericksburg."[44]

Not only did society projects and alliances unify southerners in accomplishing reburial, commemorative rhetoric factored significantly into postwar constructions of public memory. Much of the public discourse surrounding southern reburial resembled the analogous discussion in the North. Both sides sought to give meaning to the dead and to imbue them with "national" significance. However, southern commemorators faced the added challenge of justifying large-scale death for a failed cause. The oratory emerging from southern commemorative ceremonies in the years immediately following the Civil War produced the same images of duty and martyrdom heard in the North. But southern discourse included an added element of justification for a failed but righteous cause and hope that the dead as well as their defeated country might remain ever in the public conscience. As northern projections defined citizenship in a centralizing national state, southern vernacular groups expressed hope for the future of white southern society in the face of perceived threats.

Discussions of the significance of the dead often took place at public ceremonies such as Confederate Memorial Day celebrations. Many versions of the holiday's origins exist, but most credit Lizzie Rutherford of Columbus, Georgia, with the idea. In 1866, Rutherford and other members of a Columbus Memorial Association wrote to societies

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[43] *St. Augustine Examiner,* May 9, 1868, May 11, 1867.
[44] "Smyth County Memorial Association, Fredericksburg Ladies Memorial Association," July 12, 1866, MOC.

across the South to introduce the idea of setting aside a particular day for decorating the Confederate graves.[45] Some societies chose April 26, the anniversary of Johnson's surrender to Sherman, for the occasion, while others preferred May 10, the date of Stonewall Jackson's death. Telling of an 1868 Memorial Day gathering, one Florida newspaper reported that the day was "particularly sanctified to the people of the South by its having been set apart by the Southern ladies for the purpose of commemorating the 'Lost Cause,' and to keep ever fresh in remembrance the memories of those who fell at the battle's front."[46]

These gatherings usually took place in local Confederate cemeteries or in community graveyards where southern dead had been interred. Often entire towns shut down for the afternoon of the ceremony. Ministers spoke, community leaders recited poems, and all sung hymns together. Then, at the service's conclusion, women from the local memorial association decorated the soldiers' graves with flowers and evergreens. At one Charleston cemetery, women "erected a cross, covered with moss and entwined with flowers."[47] The presence of clergy and hymns, and the pervasive Christian symbols such as the cross of flowers, gave a decidedly religious flavor to southern commemoration. Unlike in the new national cemeteries, where religious ceremony was minimal, southerners combined community commemoration and Protestant worship. Such familiar imagery and ceremony undoubtedly eased the pain of death, and allowed

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[45] See Foster, 42; Cory, 12; Wilson, 28, Wilson also describes the ceremony as originating in Georgia, but from Mrs. Charles William, a Confederate widow. See also Blair, 22-77. He studies in depth the significance of public displays, such as Confederate Memorial day and Emancipation Day celebrations and determines that during Reconstruction these gatherings were highly political in nature though not always overtly so.

[46] *St. Augustine Examiner* May 9, 1868.

[47] Unnamed 1868 newspaper clipping in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers*, USC.

southerners to mourn in familiar ways.[48] Through such gatherings, newspaper

announcements, and public fairs and gatherings, select white southerners offered their

communities a prescribed context in which to place memory of the war and the dead.

A sense of profound loss and sadness permeated commemorative discourse.

However, commemorators placed this sadness in a "national" context. After one 1868

Confederate Memorial Day ceremony in Charleston, a local paper reported, "The whole

spectacle presented the appearance of a people bewailing the loss of their brothers, sons,

fathers and husbands—a vanquished nation offering its gratitude to the memory of its

brave but unfortunate defenders." At the same ceremony, mourners prayed, "Be thou

with our beloved Southern land—restore to us our rights, our liberties and property."[49]

Memorialization of the dead fit closely with the present situation facing the living, and

the defeated Confederacy remained very much alive in the public conscience. By

continuing to identify themselves with a defunct nation, southerners symbolically

maintained their Confederate citizenship. Yet, ironically, that sense of citizenship fully

blossomed only after surrender.

Like northerners, southern commemorators described the Confederate dead as

martyrs to a national cause. This served, in some instances, to gain support from the

living. In an appeal to the local community, members of the Ladies Memorial

Association of Fredericksburg proclaimed, "That noble army of martyrs who for four

years of toil and suffering, bore in triumph the 'Conquered Banner'...sleep on the fields

of their fame unnoticed & unknown." They continued, shaming the public by asking,

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[48] See Wilson, 18-26, for the religious nature of Confederate Memorial Day celebrations. These, he argues, along with funerals of Confederate heroes, and monument dedications became the public rituals for acting out the Lost Cause as a civil religion.
[49] Unnamed 1868 newspaper clipping in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers*, USC.

"Shall their very names pass from the knowledge of the living?"[50] Petersburg women

also sought to finance commemoration by stressing the sacrificial nature of the

Confederate dead. Fundraising was necessary "to devise means to perpetuate our

gratitude and admiration for those who died for us."[51] One hymn sung at an 1866

Charleston ceremony reminded spectators that commemoration was not yet complete for

the Confederacy's martyrs.

> Sleep Sweetly in your humble graves,
> Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause,
> Though yet no marble column craves
> The pilgrim here to pause.[52]

Much as northern nation-builders employed rhetoric of martyrdom to garner support for a

strengthened national entity, southern vernacular associations used the same language to

raise funds and maintain commemorative—and community—leadership.

Consistent with the depiction of the dead as martyrs to a cause was the idea that

the living owed a "sacred duty" to the dead. Many society members noted this obligation

in their organizations' mission statements. Alabama women concluded "that it is the

sacred duty of the people of the South to preserve from desecration and neglect the

mortal remains of the brave men who fell in her cause."[53] Members of the Ladies

Memorial Association of Fredericksburg declared reburial to be "holy work," and wished

that the "cooperation required in order to accomplish [it] will be universal."[54] One

[50] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," May 24, 1866, LVA.
[51] "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," May 6, 1866, LVA.
[52] "Ladies Association to Commemorate the Confederate Dead," "Three Odes," June 16, 1866, USC. Much of the commemorative discourse emerging from Confederate Memorial Day celebrations and other manifestations of Lost Cause sentiment took the form of poetry. This is consistent with Victorian custom, but it also provided a more subtle and covert way of celebrating the vanquished Confederacy in the face of federal occupation.
[53] *Montgomery Mail*, April 17, 1866.
[54] "Ladies Memorial Association of Fredericksburg," May 24, 1866, LVA.

Richmonder recorded this sentiment in a poem entitled "Richmond: Her Glory and Her

Graves."

> This remains—a mission holy,
> None may venture to deny—
> E'er to shield, protect and honor
> Places where our fallen lie.
> E'er to guard from rude obtrusion
> The lone couches where they sleep;
> Tenderly above their ashes,
> Loving watch and ward to keep. [55]

Instead of bemoaning the lack of federal assistance in reburial, many southerners extolled

the merits of managing their own commemoration, projecting the work as a significant

religious obligation to the fallen.

By endowing the dead with meaning through labeling them martyrs and making

reburial a "sacred duty," white southerners were, during the years immediately following

the war, shaping the myth of the Lost Cause. Part of this process was the recognition that

the dead had perished for their convictions and thus had not died in vain. A Charleston

newspaper noted that the Confederates who lay in the local cemetery "sacrificed their

lives in defence [sic] of their principles."[56] One Florida journalist wrote, "I will simply

say, in fighting on the side where their consciences called them They thought they were

right, and gave their lives as the forfeit."[57] Mrs. S.C. Ball of a Charleston memorial

association expressed this belief in ode. She proclaimed,

> Dear was the cause for which they bled,
> And honored still shall be our dead,
> Our noblest, and our best. [58]

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[55] Cornelia J.M. Jordan, "Richmond: Her Glory and Her Graves: A Poem in Two Parts," (Richmond: Richmond Medical Journal Print, 1867); See also "Ladies Memorial Association of Petersburg," May 6, 1866, LVA.

[56] Unnamed 1868 newspaper clipping in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers*, USC.

[57] *St. Augustine Examiner*, May 9, 1868.

[58] "Ladies Association to Commemorate the Confederate Dead," "Three Odes," June 16, 1866, USC.

Mary Anne Williams of Columbus, Georgia, writing to members of the Ladies Memorial

Association of Montgomery, Alabama, proclaimed, "They died for their country!"[59] The

memory of the war that these southerners projected portrayed a time of unity when all

men fought for "principle" and "conscience." Absent from this interpretation is any hint

that internal divisions existed in the Confederacy, or that the South lost for reasons other

than inferior numbers and resources. In an 1870 Memorial Day ode at Magnolia

Cemetery in Charleston, Reverend E.T. Winkler echoed this developing perception.

> 'Twas Fate, not Valor, failed
> To lay the Northman low;
> For never Raven-pennon sailed
> To meet a nobler foe:
>
> They did not bleed in vain;
> That father, brother, son—
> Who made grey shore and pine-clad plain
> An altar and a throne:—[60]

In giving purpose to mass death, southerners viewed their own future in more

optimistic terms. The dead were gone forever, but they did not die for naught. Out of

their ashes the southern people would one day achieve nationhood—if not tangibly, as

with the Confederacy, then in an afterlife when they would be reunited with the slain.[61]

Former Confederate Colonel Joseph Hodgson presented a poem embodying this message

at a Memorial Day celebration in Montgomery, Alabama.

> Oh, stricken dead be our's the piteous part
> To wake once more a nation's pulseless heart,
> Not now as when the combat, with eternal doom

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[59] Mary Anne Williams to Mary Ann Phelan, March 12, 1866, in Cory, 49.

[60] "Memorial Day Celebration at Magnolia Cemetery, under the Auspices of the Ladies' Memorial Association," May 10, 1870, flyer in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers*, USC.

[61] For more on Confederate visions of afterlife, see Ted Ownby, "Patriarchy in the World Where There is No Parting?: Power Relations in the Confederate Heaven," in Catherine Clinton, ed., *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229-241.

Consigned our glories to a living tomb,
But with that love which pitying angels bring
To wearied mortals on Seraphic wing![62]

Others commented subtly on the much-awaited day when federal occupiers would leave

the South. Reverend John Bachman, speaking at a Charleston ceremony, imagined the

further tribute southerners could pay their dead after Reconstruction ended.

That hour will come we fondly trust,
When, in our burthened land,
The true, the good, the wise, the just,
In their own lot shall stand.

Till then we'll keep your memories green
With ever-freshened flowers,
And after-raise ye shafts, whose sheen
Shall light this land of ours![63]

Finally, southern commemorators empowered the dead and saw in their example hope for

future southern revitalization. In May 1868, a Charleston newspaper published one such

poetic expression.

Grant their graves, our prized possession,
Hallowed power for coming years—
May their hopeful, high expression
Check our sad, complaining tears.[64]

As in the North, southerners struggled to legitimize the deaths of over three

hundred thousand men. Yet they did so largely by remembering a past that had never

existed. According to John Bodnar, public memory "help[s] a public or society

understand both its past, present, and by implication its future."[65] For postwar white

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[62] Joseph Hodgson, "Let Us Bury Our Dead," May 12, 1866, in *Alabama Associations Collection, 1850-1984*, ADAH.

[63] "Memorial Day Celebration at Magnolia Cemetery, under the Auspices of the Ladies' Memorial Association," May 10, 1870, USC.

[64] Unnamed May 11, 1868 newspaper clipping in *Mary Amarinthia Yates Snowden Papers*, USC.

[65] Bodnar, 15.

southerners, the imagined past held much greater promise for the future than the one they

had recently experienced.

In the final stanza of Cornelia J.M. Jordan's "Richmond: Her Glory and Her

Graves," composed for the benefit of the Hollywood Memorial Association, she

proclaimed in lingering defiance,

> War's blighting breath may still consume
> Our temples fair—our roses' bloom
> His ruthless hand may smite—
> But wrong shall not always assail—
> Immortal truth must still prevail;
> God will defend the Right![66]

In the five years following surrender, sectionalism lingered in both halves of the country.

During this crucial period for shaping public memory, segregated reburial played a

central role. For white southerners, vernacular commemoration gave birth to the Cult of

the Lost Cause, a regional memory of the war that would grow well into the twentieth

century.

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[66] Jordan, xxvii.

EPILOGUE

CONTESTED COMMEMORATION

> The shaping of a past worthy of public commemoration in the present is
> contested and involves a struggle for supremacy between advocates of
> various political ideas and sentiments.[1]

In January 1869, Brigadier General P. Laxton, stationed in Salisbury, North

Carolina, wrote to Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs. Laxton had a problem.

He had come to Salisbury to establish a new national cemetery at the site of one of the

Confederacy's most infamous prison camps. The site already contained the mass graves

of over 11,000 Union prisoners of war, and Laxton sought to provide suitable interment

for them. To do so he needed land. He wrote to Meigs, "Mr. Haraugh [Horah], the

owner of the land, refuses to deed the same...Mr. H. threatens to fence up the land and by

so doing will cut off all means of access to the cemetery. He asks for the land in question

one thousand dollars which is a very exhorbitant [sic] price."[2] For the next few years the

dispute lived on. Though the government eventually acquired the land, Horah continued

to cause trouble. In March 1871, cemetery superintendent Michael Partridge wrote to his

superior complaining that Horah had erected a fence blocking the cemetery's entrance.

Partridge confronted him, "Informing him that he had nothing to do with the fence and

that the passage to the Cemetery will not be blocked by him or any other person. His

response was that the fence and the whole place belonged to him and did not give a d—

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[1] Bodnar, 13.
[2] P. Laxton to M.C. Meigs, January 2, 1869, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Salisbury," NARA.

for the Government."[3] When Joseph Horah wrote to defend his actions, he claimed, "To-day I had the fence around my field put up…and as soon as I put it up the man in charge of the Cemetery grounds immediately threw it down, and said it was trespassing on the Government property."[4]

Postwar sectionalism led to separate northern and southern reburial operations, but the development of distinct regional memories did not occur in isolation. Interaction between northern and southern commemorators characterized and shaped postwar memorialization. According to David Thelen, memory constructions "occur in the contexts of community, broader politics, and social dynamics." Postwar commemorative encounters thus reinforced regional hostility—and occasionally promoted reconciliation—in the present while also shaping memories of the past.[5]

Most Civil War engagements occurred in the South and therefore most reburial for both sides took place near southern battlefields and hospitals. The establishment of exclusive national cemeteries on southern land thus became a point of contention. The Quartermaster Department chose cemetery land based on its proximity to the dead, and usually landowners received compensation for the property, though often not for several years after the war. Authorities determined land values based on prewar records and in some cases through estimates made by "loyal citizens" in the vicinity. When landowners

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[3] Michael Partridge to H.C. Hodges, March 23, 1871, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Salisbury," NARA.

[4] Joseph Horah to W.M. Belknap, March 22, 1871, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Salisbury," NARA. See also United States, *Military Reservations, National Cemeteries and Military Parks,* revised ed., (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916). Between Horah's first encounter with Laxton and his second confrontation with Partridge, he deeded "3 acres 3 roods and 10 poles of land" to the federal government. In 1874, he deeded 4,882 square feet more, perhaps the fenced land in question. (302)

[5] Thelen, 1119.

and officials could not agree on terms, the Quartermaster Department had authority to seize land and pay only an estimated value.[6] In the best-known case of contested cemetery establishment, Robert E. Lee's estate became Arlington National Cemetery. When Mary Custis Lee fled her home early in the War, Union General Irvin McDowell seized it as his wartime headquarters. By 1864, the federal government, needing space to bury soldiers who died in Washington-area hospitals, began burying the Union dead on the Arlington property. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, a southerner by birth who would soon see his own son buried at Arlington, harbored much resentment toward Lee and ordered that the first burials be made in Mary Custis Lee's rose garden. Though the Supreme Court ruled this type of land acquisition unconstitutional in 1882, and eventually reimbursed the Lee family, Arlington National Cemetery had already been established, and the land and house were uninhabitable.[7]

Some less-prominent southerners who faced similar conflicts actively resisted government land acquisition. Federal authorities initially claimed the land for the Chattanooga National Cemetery as war bounty. After the War, when the property was already an operational cemetery, the Quartermaster Department sought to reimburse the owners and to acquire additional acreage for subsequent interments. Writing to Meigs, General J. L. Donaldson of the Department of Tennessee expressed his frustration in dealing with landowners.

> I am convinced that there is a determined opposition here to our acquiring land for such a purpose. I have aimed to keep the matter quiet, but the

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[6] See J.J. Dana to M.C. Meigs, June 22, 1866, "National Cemeteries in Tennessee, Letter from the Secretary of War," United States House of Representatives, 39th cong., 1st sess., Misc. Doc 127, 3-4. Dana complains of residents in Chattanooga, Tennessee, who "ask now from three hundred (300) to eight hundred (800) dollars per acre fro what cost them sixty dollars ($60) per acre before the war...Loyal citizens estimate the value of most of this land at present at thirty dollars ($30) per acre."

[7] John V. Hinkel, *Arlington: Monument to Heroes* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 19-20.

moment one of my agents inquires for land, he is asked what he wants it
for? If he answers, he wants it for a national cemetery, the reply at once
is, 'I have no land for sale.'[8]

Land procurement near the Franklin battlefield proved even more arduous. In an 1866

letter to Secretary of War E.M. Stanton, Meigs wrote, "The citizens of Franklin will do

everything in their power to defeat the locating of a cemetery there, and will not sell the

land to the government at any price. In case a location is taken forcibly, a guard of

twenty (20) men will be necessary to prevent desecration." Meigs and Stanton agreed

instead to move the Union dead of that battle to Nashville for reburial, and the military

never established a national cemetery at Franklin.[9]

Other southerners used land-seizure discussion as a forum through which to assert

their loyalty to the federal government. Perhaps in so doing, they hoped to receive better

terms of purchase from the military. Jacob Baker, a seventy-seven-year-old Winchester,

Virginia, resident wrote to Montgomery Meigs once burial corps agents began interring

Union soldiers on his property, stating, "I trust the U.S. Government will not deprive me

of it without proper compensation." Writing again the next day, he alluded to his loyalty,

claiming, "The parties who had charge of the burial of the Confederate dead, applied to

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[8] J.L. Donaldson to M.C. Meigs, June 12, 1866 in "National Cemeteries in Tennessee, Letter from the Secretary of War," United States House of Representatives, 39th cong., 1st sess., Misc. Doc 127, 14; See also M.P. Ludington to D.H. Rucker, March 27, 1867, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Annapolis," NARA, where Ludington relates the story of Nicholas Brewer, a local landowner, who complained that "the sale of this last piece of land deprived him of the use of a valuable ice pond...the Cemetery has rendered the pond alluded to useless as an ice pond, as I was informed by a number of persons in Annapolis that the citizens refused to use the ice, on account of the proximity of the pond to the Cemetery." Brewer's situation shows one of the many impositions that southerners perceived the national cemeteries as causing.

[9] M.C. Meigs to E.M. Stanton, June 6, 1866, "National Cemeteries in Tennessee, Letter from the Secretary of War," United States House of Representatives, 39th cong., 1st sess., Misc. Doc 127, 17-18.

me to purchase a part of the same lot of ground but I declined selling it."[10] The Burial

Corps seized the house of another Winchester resident, John Lirm. Writing on his behalf,

a neighbor testified, "I am well acquainted with Mr. John Lirm He is known in the

community in which he resides as one of the few who remained loyal to the Government

of the United States throughout the late rebellion."[11] In another case of land acquisition

in Salisbury, North Carolina, landowner Mr. Boyden, insisted to authorities that he had

been "at all times...loyal to the U.S. Government."[12]

Commemorative encounters could also reveal the larger ironies of federal policy.

Though in death they would be excluded from federal burial, many white and black

southerners worked in the national cemeteries as exhumers and gravediggers. In early

1867, the "Colored Teamsters," serving in the Burial Corps at Fredericksburg, petitioned

the War Department for better wages. They argued,

> All the coulered people that is a takeing up the dead is only a getting 15
> dollars a month and that the seecesh here is a getting 30 dollars a month
> and they are making there braggs that they got 16 Dolls for killing them
> and now they are getting 30 for putting them away and the coulered
> people a doing all the hardest work and a getting the least money [sic].[13]

However, the next year, the white laborers in Fredericksburg wrote President Andrew

Johnson claiming, "The present rate of wages, $15.00 per man...is totally inadequate

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[10] Jacob Baker to M.C. Meigs, April 27, 1866, Jacob Baker to John S. Gallagher, April 28, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Winchester," NARA.

[11] J.N. Remington to M.C. Meigs, August 1, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Winchester," NARA.

[12] "Excerpt of Inspection Report," November 7, 1865, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Salisbury," NARA.

[13] "The Colored Teamsters" to War Department, January 1, 1867, Record Group 92, Entry 225: Quartermaster Dept. Consolidated Correspondence File: Cemeteries, NARA.

[for] the bare necessities of life."[14] Whichever monthly salary is correct, federal

commemorative projects had the power to unite southern whites and former slaves—

however unhappily—in their dissatisfaction with government wages.

Like national cemeteries, southern commemorative spaces also became contested

places. Southern reports of conflict often played upon racial and sectional divisions to

bolster white solidarity. One newspaper account told how "the Negroes of Richmond at

the suggestion, doubtless, of the agents of the Freedman's Bureau, stole the flowers that

the loving hands of the Confederate Women had strewed upon the graves of their

honored dead and transferred them to the graves of the Northern soldiers."[15] In another,

> A set of Northern women, who have gone down to Augusta [Georgia] to
> teach the Negroes there...got up a procession, avowedly to do honor to the
> graves of the Federal soldiers who are buried in that city, but really to
> mock the Southern women, who had been decorating the graves of their
> own kindred and heroic defenders two days before.[16]

Raleigh, North Carolina, women supposedly received word that if they sought to decorate

the Confederate graves they would have to do so individually as any group activity would

be broken up by federal authorities. Members of the Hollywood Memorial Association in

Richmond also faced federal restrictions on organized commemoration. Instead of

gathering for an 1866 Memorial Day ceremony, they distributed printed copies of the

keynote speech because "federal authorities, who were in control, would not allow

crowds to congregate or an address to be made openly by the people of this city."[17]

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[14] "Fredericksburg Burial Corps" to Andrew Johnson, June 25, 1868, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Fredericksburg," NARA.

[15] Unnamed 1866 newspaper articles qtd. in Cory, 73-75.

[16] Unnamed 1866 newspaper articles qtd. in Cory, 73-75.

[17] Unnamed 1866 newspaper articles qtd. in Cory, 73-75; "Our Confederate Dead," 8.

Whether or not these reports were based in fact, they surely stirred the dander of southern audiences.

Not all commemorative encounters proved hostile. Occasionally, memorial spaces became sites of practical cooperation rather than sectional animosity. Some southerners worked to inter northern corpses along with the southern dead. Mr. Sanford, a resident of Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia, buried fallen northerners in that vicinity "in compliance with an agreement to that effect with General Sherman while on his march to Washington City." Whether this was a financial deal or another sort of arrangement, both parties seemingly found cooperation possible.[18] Women in Staunton, Virginia, corresponded with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to coordinate their memorial society's efforts with those of the Burial Corps. Janetta Cowan wrote,

> The Ladies Soldiers Cemetery Committee of Staunton, Augusta County
> Va, having been duly authorized to take charge of the Soldiers graves at
> this place are about to commence their work. As there are a number of
> Federal Soldiers buried here, side by side with the Confederates we think
> it right that you should be advised of the fact, that you may, if you deem it
> proper co-operate with us in this duty to the dead…The turfing &
> ornamenting we will do ourselves; but are compelled to ask aid in the
> other work.[19]

Brigadier General W.S. James responded to Cowan's request, agreeing that it would be "expedient for the bodies to remain where they are, and that the ladies [should] be assisted."[20] In Memphis, Tennessee, federal commander Captain Ester conferred with the local memorial association and "allowed the graves to be decorated, and accepted an invitation to be present, and listened to a sermon on the occasion." One Florida

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[18] "Extract from annual report of Captain J.M. Moore," June 30, 1865, series 3, volume 5, WOTR, 318.

[19] Janetta Cowan to E.M. Stanton, May 16, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Staunton," NARA.

[20] "Memo from Brigadier General W.S. James," May 30, 1866, Record Group 92, Entry 576: Records Relating to Functions: Cemeterial, 1828-1929, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, "Staunton," NARA.

newspaper published the story in recognition of his goodwill. [21] In such situations,

northerners and southerners found practicality in moving past sectionalism to achieve

common goals. These instances, while exceptional, show that cooperation could prove

fruitful in accomplishing reburial.

These commemorative encounters peaked during the years immediately following

the Civil War. By 1870, most corpses—northern and southern—had been reburied either

in national or local cemeteries. As Reconstruction faltered, federal troops gradually left

the South, and by 1877, white southerners had "redeemed" their region, restoring white

leadership and suppressing African American freedoms. Though reburial was completed,

its legacy remained. Seventy-two new national cemeteries dotted the South. Manned by

Union veterans and flying national flags, they stood as reminders to many of the war's

outcome.[22] Federal soldiers soon adopted the Memorial Day holiday from southerners,

and by the 1890s citizens across the former Union set aside the last weekend in May for

remembrance.[23] Likewise, southern graves continually demanded attention. Memorial

Associations did not disband after completing reburial work; rather, they thrived.

Southern women continued their annual Confederate celebrations and raised funds for

cemetery beautification and monument erection. By World War I, nearly every southern

courthouse green boasted a soldier monument.

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[21] *St. Augustine Examiner*, May 11, 1867.

[22] Catherine Zipf emphasizes the role of the national cemeteries as symbols of federal authority in the postwar South. See Zipf, "Marking Union Victory in the South: The Construction of the National Cemetery System," in Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 27-45.

[23] Though northerners celebrated Memorial Day from 1868 on, it did not become a federal holiday until 1971, during the Vietnam War.

According to Kenneth Foote, "sites stained by the blood of violence and covered by the ashes of tragedy force people to face squarely the meaning of an event."[24] For postwar Americans, the corporeal remains of Civil War violence demanded such a reckoning. The ways commemorators delegated this meaning would ultimately say much about postwar visions of the war, identity, and the nation's future.

The exclusionary model of citizenship that northerners and southerners envisioned through reburial and other Reconstruction-era projects defined the nation well into the next century. As the Cult of the Lost Cause took hold in the South, and southerners dismissed the role of slavery in the war, Northerners likewise dissolved any responsibility to the newly freed slaves. By negotiating this uneasy stalemate, whites, north and south, chose continued division rather expanding citizenship, and sacrificed black rights in the bargain. The collective memories the living constructed by burying the dead helped make this development possible.

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[24] Foote, 5.

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