UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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# What They Fight For:

# The Men and Women of Civil War Reenactment

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by

Christopher George Bates

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The Men and Women of Civil War Reenactment

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Professor Joan Waugh, Chair

**Abstract**

This study examines the three generations of Civil War reenactors: the veterans, the centennial reenactors, and the modern community. It argues that they are an excellent case study for examining the evolving memory of the Civil War, particularly when considered in the context of five interpretative traditions: the "Lost Cause," the "Union Cause," the "Reconciliationist Cause," the "Emancipationist Cause," and the "White Supremacist Cause." At the same time, a careful analysis of the modern community illustrates the myriad ways in which contemporary individuals interact with and utilize the past.

The dissertation of Christopher George Bates is approved.

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# Introduction

> Who knows but again the old flags, ragged and torn, snapping in the wind, may face each other and flutter, pursuing and pursued, while the cries of victory fill a summer day? And after the battle, then the slain and wounded will arise, and all will meet together under the two flags, all sound and well, and there will be talking and laughter and cheers, and all will say: Did it not seem real? Was it not as in the old days? [1]

This passage—an apt description of Civil War reenactment, if ever there was one—was penned by Confederate veteran Berry Benson in 1880. It is apropos that the sentiment that serves as coda to both Shelby Foote's three-volume history *The Civil War: A Narrative* and Ken Burns' *The Civil War* should introduce this study, for Foote's and Burns' stories end where this one begins. After his military service was over, Benson—like countless other veterans—took an active role in organizations and activities that tried to recapture the camaraderie of the war years while also interpreting the meaning of the war for contemporaries and for posterity. He wrote articles, attended reunions, served as the model for the most prominent Civil War monument in his hometown of Augusta, Ga., and marched in Woodrow Wilson's second inaugural parade in 1917. [2]

By definition, the passing of Benson (in 1923) and his comrades-in-arms marked the end of living memory of the Civil War. The "history" of the war—and, thus, Burns' and Foote's narratives—was then complete. But with their postwar activities (and sometimes even with their during-the-war activities), the veterans were the starting point for a contest over the memory and meaning of the war that resonates to the present day. At the same time, they were also the first generation of Civil War reenactors. They may not have carried arms (at least, not usually), but they did don their old uniforms, they did return to the old battlefields, and they did climb into their "time machines" in an effort to travel back to bygone days. At least two dozen times, Union

and Confederate Veterans did this together; these "Blue-Gray Reunions" took place until the late 1930s. Meanwhile, gatherings where only one side or the other was present continued through the 1940s, concluding with the final encampment of the Union veterans' Grand Army of the Republic in 1949. The last verifiable Civil War veteran, a Yank from Minnesota named Albert Woolson, died in 1956. [3]

As Woolson and his comrades were shuffling off this mortal coil, a number of faux Civil War activities emerged with non-veterans as participants. For example, the West Point "staff rides" of 1894 to 1915 recreated important moments from the war in order to teach tactical lessons to plebes. In 1931, the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association (NMLRA) was founded; its members staged shooting competitions using 19th century weapons. In 1958, NMRLA members who wanted to focus exclusively on the Civil War split off and founded the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA), which still exists today. In the 1940s and 1950s, there was a unit of Zouaves based at American Legion Post No. 29 in Jackson, Michigan. Known for their 300-steps-per-minute cadence marching with rifles, they appeared in countless parades, performed in the 1955 medieval-themed comedy *The Court Jester* (dressed as knights), and were guests on Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* in 1957. [4]

The staff riders, N-SSA shooters, and Jackson Zouaves are sometimes regarded as Civil War reenactors, but the label really does not fit. All three activities are forms of historical simulation, and participants did not (and do not) entertain the illusion of actually re-creating a past era. Put another way, there is no "re-" in these particular forms of enacting the war. By contrast, when hundreds of N-SSA members were recruited to re-create battles during the celebration of the Civil War Centennial in the late 1950s and early 1960s, time travel was absolutely the goal—both for participants and for the audience. This second "Centennial"

generation of reenacting was, on balance, not a great success. The turmoil of 1960s America triggered a new wave of debates about the meaning and memory of the war, as well as the appropriate means of commemorating the conflict. The reenactments—and, indeed, the entire Centennial celebration—were engulfed in controversy. By the time 1965 rolled around, most observers and participants were either relieved, or had just lost interest.

Indeed, the Centennial went badly enough that it nearly killed Civil War reenactment. The majority of the young men who made up the Centennial generation—most of them teenagers—either moved on to new things or returned to the N-SSA. Geography presented a challenge as well: It is not enough to have a hundred or a thousand or even five thousand reenactors if they are not clustered together. A reenactment requires a certain critical mass of participants to be viable. The tenor of the times was not helpful, either. With Vietnam looming large, an activity that appeared to glorify war seemed to many to be in bad taste. Still, despite these obstacles, a few hardy bands of Civil War reenactors soldiered on, holding battles whenever it was possible and participating in alternative activities—living history demonstrations, drill practice, battlefield tours—when it was not.

The hobby might very well have faded away, if not for one man: Bill Keitz. A mailman by day and a Civil War reenactor by night, in mid-1972 he began using the mimeograph machine at work to produce a newsletter for the members of his Ohio reenactment group. He called it the *Camp Chase Gazette* in honor of a nearby Civil War recruitment depot and training ground (converted into a prison later in the war). Initially comprised of factual advice for improving one's "impression," the newsletter was passed from friend to friend, such that Keitz began to receive fairly voluminous correspondence from reenactors across the Midwest. By 1974, the newsletter had been converted to a magazine format, and had added advertisements, surveys,

letters to the editor, an opinion page, and announcements of upcoming events. The cover of the first magazine-formatted issue declared the *Gazette* to be the "Voice of Civil War Reenacting," and it provided an anchor for a community that does not have, and never has had, any sort of central structure or governing authority. The *Gazette* is the one constant in Civil War reenactment, cresting in boom years and limping along in lean years. It has passed through the hands of several publishers since Keitz, but is still going strong 46 years later, producing 10 issues annually. Competitors—and there have been many—have taken their best shot, but none has lasted more than a year or two.

Keitz not only kept reenactment going, he helped to substantially transform the hobby. The Centennial reenactments were amateurish, not much different in character from a grade school Thanksgiving pageant. Keitz used the *Gazette* to proselytize for the merits of research and historical accuracy. At the same time, he and the reenactors left over from the Centennial—along with most of their new recruits—were no longer teenagers, but instead family men in their twenties and thirties. Ergo, there was significant motivation to turn reenactment into a family activity. To help facilitate and encourage this development, Keitz regularly printed items authored by his wife Nancy and daughter Kandace. He also hired Chris(tine) Catalfamo, by then a veteran of the hobby, to pen a monthly column with advice for female reenactors. The hiring was controversial, and even Keitz himself only envisioned women playing civilian roles.[5] Over the course of the 1970s, female participation slowly became de rigueur, such that organizers of reenactments were customarily providing both "male" and "female" guidelines for participants by the mid-1980s. Today, it is estimated that between 10% and 20% of Civil War reenactors are women. [6]

Through their efforts and their commitment, Keitz and the other reenactors of the 1970s kept the hobby alive until it received a series of metaphorical shots in the arm: the celebration of the national bicentennial in 1976, the broadcast of the popular miniseries *The Blue and the Gray* in 1982 and *North and South* in 1985, and the advent of the Civil War quasquicentennial in 1986. By 1988, Civil War reenactment had grown enough in popularity than 12,000 individuals participated in the 125th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg. At that point, the demographics of the hobby, and the approach employed by participants, was so different from the Centennial reenactments that it is proper to regard the period from the 1970s to the present as the third era of reenactment, featuring the "modern" generation of Civil War reenactors.

Exactly how many reenactors make up the modern generation? Answers to that question are all over the map. Anthropologist Cathy Stanton, for example, says 20,000. Reenactor Van Zavala, who has written a book about the community, guesses 150,000. Lisa Woolfork—who studies the memory of slavery—pegs the number at closer to 1 million. What these wildly varying figures tell us is that there really is no meaningful answer to the question. As noted, there is no central governing authority that keeps a roster of "members." Subscription rates for the *Camp Chase Gazette* might serve as a "census" of sorts, but only a very imprecise one. And beyond the lack of data is the problem of deciding exactly who qualifies for counting purposes. Even if we exclude N-SSA members, costumed employees at Ford's Theater, Abraham Lincoln impersonators, and other marginal cases, and we limit ourselves solely to those who participate in encampments, battle simulations, and living history events, exactly what does it take to be a "member" of the community? One event? Five? Ten? And once someone has participated in that requisite number of reenactments, are they a reenactor for life, or just until they leave the hobby? Further, what if a person's participation is exclusively private and/or uncostumed? Is "General

Lee's" wife, who sews his clothing and sells tickets at the gate of the reenactment dressed in blue jeans and a hoodie, a member of the community? [7]

But while population estimates might be of limited value, it is nonetheless evident that the modern community is large enough and distinctive enough be very visible, as they have gotten enormous attention. Dozens of books, both non-fiction and fiction, have reenactors as a subject. In the former category, the most prominent example is Tony Horowitz's 1998 bestseller *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. In the latter category, Civil War reenactors most often appear in murder mysteries, with titles like *The Final Reveille, War and Peas,* and *A Memory of Muskets*, and children's books such as *Stonewall Hinkleman and the Battle of Bull Run, Ghost Cadet, and Charley Waters Goes To Gettysburg*, but they have also found their way into other genres, including romances—*Confederates Don't Wear Couture*—and plays—*The Reenactor: A Staged Death*—and, interestingly enough, pornography. The reenactors themselves have published widely, as well. They most commonly produce advice manuals for other reenactors like *Reliving the Civil War, Civil War Women: Their Quilts, Their Roles,* and *The Little Book of Civil War Reenacting*; reenactment memoirs such as *The Life and Times of a Civil War Reenactor, Muskets and Memories*, and *Chin Music From A Greyhound: The Confessions of a Civil War Reenactor*; narrowly focused Civil War nonfiction like *American Civil War Years: The Michigan Experience*; *Confederate Camp Cooking*; and *117 Facts Everyone Should Know About African Americans in the Civil War*; and Civil War-themed poetry and novels including *Reenactments from My Heart: Spiritual and Supernatural Civil War Fiction and Poetry, On the Way to the Reenactment: A Southern Novel,* and *Haunted Fields: A Collection of Poems from Battlefields and Broken Hearts*.

In addition to books, newspaper coverage of the community has been extensive. From major dailies like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Los Angeles Times* down to tiny local publications, there are literally thousands of articles in print. The reenactors have also received attention from a veritable newsstand of magazines, including those in the children's section (*Jack & Jill*), ethnic interest (*Jet, Irish America, Jewish Times*), music (*Rolling Stone, NME*), science and nature (*National Geographic, Mother Earth News*), sex and sexuality (*Out*, *Playboy*), news (*U.S. News & World Report, Newsweek, Time*), business (*Bloomberg Businessweek*), and politics (*American Conservative*), among others. In music criticism circles, in fact, Civil War reenactment has emerged as a popular metaphor for poor and/or inauthentic performances. In a review of a new collection of Beethoven symphonies, for example, Lawrence Hansen writes:

> Over the years, we've reviewed many performances that were mechanical, expressionless, and devoid of feeling (some of them breathlessly trying to observe Beethoven's impossible metronome markings). They're mostly historical curiosities—not uninteresting in themselves but, like going to a Civil War battle reenactment or Colonial Williamsburg, no place to live permanently.

Similarly, in a review of Prodigy's *Always Outnumbered, Never Outgunned,* Michaelangelo Matos declares that the electronic band's fourth album is the, "equivalent of a Civil War Reenactment…[it] plods along with little purpose beyond proving that [Producer Liam] Howlett can still wage sonic warfare." Even legendary rocker Bob Dylan—who is known for his interest in Civil War history—has weighed in on the community, lamenting that reenactors teach nothing of historical value, and that, "If you want to know what [the war] was about, read the daily newspapers from that time from both the North and the South." [8]

Civil War reenactors are also ubiquitous in visual media. In 1987, during the quasquicentennial, the children's cartoon *DuckTales* became the first television show to produce

an episode inspired by the modern generation of Civil War reenactors. Entitled "Launchpad's Civil War," it centers on a re-creation of the Battle of Duck Ridge, a fictional Union defeat that came about due to the blunders of General Rhubarb McQuack, great-great grandfather to main character Launchpad McQuack. Conveniently, most of the General's troops are still living, having fled to the hills around Duckburg after their humiliating loss. Launchpad recruits them for the reenactment, and although they get off to a poor start, the soldiers—fortified by some emergency lemonade—make a heroic stand at Duck Ridge and save the day. Thusly does the shame of Rhubarb McQuack and his men (his ducks?) finally come to an end, 125 years later. [9]

Since then, Civil War reenactors have been something of a staple of television programming, particularly for producers who are looking to do something a little different or offbeat. Many other cartoons, both children's and adult, have done a reenactment episode, including *The Simpsons* ("The Sweetest Apu"), *South Park* ("The Red Badge of Gayness"), *Family Guy* ("To Love and Die in Dixie"), *SpongeBob SquarePants* ("The Battle for Bikini Bottom"), and *Bob's Burgers* ("Moody Foodie Show"). They are a useful foil for sketches on comedy-variety shows, including *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart* on multiple occasions, as well as *The Colbert Report*, *Conan*, *Mr. Show*, *The Jeff Dunham Show*, and *Key & Peele*. Traditional multi-camera sitcoms have fallen out of favor in the 21st century, giving way to more realistic single-camera fare, but in the 1990s and early 2000s, nearly all of the popular television comedies dipped their toe into the reenactment pool, including *Everybody Loves Raymond* ("Civil War"), *Ellen* ("GI Ellen"), *Malcolm in the Middle* ("Family Reunion"), *The Jeff Foxworthy Show* ("Foxworthy Shall Rise Again"), and *30 Rock* ("When it Rains, it Pours").

And it's not only comedic programs that have featured reenactors. Dramas have gotten into the act as well, including *ER* ("The Secret Sharer"), *The Outer Limits* ("Gettysburg"), and

*House of Cards* ("Chapter 18"). Civil War-era ordinance can make for some interesting forensics, and so most modern crime procedurals have done a Civil War reenactment episode, including *NCIS* ("Silver War"), *Without a Trace* ("Cloudy With a Chance of Gettysburg"), *Bones* ("The Dentist in the Ditch"), *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* ("Way to Go"), and *Psych* ("Weekend Warriors"). These storylines tend to come along when ideas have begun to run short, which has given rise to tongue-in-cheek claims of a "reenactors' curse," since nearly all of these shows were canceled following the season in which they did their reenactment episode. Anthology-style "reality" programs have also done their share of reenactment segments, including *TV Nation* ("War Night"), *Rescue 911* ("Civil War, Part 1 and 2"), *American Pickers* ("Civil War Pickings"), and *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations* ("South Carolina"). The reenactors have even been turned into *Jeopardy!* questions on more than one occasion:

> In Feb. 2005 a reenactment was staged for this 140th anniversary of this fort's reoccupation by Union troops (February 6, 2006; category "The Civil War")
>
> Re-enactors still buy hardtack crackers from the G.H. Bent Co. of Mass., which supplied them for this 1860s war. (November 15, 2006; category "Food in History")
>
> Add 4 letters to "actors" to get these military devotees, like inauthentic farbs & obsessive stitch counters. (March 22, 2012; category "Hobbies")
>
> This county with a famous Court House hosted the main event of April 9, 1865 & is reenacting it in April 2015. (April 1, 2015; category "The Civil War Years")

Finally, there are reenactment-themed television commercials, including one for GEICO and another for Budweiser.[10]

Some mention should also be made of movies and documentaries. As with episodic television, the reenactors have been the subject of comedies like *Sweet Home Alabama* and *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, and also more serious fare, including the documentaries *The Unfinished Civil War* and the Academy

Award nominated short film *Men of Reenaction*. Perhaps more importantly, they have been a part of the making of nearly every major Civil War-themed film of the last 30 years, serving as consultants and/or performers for *Gettysburg, Glory, Gods & Generals, Cold Mountain*, and *Ride With the Devil,* among others.

And of course, this extensive discussion has yet to even touch upon the most direct way in which people come into contact with reenactors: live performances. There have been tens of thousands of battle reenactments in the last four decades, attended by millions of observers. On top of that are additional thousands of living history events, in which reenactors visit museums, classrooms, battlefields, and other sites to serve as educators. Civil War reenactors have also been asked to participate in all manner of ceremonial functions, including more than one presidential inauguration. They were a part of Jimmy Carter's procession; *Camp Chase Gazette* founder Keitz took to the pages of his magazine to document his experience for posterity:

> Reaching the reviewing stand, I witnessed Vice President Mondale nudge President Carter and point as the Mudsills came into view. The Vice President made a comment, which I could not hear, and the President gave his now world famous smile as they marched by, stood up and waved to the troops.

Ronald Reagan and both Bushes were apparently impressed with what they saw in 1976, because they too invited reenactors to their inaugurals. And, as *the Jeopardy!* question above notes, Civil War reenactors were also a part of the government's sesquicentennial commemoration of the war, including a reenactment of the concluding engagement at Appomattox Court House. [11]

The point here is that Civil War reenactors, regardless of whether there are 20,000 of them or 1 million, have a huge presence. Some observers admire them, others disdain them, but there can be no doubt that they are among the more prominent interpreters of the war in modern American culture. As such, the current generation of reenactors is an excellent case study for

examining both the modern memory of the Civil War, and for understanding how and why present-day Americans engage with the past.

**The Memory of the Civil War**

The key insight at the heart of memory studies, a historical sub-discipline that emerged in pre-World War II Europe, is that the narrative of events that we call "history" is invariably an exercise in forgetting, remembering, downplaying and exaggerating that reflects and serves present-day needs and biases. Compared to some areas of Civil War scholarship—the life of Lincoln, the conduct of the Battle of Gettysburg, slavery—the study of the war's memory is a fairly late arrival on the scene, slowly emerging in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of Rollin G. Osterweis, Thomas L. Connelly, Barbara Bellows, and Gaines M. Foster. These early works all focused on the Southern interpretation of the war, which was and is known as the "Lost Cause" school. Since the 1990s, memory has been among the most active areas of Civil War scholarship, with at least three other interpretative traditions getting extensive attention. These are essential to understanding the activities of the various generations of Civil War reenactors, and so a brief overview is in order: [12]

> The Lost Cause: The Lost Cause—a term that was in use as early as 1866, just a year after the Civil War ended—was both a means of coping with defeat for white Southerners and also a justification for re-entry into the Union on an equal basis with white Northerners. It downplayed the role of slavery in the Civil War, to the point of rendering the "peculiar institution" almost wholly irrelevant, and recast the conflict instead at an exercise in protecting states' rights against an over-reaching federal government. Lost

Cause writers made heroes out of Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, Jefferson Davis, and the common Confederate soldier, while villainizing those they blamed for the South's defeat—Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, and James Longstreet. The latter was a Confederate general, of course, but someone other than the sainted Lee had to take the blame for the failures of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and Longstreet was the obvious candidate, having committed the cardinal sin of becoming a Republican after the war. The Lost Cause posited that the South could never really have the won the war due to shortages of manpower and resources, and yet at the same time argued that they almost did, particularly at Gettysburg. This interpretation of the war was (and is) so compelling from a narrative standpoint that it came to dominate both Northern and Southern thinking about the war by the 20th century, as evidenced by—among other examples—the success of the 1937 novel and 1939 movie *Gone With The Wind*. [13]

The Union Cause: The Lincoln administration began the war with one stated goal: To restore the Union, and thus to save democracy for both the United States and the world. The Union Cause is the interpretation of the Civil War that focuses on this dimension of the conflict. It makes heroes of the men who restored the Union, most obviously Grant, while at the same time casting the Southrons as traitors who were willing to sacrifice democracy to save King Cotton. Once the American democracy was indeed restored in 1865, the Union Cause proved to have less appeal and less relevance for the generations of Americans born after the Civil War, which meant that it had less staying power. It was also antithetical to the Lost Cause, and so for all these reasons, it had a declining impact

on Americans' thinking about the war in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And as the Union Cause faded in inportance, the reputation of its greatest symbol also collapsed. On the day that Ulysses S. Grant died in 1885, he was regarded almost universally as an iconic figure, a hero, and the savior of the Union. But within a few decades, thanks to pushback from the Lost Cause, as well as reinterpretation of his presidency and of the Reconstruction that his administration oversaw, he was broadly viewed as a drunkard and as "Grant the butcher." His reputation is in the midst of a rebound in the early decades of the 21st century, but has come nowhere near returning to the lofty heights it once occupied. [14]

The Emancipationist Cause: With the promulgation of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the Lincoln administration officially added a second item to its list of war aims: freedom for the slaves. The Emancipationist Cause emphasizes this element of the war, centering the story not only on Lincoln, but also on the men who took the cause of freedom directly to the South—most obviously Frederick Douglass and the black military unit that included two of his sons, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. In the years immediately after the Civil War, with the horrors of slavery still fresh in the minds of Northerners, and with their triumph over the institution still resonant, the Emancipationist Cause had nearly the same importance as did the Union Cause. And as late as the 1880s, there were still monuments to the 54th being built in the North. However, in his 1875 speech "The Color Question," Frederick Douglass correctly anticipated that there was reason to be nervous. "If war among the whites brought peace and liberty to blacks," he asked, "what will peace among the whites bring?" He was right,

of course—outside of the black community, the Emancipationist narrative of the war was largely overlooked by the first half of the 20th century, and was not "rescued" until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and then later the 1989 movie *Glory*. As with the Union Cause, its rebound is still only partial; one of the emerging questions in the study of Civil War memory is why today's young African Americans take relatively little interest in the war that ended slavery. [15]

The Reconciliationist Cause: While the generation that fought the Civil War never entirely left their bitterness and their resentments behind—and, in many cases, never came particularly close—the next generation of Americans, along with the men who led the country after 1885 or so, had a strong interest in moving on. The result was the Reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War, which almost entirely eliminated the political dimensions of the struggle, and focused almost entirely on the valor and sacrifice of "those who fought so nobly," particularly the common soldiers of the Union and the Confederacy. The result was a war that had no particular cause, nor any particular result, except to make the country somehow stronger than it was before the conflict. The Reconciliationist Cause shares many elements with the Lost Cause, and is similarly appealing, such that the two often blend together to form a hybrid interpretation. This hybrid was on full display during the Civil War centennial, and is also at the heart of the 1974 book *The Killer Angels* and its 1993 movie adaptation *Gettysburg*, among other works. [16]

The White Supremacist Cause: In the final decades of the 19th century, some white southerners—particularly Confederate veterans—knew that their states' place in the Union, and their own social and economic supremacy in the South, were assured. Thus emerged a much more militant strain of thought about the Civil War. Consider, for example, the popular Innes Randolph song "Oh, I'm a Good Old Rebel" from 1898, which is directly confrontational in a way that the Lost Cause was not:

> Oh, I'm a good old rebel
> Now that's just what I am
> And for this Yankee nation
> I do no give a damn.
>
> I'm glad I fit agin 'er
> I only wish we'd won
> I ain't asked any pardon
> For anything I've done.
>
> I hates the Yankee nation
> And everything they do
> I hates the declaration
> Of independence too.
>
> I hates the glorious union
> 'Tis dripping with our blood
> I hates the striped banner
> And fit it all I could. [17]

A few provocative song lyrics might be dismissed, if not for the fact that they coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of black lynchings, the return of discriminatory "Jim Crow" legislation, a wholesale reinterpretation of the Reconstruction Era, and lionization of the then-defunct (but soon to return) Ku Klux Klan. The latter two developments, in particular, were responsible for Thomas Dixon's 1905 novel T*he Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, and D.W. Griffith's filmic adaptation of the novel, *The Birth of a Nation*, in 1915. The literature tends to regard this aggressive turn as aspect of the Lost Cause—Lost Cause, v. 2.0, in a manner of

speaking—and not as its own interpretative tradition. The problem is that while the Lost Cause and White Supremacist Cause are similar, and certainly share some elements, blending them together elides over some very important differences, not the least of which is an overt embrace of white supremacy, as well as a clear endorsement of the use of violence in support of that end. As such, they will be treated separately here.

The lines between these interpretative traditions are not bright red, of course. They often overlap, and blend together, and the expression of one can easily be misread as the expression of another. For example, Gary W. Gallagher's 2013 book, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War*, uses the first four traditions on the list as a tool for interpreting popular Civil War-themed works, and almost invariably finds a great deal of spillover. [18]

As with Gallagher's book, the first three chapters here will use the interpretative traditions as tools, in this case to examine the three generations of Civil War reenactors. Chapter 1 focuses on the veteran reenactors, Chapter 2 the centennial reenactors, and Chapter 3 the modern community. Across the three chapters, the central theme will be the symbolic importance of the common Civil War soldier. One of the pioneering works in the general field of memory studies is Maurice Agulhon's 1979 *Marianne au Combat*, in which he argued that an image can give concrete form to many different political agendas. He was focused on the French Marianne (roughly equivalent to the United States' Lady Liberty), but there is little in his analysis that would not also apply to Johnny Reb and Billy Yank. The Confederate battle flag is the more famous—and more notorious—symbol associated with the Civil War, at least since the Civil Rights Era. It could be argued, however, that the common soldier of the war—who is often

accompanied by the battle flag, of course—has been an even more important symbol, with enormous salience throughout the entirety of 20th century (as opposed to just the second half of the century). The Civil War soldier has such significance in American culture that none of the three generations of reenactors has been able to operate in a vacuum. Invariably, outsiders have imposed their own meaning on their activities. For the veterans, that meant appropriating them as a symbol of reconciliation, even though most of them clearly had other ideas. The centennial reenactors were largely teenagers who cared about little beyond playing soldier before an audience, but nonetheless ended up at the center of a heated debate over both the appropriate means of commemorating the war and the meaning of the conflict. And modern reenactors are often lumped in with those who would embrace a white supremacist interpretation of the war (neo-Nazis, for Klansman), despite being a broad community whose thinking is quite diverse and, in any event, is much more likely to align with the Lost and Reconciliationist Causes. [19]

Of course, it is not sufficient to simply discuss what reenactors think about the Civil War. A question at the center of all studies of historical memory—sometimes implicitly, usually explicitly—is exactly why a particular community, or generation, or faction, or group embraces their chosen interpretation or interpretations of the past. After all, if the assumption is that the memory exists in service of a modern-day agenda or purpose, then it is necessary to understand precisely what that agenda or purpose is.

There has been a tendency among the scholars in this field to craft exceedingly broad, and ultimately rather simplistic, models for how historical memory is "used." To take a prominent example, one of the most widely-cited studies of Americans' historical thinking is John Bodnar's 1992 book *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. He argues that debates over the meaning of the past can broken down

into a dominant "official" memory that has the backing of those in positions of power and one or more competing "vernacular" memories. The model works fairly well for the specific case studies he examines, like the debate over the Vietnam War memorial, or the Smithsonian's *Enola Gay* exhibit. It often begins to break down when applied to other cases, however. [20]

The scholarship on the modern Civil War reenactment community—and there is a surprising quantity, from scholars in more than a dozen different disciplines—generally falls victim to the same tendency. There are a few common explanations for why Civil War reenactors do what they do, but far and away the most common—present in popular media, as well as academic scholarship—is that they reenactors are using the past as basis for a conservative backlash against modern-day race relations. Lisa Woolfork, for example:

> For these white reenactors, their hobby or passion is an imagined return to a day when whiteness meant something or at least meant more than it does today. It allows them—however subconsciously—to reify white supremacy in the name of historical veracity.

Or Elizabeth Swearingen:

> Civil War reenacting reflected the wide spread denial of white privilege by constructing the Civil War as a familial fight between white brothers who, believing in the same Judeo-Christian God, protected an Anglo-Saxon conservative view of the American way of life with great patriotic zeal.

As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, these are just two examples among many. They are also grossly oversimplified. Yes, there are certainly reenactors who embrace some very right-wing and even racist beliefs, and yes those individuals sometimes manage to find their way on camera or into print. But they are the exceptions; the argument here is that the reenactors (sometimes even those in Federal uniforms) are being unfairly and inaccurately lumped into one large neo-Confederate/battle flag/Johnny Reb/racist/Ku Klux Klan/neo-Nazi stew, primarily as part of a

larger pattern of denigrating the South in response to their intransigence during the Civil Rights Movement. [21]

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a more satisfactory answer to the question of exactly what the modern reenactors are doing, with the former focusing on reenactment as their choice of activity and the latter focusing on the Civil War as their choice of subject. The title of this study is derived from James McPherson's 1994 volume *What They Fought For: 1861-65*. In that book, and in his 1997 follow-up *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, McPherson argues strongly against the temptation to conclude that Civil War soldiers' motivations were either simple or universal. In his introduction, he explains:

> In *What They Fought For*, I expect to focus on a range of attitudes and motives among these mostly volunteer soldiers, including peer pressure; group cohesion; male bonding; ideals of manhood and masculinity; concepts of duty, honor, and courage; functions of leadership discipline, and coercion; and the role of religion as well as of the darker passions of hatred and vengeance.

Understanding what modern-day reenactors "fight" for requires equal complexity. The two chapters dedicated to that question will outline at least two dozen different answers, some of them intimately linked to the Civil War and its memory, others where the war is little more than an incidental canvas or staging ground. [22]

**Methodology**

Memory is an inherently cross-disciplinary subject, particularly when dealing with living people. As such, this study required delving into many different areas of scholarship, and utilizing many different kinds of evidence. The first type of evidence is interviews with reenactors, more than 400 of them in total. That technically makes this work of "oral history," although there should probably be a different label to distinguish what happens here from the great majority of oral

histories. Generally, the peccadilloes of memory—forgetting, exaggeration, distortion—are a challenge to be overcome, whether the subject is a slave, a World War II factory laborer, or a recent immigrant. Here, those peccadilloes are the meat of the study—a feature, not a bug. The questions asked of the reenactors appear in the Appendix.

The second major source of evidence for this project is the *Camp Chase Gazette*. The current publisher has a complete archive of issues, dating all the way back to that first post-office-mimeographed newsletter in 1972. Beyond being the "Voice of Civil War Reenacting," the magazine's archives allow the community's thoughts and feelings to be judged in the context of past events and milieus: The Vietnam War era, the attempt on Ronald Reagan's life, the 9/11 attacks. This is particularly true for the years from roughly 1970 to the start of the Civil War quasquicentennial in 1986, where alternative sources of information are fairly scarce. For the last decade or so, reenactor websites like authentic-campaigner.com and cwreenactors.com are a useful supplement to the *Gazette*.

Given that reenactment is a form of performance, it is unsurprising that the reenactors—particularly those of the first and third generations—have not been shy about documenting their experiences for posterity. These accounts—from magazine and newspaper articles to full-length memoirs—provide valuable depth that sometimes cannot be gleaned from other sources. In particular, the rise of the Internet and on-demand publishing has been a boon, since it has allowed a great many modern reenactors to share their views on the hobby with minimal imposition of editorial filters.

Finally, the way in which outsiders view the community is a critical part of the story, and their responses are the fourth and final source for the study. There has been, as noted, extensive newspaper and magazine coverage of reenactment—this is true for all three generations. Often,

this coverage generates feedback from the readers, in the form of letters to the editor or, more recently, online comments. There are also voluminous scholarly analyses; all three generations have gotten a great deal of attention from the academy. For modern reenactors, as noted, there also exists a wide selection of film and television portrayals. All have been tracked down, including the one—Michael Moore's *TV Nation*—that cannot legally be sold in the United States due to changes in copyright law. Such are the challenges that the modern scholar faces.

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[1] Quoted in Foote, Shelby. *Red River to Appomattox*. Vol. 3 of *The Civil War: A Narrative*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, 1048.

[2] Benson, Berry. *Berry Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962.

[3] Serrano, Richard. *Last of the Blue and Gray: Old Men, Stolen Glory, and the Mystery That Outlived the Civil War*. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2013. There were several men who claimed to be Confederate veterans, and who outlived Woolson. The last of these was Walter Williams, and when he died in 1959, obituaries described him as the last living Civil War veteran. However, Serrano makes clear that Williams' claim was fraudulent, as now-available census records demonstrate that he was only 10 years old when the war ended.

[4] For more on the staff rides, see Carol Reardon. *The U.S. Army and the Uses of Military History, 1865-1920*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990, 50-67. For information on the Jackson Zouaves, see http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/08/peekthrough_time_jacksons_fast.html (March 1, 2016). The N-SSA has never numbered more than 4,000 members, and so has not gotten the attention that the much larger Civil War reenactment community has. However, there are brief histories of the group in Thompson, Jenny. *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors*. Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004, 35-38, and Anderson, Jay. *Time Machines: The World of Living History*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1979, 136-138.

[5] "Civilian roles only" policies for women ultimately led to a lawsuit against the National Park Service by would-be Union soldier Lauren Cook Burgess in 1989. She won, and also became a leading authority on women who passed as men during the war.

[6] Mark Shanks, who has done the most exhaustive demographic analysis of the Civil War reenactment community affirms this figure. See Shanks, Mark L. *Very Civil Wars: Reenactors, Academics, and the Performance of the Past*. Ph.D. diss., 2009, 50. Wendy Bryce Wilhelm and Sandra Mottner, who have done a less exhaustive demography. agree. See Wilhelm, Wendy Bryce and Sandra Mottner. "An Empirical Study of the Motivations and Consumption Behaviors of Civil War Re-Enactors: Implications for Re-Enactment Tourism." *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing* 12:4 (2005), 44.

[7] Stanton, Cathy. *Being the Elephant: The American Civil War Reenacted*. Masters Thesis, 1997, 72; Zabava, Van. *Greenhorn and The Elephant: A Reenactor's Journey*. Tucson, Ariz.: Wheatmark, 2007, 7; Woolfork, Lisa. *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009, 163.

[8] Hansen, Lawrence. "Overview: Beethoven's Symphonies & Concerts," *American Record Guide* 22 (June 2001), 53; Matos, Michaelangelo, *The Underground Is Massive: How Electronic Dance Music Conquered America*. New York: Day Street Books, 2015, 1; Gilmore, Mikal. "Bob Dylan Unleashed." *Rolling Stone* 1166 (September 27, 2012), 12.

[9] "Launchpad's Civil War." *DuckTales.* Writ. Pamela Hickey and Dennys McCoy. Dir. Steve Clark. Disney Television Animation, 1987.

[10] From the Jeopardy! questions archive, http://j-archive.com/listseasons.php (accessed March 1, 2016).

[11] Keitz, William. "Nuts About Nuts, Who Love Nuts." *Camp Chase Gazette* 8 (March 1977), 13.

[12] Osterweis, Rollin. *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973; Connelly, Thomas L. *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977; Connelly, Thomas L. and Barbara Bellows. *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982; Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

[13] As noted, the earliest works on the war's memory all explored the Lost Cause mythology. Since then, other important studies include Davis, William C. *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy*.

Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1996; Gallagher, Gary W. *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998; Gallagher, Gary W. and Alan T. Nolan. *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000; Ashdown, Paul and Edward Caudill. *The Mosby Myth: A Confederate Hero in Life and Legend*. Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2002; Ashdown, Paul and Edward Caudill. *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

[14] The preeminent discussion of the rise, fall, and partial re-rise of the Union Cause and the reputation of Ulysses S. Grant is Waugh, Joan. *U.S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Also instructive are Peterson, Merrill D. *Lincoln in American Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994 and Jordan, Brian Matthew. M*arching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War*. New York: Liveright, 2016.

[15] Douglass, Frederick. "The Color Question," July 5, 1875, in *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One, Vol. IV*, ed. John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979–1992), p. 420. The most notable work on the Emancipationist interpretation and its decline is Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001. It has since been challenged in important ways, however, as will be noted in the first chapter and in the next footnote. See also Shaffer, Donald R. *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004, Gannon, Barbara A. *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011, and Levin, Kevin M. *War as Murder: Remembering the Battle of the Crater*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012. For an insightful commentary on African Americans' lack of interest in the Civil War today, see Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?" *The Atlantic* (March 2012 special issue), 22-25. This question is also a recurring theme of Horowitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Pantheon, 1998.

[16] Nearly all of the work that focuses on the Reconciliationist interpretation is, as a response and challenge to Blight, focused on veterans and/or the immediate postbellum years. This includes Blair, William. *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004; Neff, John R. *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the*

*Problem of Reconciliation*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005; Janney, Caroline E. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013; and Harris, M. Keith. *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014.

[17] Randolph, Innes. "Oh, I'm a Good Old Rebel." Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1898.

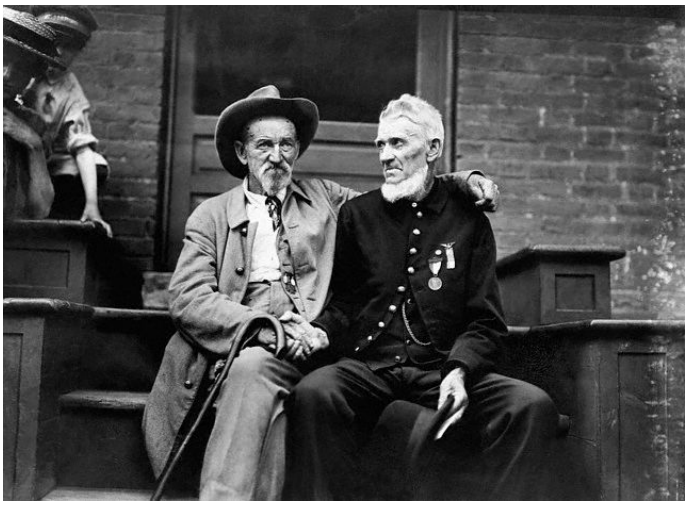
[18] Gallagher, Gary W. *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. He sees films, in particular, as drawing broadly on the various traditions.

[19] Agulhon, Maurice. *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

[20] Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

[21] Woolfork, 163; Swearingen, Elizabeth. *The Performance of Identity as Embodied Pedagogy: A Critical Ethnography of Civil War Reenacting*. Ph.D. diss., 2004, 181.

[22] McPherson, James. *What They Fought For: 1861-65*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994, 1.



## "Grand Armies of the Republic":

## The Veteran Reenactors

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These two photographs are among the best-known images of the Civil War era. The top one shows a member of the South's United Confederate Veterans (UCV) with his arm draped around a member of the North's Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), two white-haired old men whose previous differences have ostensibly been forgotten. The bottom one captures the meeting of the Pickett's Division Association (PDA) and the Philadelphia Brigade Association (PBA) as they

gathered and shook hands on the same spot where they had battled each other 50 years earlier—Gettysburg's stone wall.

Between 1887 and 1937, there were roughly two-dozen events like this one—the "Blue-Gray Reunions"—where veterans from both sides of the Civil War came together to remember and celebrate their service as soldiers. These pictures were both taken during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, far and away the largest of the Blue-Gray Reunions. More than 50,000 former soldiers, ranging in age from 61 to 112 years old, attended the event, with the costs of food, transportation, and boarding all borne by the state and federal governments. For more than a week, attendees swapped stories, renewed friendships, participated in ceremonies, and listened to speeches by President Woodrow Wilson and other dignitaries. [1]

The Civil War gave Americans a great many symbols—Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, "Stonewall" Jackson, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, Gettysburg—but the common soldier may have been the most important of all to Americans of the postbellum years. Scenes like these thus had the potential to send a powerful message about national unity. If the men who had once tried to kill one another could move past their differences and stand together in brotherhood, then every other American certainly should be able to do the same, whether that meant moving past the lingering animosities remaining from both the war and Reconstruction, or joining together in the face of whatever other national crises might arise.

This is an exceedingly useful message for political leaders, particularly when tied to such a potent symbol. And so, politicians—particularly presidents—were eager to encourage this interpretation of the reunions. They did so through speeches, letters, telegrams, and newspaper editorials. Newspapers were willing accomplices in promoting this interpretation—coverage of

the veterans' reunions was invariably dominated by heartwarming stories of cross-sectional cooperation, while glowing editorials that asserted that, "We are, indeed, one country, now," or else spoke of "the death of sectionalism." [2]

Ultimately, this view came to dominate Americans' thinking about veterans after the Civil War. Rather than focus on the unpleasant elements of Johnny Reb's and Billy Yank's postwar experience—participation in the Ku Klux Klan, morphine addiction, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder--the popular imagination has, fairly predictably, gravitated towards these stories of brotherhood and forgiveness. When Gettysburg National Military Park celebrated its 100th anniversary, for example, the picture of the two veterans with arms around one another was chosen as the event's official image. Similarly, Ken Burns' Civil War closes with the same picture, while also making extensive use of footage from the 1913 reunion. [3]

Historians, too, have presented veterans as leading the charge toward sectional reconciliation. This was a central argument of historian Paul Buck's Pulitzer Prize-winning work *The Road to Reunion*, the first major scholarly study to examine veterans' postwar activities. Writing in 1937—just months before the 75th Gettysburg, the final Blue-Gray Reunion—he asserted that:

> The spirit of good will received a more striking exemplification in the fraternizing of men in Blue and Gray…The veterans of both armies met in mutual celebration, giving a convincing object lesson of the truth that those who fought most honorably in war are first to forgive in peace.

Subsequent historians have echoed Buck. Gaines M. Foster argues that the UCV had an "emphasis on reconciliation," while Donald Shaffer asserts that the same was true of the GAR. In *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, David Blight contends that veterans made certain that an interpretation of the Civil War focused on reconciliation and reunion

triumphed over one focused on emancipation and civil rights for African-Americans. Blight pays particular attention to the 1913 Gettysburg event, which he characterizes as, "a festival of reconciliation [that] was about forging unifying myths and making remembering safe." Stuart McConnell uses similar language, describing the reunions as a, "veritable love feast of reconciliation." Carol Reardon agrees with Blight, observing that, "Signs of progress towards national reconciliation took many forms, but veterans reunions offered the most public display of those feelings." Nina Silber and Mary Dearing have also offered concurring interpretations. [4]

There can be no doubt that some veterans did reconcile, at least in limited fashion, after the Civil War. However, contemporary observers—politicians and reporters—grossly distorted the extent and character of those meetings. A reconciliationist interpretation of the war had enormous appeal and utility by the 1880s, and so that is what was imposed upon the veterans by outsiders. Of course, politicians and reporters leave behind a great deal of documentation of their ideas—including the photographs that appear at the start of this chapter. The result is that succeeding generations of Americans have fallen victim to their distortions.

A more careful examination of the Blue-Gray Reunions—which were far and away the preeminent symbol of veterans' reconciliation—makes clear that this is the case. Many veterans flatly refused to be a party to these events, particularly in as enthusiastic a fashion as government officials (who always footed the bill) desired. Consequently, cross-sectional reunions were exceedingly rare and were difficult to organize. On those occasions when Blue-Gray reunions did come together, the events were marred by disagreements between the two sides, and often by disappointing attendance, particularly on the Confederate side. Further, among those who soldiers who did attend the reunions, there were generally clear limits on the extent and meaning of their participation.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that most Civil War veterans would be horrified to learn that a narrative focused on forgiveness and reconciliation—a "manufactured tradition," as historian John Neff puts it—has become their story. A number of recent studies—by Barbara A. Gannon, Caroline Janney, Brian Matthew Jordan, and M. Keith Harris—are all in essential harmony with the main thesis of Harris' *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration Among Civil War Veterans*:

> Veterans did not calculatingly contribute to historical amnesia along racial lines in the name of reconciliation. It is true that from the point of view of most veterans, reconciliation seemed the soundest course of action. Yet the memories that informed the terms of reconciliation suggest that Civil War veterans acquiesced to reaching across the bloody chasm only so long as their former enemies accepted their respective arguments – a scenario that seldom transpired.

Building on Harris, et. al., this chapter will examine how the Blue-Gray reenactments came together, the veterans' agenda at these reenactments, the clear evidence that they were not—as a group—reconciliationist, and then the deliberate efforts by outsiders to impose their own meaning on these reenactments. [5]

**The First Generation of Reenactors**

The Civil War was not long over before veterans—mostly in the North—began to organize. For example, the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), a fraternal organization for Union officers, was formed in April of 1865 in response to the death of Abraham Lincoln. The United States Soldiers and Sailors Protective Society, which lobbied for pensions and health care for disabled veterans, was founded in late 1865. The Grand Army of the Republic, which would eventually dwarf all other veterans' organizations in size, was established in 1866. Ultimately, there were many hundred veterans' organizations, most of them small in size, but some with memberships numbering in the thousands. Southern veterans did not

participate in this early round of fraternization, which would have been impractical and perhaps illegal in the postwar South, but some ex-Confederates did form groups dedicated to preserving the history of the war, most notably the Southern Historical Society in 1868.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, veterans' organizations remained fairly small. Even the GAR had only 30,000 members in 1879—not an inconsequential number, but only a fraction of the 400,000 members it would ultimately have. It was in the 1880s that these organizations finally began to take off, with the GAR reaching its peak membership by 1889, and former Confederates founding the powerful UCV in that same year. Historians generally understand the timing of these developments as a response to the challenges of the 1880s—immigration, political corruption, labor strife, industrialization, and so forth. In short, veterans' organizations—particularly the GAR and UCV, which will be the focus here—served many purposes connected to the context of the late 19th century. [6]

To begin with, the GAR and UCV were social clubs. The bonds formed among soldiers may not have a counterpart in civilian life, and soldiers naturally hoped to re-create that sense of camaraderie. The GAR's statement of purpose, for example, asserted that one of the organization's main goals was to "preserve and strengthen those kind and fraternal feelings which bind together the soldiers." While socializing with their comrades, veterans could also escape from the pressures of daily life, particularly married life, since non-veterans—especially women—could not join.[7] Indeed, in this way—not to mention their initiation rituals and their rigid hierarchical structure—these veterans' organizations bore a strong resemblance to the other fraternal societies of the Victorian era.[8]

Veterans' organizations were also political lobbies. Officially, the GAR disavowed any political agenda, going so far as to include the policy in their bylaws:

> No officer or comrade of the Grand Army of the Republic shall in any manner use this organization for partisan purposes. and no discussion of partisan questions shall be allowed at any of its meetings nor shall any nomination for political office be made.

The notion that the GAR was actually apolitical is laughable, however. The organization was initially founded with a very specific political purpose in mind, namely the re-election of Richard Oglesby as governor of Ohio in 1866. In the 1880s the GAR became heavily involved in lobbying for pensions, and was largely responsible for the passage of the Pension Act of 1890, which made almost all Union veterans and their dependents eligible for federal assistance.[9] The organization also served as somewhat of a kingmaker, especially on the federal level. Republican presidential candidates, in particular, had to be in the good graces of the GAR. The five Republican presidents elected between 1868 and 1900—Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley—were all members of the organization.[10]

The UCV also had a political agenda. The organization was formed in 1889, on the very cusp of the era of segregation. In the 1870s and 1880s, white Southerners were relatively careful to respect the rights of their former slaves, largely out of fear of recrimination from the federal government. By the 1890s, however, it was fairly clear that there would be no more interference. That fact, coupled with a severe economic recession, led to a precipitous rise in lynchings and the passage of laws in every Southern state designed to curtail the political and economic rights of African-Americans. From the moment of its founding, the UCV ardently supported such efforts.[11]

Beyond their political agenda, the GAR and UCV also had a philosophical agenda. Echoing a refrain seemingly sounded by every generation of Americans since the Pilgrims, the members of both groups were deeply concerned with the moral decay they saw among the young

people of their day. One South Carolina veteran, for example, complained that, "Most of the young men are willing to turn their backs on everything we were taught to regard as sacred." Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. who fought for the Union, struck a similar chord in a speech he delivered to Harvard's graduating class on May 30, 1895:

> We do not save our traditions, in our country. The regiments whose battle-flags were not large enough to hold the names of the battles they had fought vanished with the surrender of Lee, although their memories inherited would have made heroes for a century. It is the more necessary to learn the lesson afresh from perils newly sought, and perhaps it is not vain for us to tell the new generation what we learned in our day, and what we still believe.

The GAR and UCV confronted this problem head on. The GAR, for its part, pressured schools to display the American flag, and to require students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. In a similar vein, the UCV undertook a campaign of monument building, with the idea that the monuments would be a permanent reminder of the ideals they had fought for. The following inscription, written by historian and diplomat William Henry Trescot, appeared on dozens of UCV-funded monuments throughout the South:

> Let the stranger who may in future times
> Read this inscription
> Recognize that these were men
> Whom power could not corrupt
> Whom death could not terrify
> Whom defeat could not dishonor
> And let their virtues plead for just judgment
> Of the case in which they perished
> Let the South Carolinian of another generation
> Remember that the state taught them
> How to live and how to die
> And that from her broken fortunes
> She has preserved for her children
> The priceless treasure of their memories
> Teaching all who may claim the same birthright
> That truth, courage and patriotism endure forever. [12]

In addition to flags and memorials, veterans on both sides concluded that an excellent way to reach young people was to become involved in history education. In 1888, a GAR post in Wisconsin commissioned a report on the teaching of the Civil War in schools. The report's authors were aghast at what they found, complaining that students, "[are] left unable to comprehend which was right and which was wrong; indeed to discover that even there was a right or wrong side to that struggle for the preservation of the Union." This led the national GAR to establish a textbook commission, which lobbied school districts to use history books that the veterans deemed appropriate. In 1892, the UCV followed suit, establishing its own textbook commission. Both organizations were very successful in their respective sections. [13]

These few pages offer only a brief introduction to some of the concerns that drove the rise of the GAR and the UCV; it is beyond the scope of this chapter to do more. Nonetheless, it should be clear that veterans had a great many concerns, some of them fundamentally in conflict with the notion of reconciling with their former enemies. Their postwar activities, including the Blue-Gray reunions, must be considered in this light.

**The First Reenactments**

It may seem odd to refer to the veterans of the Civil War was "reenactors." There can be no question, however, that at some point in the 1860s, 1870s, or 1880s it became an appropriate descriptor. To start, the motivations underlying the formation of veterans' organizations—camaraderie, patriotism, influencing history education—bear a strong resemblance to some of the main motivations underlying modern reenactment. On that basis alone, in may be fair to connect the two movements, and to characterize the first MOLLUS and GAR meetings in the 1860s as the first reenactments.

Veterans and modern reenactors are not only linked by their shared purposes, however. They are also linked by the manner in which they achieve those purposes. For example, like modern reenactors, veterans' groups were deeply concerned with their uniforms. For a soldier, uniforms serve many purposes—they create group unity, separate civilians from soldiers, and separate friends from enemies. They served the same purpose for the veterans. At official functions, GAR members generally wore their actual uniforms from the war, or else a black suit and hat decorated with GAR ribbons and insignias. UCV members also wore their actual uniforms on occasion, though this was rarer, given the quality of Confederate material and the long gap between the end of the war and the founding of the organization. As an alternative, UCV members tended to don simple gray coats, ties, and UCV insignias.

Veterans and modern reenactors also share a deep interest in authenticity, though their definitions of that concept differ. For modern reenactors, a truly "authentic" object is a reproduction manufactured in such a way as to be indistinguishable from the real thing. They do not use actual Civil War equipment, as they do not wish to risk damaging something irreplaceable. Veterans, by contrast, held the exact opposite view. They preferred real equipment and, consistent with a disdain for industrialization, were suspicious of anything manufactured. A complaint about all the brand-new flags on display at an 1891 event is illustrative: "Flags were there in plenty; but they were as a rule the trumpery pennons of individuals, or the brand-new gaudy banners of the different posts, and not in the least historical or important."[14]

Another notion common to both veterans and modern reenactors is a belief in the importance of interacting with the public. The veterans' construction of monuments and involvement with education has already been discussed. In addition, veterans participated regularly in civic ceremonies, funerals, and parades. They gave lectures and speeches, and wrote

memoirs and editorials. Indeed, they utilized virtually every means of reaching the public that was available to them in order to promote their various messages and causes.

Still, for many observers, modern Civil War reenactment is not defined by its purposes, or the uniforms, or by classroom presentations, but instead by battle re-creations. Veterans first began to conduct these in the late 1880s. They would gather at a battlefield—particularly Gettysburg—to camp out and revisit the spots where they had fought, often going so far as to retrace the maneuvers they had executed during the battle. They did not generally carry weapons, or simulate combat, as later reenactors would. Still, they were on a battlefield, channeling the common soldier's experience, trying to recapture elements of the Civil War. This surely fits comfortably within any possible definition of "reenactment."

The battle re-creations of the 1880s evolved into the Blue-Gray reunions. The Blue-Gray events began as exchanges—Union veterans would pay a visit to Confederates; then, the next year, the favor would be returned. In 1881, for example, there were several such events: GAR members traveled to New Orleans during Mardi Gras to help decorate the graves of Southerner soldiers; members of the Association of the First Virginia Regiment visited a GAR post in Trenton, helping the Yankees to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Yorktown; and the GAR post of Carlisle, Pennsylvania met with Confederates from the Luray Valley in Virginia to commiserate over the death of President and former general James Garfield.[15]

1887 witnessed the first Blue-Gray reunion to involve veterans traveling to a battlefield and re-creating their maneuvers. In that year, members of the PDA and the PBA—the same groups shown in the famous 1913 photograph—met at Gettysburg to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the battle. This event, held from July 2 to July 4, has the strongest claim to being called the first Civil War reenactment.

The PBA was made up of survivors from the 69th, 71st, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania Infantry Brigades, all of which saw significant action at Gettysburg.[16] Early on the morning of July 2, 1887, 500 members of the Association convened in downtown Philadelphia. Dressed in identical snow-white helmets and blue flannel shirts adorned with special memorial badges, they marched through the streets of the city as cannons boomed and crowds cheered. They were inspected by the mayor of Philadelphia, William B. Smith, and then boarded the train for Gettysburg, arriving there at 6:00 p.m. At 8:30 p.m., the PBA was joined at the Gettysburg depot by 200 members of the PDA. The former Confederates let loose with a chorus of rebel yells, while the Union men doffed their white helmets. Roman candles were lit and a band played "Dixie" as the two groups shook hands and traveled to the town square together. One Northerner observed: "Pickett's Division, for the first time, was in undisputed possession…of Gettysburg."[17]

Once the greetings were complete, the veterans heard speeches from a long list of dignitaries. Colonel Charles H. Banes, president of the PBA, spoke first. Among his remarks was this sentiment:

> Today, soldiers of the contending armies, we meet as citizens of a united country. The old issues are dead and new ones confront us. We who have fought as the blue and the gray can discuss the past, if need, in the light of the present, as travelers who, after perilous journeys and conflicts by the way, sit down on the mountain top and review the scenes through which they have passed and the dangers of the roads over which they have journeyed.[18]

Banes was followed on the podium by Confederate Captain Edward Payson Reeve of the PDA. His speech utilized similarly syrupy rhetoric, and argued that a monument to both armies should be built on the site of Pickett's Charge.[19] After Reeve's remarks, the veterans heard another thirteen speeches, as well as letters written by President Grover Cleveland and his cabinet, former Confederate general Fitzhugh Lee, newspaperman Charles A. Dana, and more than a dozen others.[20]

July 3 dawned early for the veterans, and after a church service—it was a Sunday—attendees were treated to more of the same. New monuments to the 69th and 71st Pennsylvania were dedicated, each accompanied by a lengthy round of speechmaking. Sallie Pickett, widow of George Pickett, was in attendance, and was greeted enthusiastically. For many attendees, the highlight of the day came when Philadelphian Colonel Andrew Cowan ascended the stage with a sword in his hand. He explained that he had taken possession of the sword 24 years before when a young Confederate officer fell dead at his feet. Cowan expressed his wish to return the sword to Pickett's men, so that they might find the dead man's family and return it. Major J.C. Crocker gratefully accepted the sword on behalf of the Pickett's Division Association.[21]

The high point of the reunion came on July 4. As soon as midnight struck, and Independence Day had officially begun, there was an burst of celebration. A reporter described the scene:

> The midnight stillness was broken by the strains from a bugle of "Way down upon the Suwanee River." Scarcely had its notes died away when the members of the Philadelphia Brigade and Pickett's division began the celebration of the glorious Fourth with the booming of cannon on East Cemetery Hill and the roar of firecrackers in the town. Pandemonium reigned for an hour and a half. No such noise has disturbed this little village since the three memorable days of 1868.

That afternoon, the veterans from Pickett's Division lined up on the battlefield, arrayed just as they had been on the day of Pickett's charge. Great care was taken to make certain that every man was located in the correct spot. Once all was in place, they marched across the battlefield, ultimately meeting up with their Northern counterparts. The attendees were then given the opportunity to request autographs from Sallie Pickett, whose travel expenses were paid by taking up a collection from the members of the Philadelphia Brigade Association. After more speeches, some music, and a concluding religious service, the reunion came to a close.[22]

The entire event, which received national attention, undoubtedly sent a strong message to the rest of the country. This is certainly the conclusion of historian Carol Reardon, who writes, "Through such public celebrations, Pickett's Charge became one of the first and thus one of the most lasting symbols of national reunion." In important ways, however, appearances were deceiving. While there is little doubt that those 700 veterans were enthusiastic about bridging the gap between sections, there is also no compelling reason to believe that they were representative of the veteran population as a whole. Indeed, the overwhelming weight of evidence suggests they were not. On the same weekend that the Pickett's Charge reenactment was held, 150 survivors from the 13th New Jersey were in Gettysburg to dedicate their own monument. The New Jerseyans took great pains to avoid contact with the Confederate veterans. Meanwhile, the GAR took no chances, shifting the date of their 1887 national encampment—scheduled to take place in Gettysburg that year—to the next weekend. Indeed, even within the PBA and the PDA, there was disagreement. The majority of members in both organizations declined to attend, many of them dropping out only after they learned the final details of the agenda. [23]

Despite such evidence to the contrary, however, outside observers seized upon the idea that important national healing had taken place. The media, for its part, was effusive. The *New York Times*, which sent several reporters to cover the event, asserted that, "[The reunion] breathes a spirit of reconciliation and fraternity which shows how futile have been the efforts of the desperate and excited partisans to reopen wounds long since closed." The *Washington Post* agreed, suggesting that the reunion pointed the way towards, "lasting peace and good will among all the people of this mighty republic." The nation's political leaders echoed such sentiments. President Grover Cleveland, for example, wrote a letter that was read at the gathering. He remarked that, "While those who fought and who have so much to forgive lead in the pleasant

ways of peace, how wicked appear the traffic in sectional hate and the betrayal of patriotic sentiment." [24]

It is hardly surprising that veterans' reunions and reconciliation became national news at the precise moment that they did, namely during the administration of Grover Cleveland. Following the Civil War, the Republican Party dominated national politics, doing so almost entirely on the strength of Northern votes. The presidential candidates the GOP fielded in the two decades after the war—Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield—were all, as already noted, veterans and GAR members.[25] For them, it was politically wise to emphasize the differences between North and South, and to rally Northern voters around their disdain for the Confederacy—a strategy known as "waving the bloody flag." That approach was much less useful for Republicans in the 1884 presidential election, however. In part, this was because 20 years had passed since the war had ended, but primarily it was because their candidate—James G. Blaine—was not a veteran.

Meanwhile, the bloody flag was utterly antithetical to the needs of Blaine's opponent Cleveland. He was not a veteran, either, having hired a substitute to take his place during the war. More importantly, as a Democrat, he was dependent on both Northern and Southern votes to get elected. His victory meant that, for the first time since the Civil War, the occupant of the White House was someone who benefited from playing up the commonalities between North and South, rather than the differences. It cannot be a coincidence that the national narrative on veterans underwent a dramatic shift at precisely the same time, moving toward an emphasis on reconciliation and brotherhood.

**The Grand Reenactments**

The apparent success of the 1887 reenactment, coupled with the fact that 1888 marked the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, set the stage for Blue-Gray reunions to grow rapidly in size and scope. Government officials were anxious to facilitate this development, and state and federal officials expended much effort in support of the 25th anniversary reunion at Gettysburg. They made available the land used for the event, gave logistical support, and provided equipment, including 1,000 tents.[26]

In some ways, the 1888 reunion at Gettysburg was a great success. With 5,000 Union veterans in attendance, plus additional thousands of relatives and spectators, 1888 was a dramatic increase over 1887 in terms of turnout. On the other hand, organizers were sorely disappointed with the number of Southerners in attendance. Although the public was told that, "thousands of those who fought in the Army of Northern Virginia," would be there, only 300 Confederates actually came, scarcely more than had been at the 1887 event. As with other reunions, the veterans slept in tents on the battlefield, socialized with one another, listened to speeches, and toured key sights—particularly Little Round Top and the military cemetery–with comrades and family members.

A number of distinguished guests were in attendance in 1888—Union generals Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Abner Doubleday, Francis Channing Barlow, Daniel Sickles, and Henry Slocum were all present, while James Longstreet and John Gordon represented the Confederacy.[27] In front of a throng of reporters, Barlow and Gordon re-created their July 1 meeting on Blocher's Knoll, where Gordon claimed to have saved the injured Barlow's life.[28] The highlight of the 1888 reunion was another re-creation of Pickett's charge.[29] The Confederates lined up on western edge of the battlefield and marched across to the stone fence. There they met the Yankees, and the two sides shook hands and exchanged pleasantries.

Following the 25th Gettysburg, there were several more large Blue-Gray reunions held, many of them dwarfing the 1888 event in size. In September of 1895, for example, the dedication of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park brought together 40,000 soldiers from six different veterans' associations. Also in attendance were a number of dignitaries, including Vice-President Adlai E. Stevenson, several state governors, and nearly every Civil War general still living. The majority of the veterans at the event had not participated in the battles of Chattanooga or Chickamauga, as was the case at all the battlefield reunions held after 1890.

The biggest and most widely publicized reenactment was the 1913 event at Gettysburg. A commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the battle, the gathering was given the moniker "Peace Jubilee." Over 50,000 men attended—44,713 Union and 8,694 Confederate—the most of any veterans' reunion.[30] Attendance was no longer limited to those soldiers who had participated in the battle—men who had fought in the West under Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, John C. Pemberton, Braxton Bragg, and John Bell Hood were also present in large numbers.[31]

None of the generals who had attended the 25th anniversary event in 1888 were present for the 50th anniversary in 1913. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was still living—and even helped with the planning of the reunion—but was too ill to attend and was only a few months from the grave. Daniel Sickles was likewise alive but incapacitated, and all the other generals who had been at Gettysburg in 1888 were dead.[32] Indeed, officers of any sort were scarce by 1913, and the vast majority of attendees at the 50th Gettysburg were men who had been privates or corporals at the time of the battle. The *New York Times* commented on the makeup of the crowd:

> [They were the] young fellows, the mere boys of fifteen or sixteen, who went into the army, some of them, for a devil-may-care love of fighting…those who are left are the gallant young

> irresponsibles who enlisted before they got out of grammar school and patriotically prevaricated about their ages to get in. Such youngsters usually have the constitutions of horses, and it is not surprising that at 66 or so they are the lustiest looking lot of old men that could be gathered together.

Even these lusty old men had their limits, however. The heat that year was oppressive, and alcohol sales had to be curtailed after the first day of the event because too many veterans died.[33]

As was the case with all of the large-scale veteran reenactments, government officials were intimately involved in staging the 1913 event, doing most of the planning, and paying all of the veterans' travel and boarding expenses—a tab that ultimately totaled $2.1 million.[34] It could hardly have been otherwise, as putting together an event so large was an enormous undertaking. Housing had to be provided to all the veterans and their families; the tents constructed ultimately covered 280 acres. 1,297 feet of water line was laid, and several hundred toilets were constructed. 2,000 cooks were hired to man 173 field kitchens, they served a total of 688,000 meals. 35 hospital tents were erected—they provided care to 11,540 individuals. A temporary post office was constructed, as was a morgue to handle the bodies of the nine men who died. [35]

As with all veterans' reunions, the agenda was heavy on music, prayers, and speeches. The most distinguished individual in attendance was president Woodrow Wilson, who delivered a speech modeled on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Among his remarks:

> I need not tell you what the Battle of Gettysburg meant. These gallant men in blue and gray sit all about us here. Many of them met upon this ground in grim and deadly struggle. Upon these famous fields and hillsides their comrades died about them … But do we deem the Nation complete and finished? These venerable men crowding here to this famous field have set us a great example of devotion and utter sacrifice. They were willing to die that the people might live. But their task is done. Their day is turned into evening. They look to us to perfect what they established. Their work is handed on to us, to be done in another way, but not in another spirit. Our day is not over; it is upon us in full tide.

Besides listening to speeches, the attendees in 1913 conducted their own special rituals and ceremonies. Colonel W. D. Mann of Massachusetts, for example, returned the battle flag of the

55th Virginia Infantry—which he had captured five decades earlier—to the governor of Virginia. The veterans also toured the battlefield and its monuments and, of course, did a great deal of socializing. Vermonter Joseph Stone was among those soldiers who came prepared to catch up on old times. He wrote to his wife: "I went to the rebels camp and I found a jolly set of old boys as I ever met we had a very good time and we told stories of war time." [36]

As with the 25th anniversary event, the highlight of the 50th anniversary celebration of Gettysburg was a reenactment of Pickett's Charge. The 1913 version featured 150 unarmed Confederates, who marched slowly across the battlefield followed by a band playing "Dixie." When the Confederates reached the stone fence that had served as the focus of the assault, they were greeted by handshakes from the Union men, and the standard-bearers on each side crossed their battle flags. The Federals then presented the Confederates with a gift—the Stars and Stripes—and the event concluded with participants and spectators joining together to sing "My Country 'Tis of Thee." This brought an end to the 50th anniversary reunion.

Following the 1913 event, the cross-sectional reunions largely came to an end. In part this was because World War I and then the Great Depression took the nation's attention—and tax dollars—away from the Civil War. Mostly, it was because the veterans' organizations—and the veteran population as a whole—were weakened by the deaths of most remaining soldiers from the war. In the 1920s and 1930s, most GAR and UCV posts closed, or were folded into chapters of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) or Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV).

In 1938, however, the federal government decided that there should be one final reunion at Gettysburg—a commemoration of the battle's 75th anniversary. By that time, less than 8,000 Civil War veterans were still living, and only 1,800 managed to travel to the event. They

comprised only a small minority of the 250,000 people in attendance. The now ancient men—the average age was 94—watched the dedication of the Gettysburg peace memorial and heard a speech from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The veterans were, by 1938, too infirm to reenact Pickett's Charge, so that tradition was abandoned. Instead, on July 2, they were treated to a parade of 3,000 veterans from World War I and a fly-by staged by the Air Force. The veterans were delighted by the display, and by the opportunity to commune with their comrades one last time. Departing the event, 92-year-old John Claypool, the commander of the United Confederate Veterans, told a reporter:

> I've just been tickled to death. I've been to lots of reunions, but never anything like this. I knew it would be good, but it turned out better than anything I could conceive.

A GAR member expressed the same sentiment:

> What is exemplified at Gettysburg today could not occur anywhere else in the world but in the United States. The reconciliation and reunion of the men who fought here, the bitterness which has been translated into everlasting friendship—these are true Americanisms.

The 75th Gettysburg was the swan song for veteran reenactment. It was, as all participants knew it would be, the final meeting of the Civil War armies. The UCV survived into the 1940s, with the last Confederate veteran passing away sometime in the 1950s. The GAR limped along until 1956; its final chapter closed upon the death of 106-year-old Albert Woolson, the last living Union veteran.[37]

**Veterans as Symbols**

Consistent with the evidence presented in the previous section, it is clear that some veterans took great delight in attending the reunions, and in making amends with their former foes. These individuals, the ones willing to be photographed with their arms around a former enemy, the

ones willing to gush for newspaper reporters, received much attention, whether they numbered 100, or 1,000, or 100,000. The political leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries—particularly Democrats—were cognizant of this fact, and so were eager to get as much mileage as was possible out of this symbolism. As noted, Grover Cleveland was in the White House for the first reenactments. His response to the 1887 event has already been addressed, and he continued on the same theme in his remarks on the 1888 event:

> The meeting of the survivors of Gettysburg upon the field where they fought 25 years ago cannot fail to teach an impressive lesson and convince all out people that bravery is akin to magnanimity while it reminds them that the object of war is the attainment of peace.

Given Cleveland's liabilities, namely his non-veteran status, he chose not to attend either event. Nonetheless, he was still comfortable imposing his interpretation on both occasions.

At the conclusion of his second term, Cleveland was succeeded by William McKinley. As a veteran and longtime member of the GAR, McKinley was comfortable attending veterans' reunions in person and was much more aggressive in his pronouncements that reconciliation had finally come for the nation. For example, he gave an energetic speech on this theme while attending a veterans' event in October of 1896, only weeks before his election to the presidency. The *New York Times* described the scene:

> This was the note of Mr. McKinley's speech. "Liberty, union, and honor" he declared to be the "high aim of every survivor of the great war." His visitors had come "to testify their devotion to the unbroken and never-to-be-broken Union [tremendous applause] and their purpose to uphold its credit and honor forever. [Cries of "Good! Good!" and great cheering.]" "Let it go forth; let it be everywhere proclaimed that the men of the North and the men of the South stand for the enthronement of justice and the supremacy of the law. [Great cheering.]" "Let us remember now and in all the future that we are Americans, and that what is good for Ohio is good for Virginia. [Continuous applause and loud yells and three cheers for McKinley and Hobart.]"

McKinley's successor, Theodore Roosevelt, was equally enthusiastic in declaring the nation to be healed. At a 1910 reenactment, he announced:

> We can admire the heroic valor, the sincerity, the self-devotion shown alike by the men who wore the blue and the men who wore the gray; and our sadness that such men should have had to fight one another is tempered by the glad knowledge that ever hereafter their descendants shall be found fighting side by side, struggling in peace as well as in war for the uplift of their common country!

Woodrow Wilson shared the Rough Rider's sentiments:

> How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades in arms, enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the quarrel forgotten—except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other's eyes. How complete the union has become and how dear to all of us, how unquestioned, how benign and majestic!

This was in 1913, at the 50th anniversary of Gettysburg.[38]

Newspapers did much to promote this interpretation. Gilded Age and Progressive Era journalists tended to see it as their job to try and solve society's ills, and encouraging sectional harmony certain seemed to fit with that agenda. Further, heartwarming stories make for good articles that sell newspapers. So, their stories were overwhelmingly positive, and hewed closely to the interpretation being offered by political leaders. The coverage of the 1913 Gettysburg event is characteristic. Newspaper stories on the event were filled with pronouncements like this one from the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

> It was an army united in sentiment and united in fact, for the blue linked arms with the gray. They marched the dusty road together from the village, they sat down at the same mess tables and they talked over the way before the same camp fires tonight. If there were any rancor in any heart, any feeling of bitterness, it did not come to the surface, and over the broad expanse of the "city" reunions of those who won and those who tried went on hour after hour.

Or this one from the *New York Times*:

> The Rebel Gray is a popular color in Gettysburg. Any man who wears it is sure of a tumultuous greeting from all the old men in blue who can get within gunshot of him. All through the streets to-day the same picture was being repeated every moment—some old man

> in gray coming along and being instantly pounced upon by half a dozen men in blue and being borne off in triumph. It is a real reunion, the genuine article.

One might ask if Southern newspapers were quite as enthusiastic as their Northern counterparts. By all evidences, they were. The *Atlanta Constitution*, for example, had this to say:

> We are indeed become one nation. And we are dedicating ourselves to the ideal which Lincoln spoke of with such ringing simplicity. As never before in its history, the nation is united in demanding that justice and equal rights be given all of its citizens…The men who died at Gettysburg, where in Blue or Gray, did not indeed "die in vain." The harvest of their sacrifice is a country that no longer nurses sectionalism to make it better, and that approaches the solution of its mutual problem with eyes cleared of bigotry and passion.

If there were any negative reporting about the 50th anniversary Gettysburg event, it would presumably come out of South Carolina—the heart of the Confederacy, and the first state to secede during the Civil War. However, even the *Charlestown News and Courier* gave a glowing review:

> The genuineness of the celebration, the absence of any untoward incident, the spirit of brotherhood there manifested show how completely this country has purged itself in the short space of fifty years of every vestige of sectional bitterness. That the metamorphosis has been so complete is an amazing thing … Yet such is the fact; and the Second Gettysburg, a great victory for the North and the South, is the best proof of it.

It is quite difficult, if not impossible, to tell the Southern coverage from the Northern coverage.[39]

The newspapers also ran a great many heartwarming stories about individual reunions occurring across the battlefield. The *Chicago Tribune*, for example, reported on a meeting at the Peach Orchard, where a veteran from General Daniel Sickles' III Corps crossed paths with the flag-bearer of General William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade. The Northerner was delighted by the encounter, and insisted that he remembered seeing the Confederate during the battle as he retreated. The *New York Times* had several similar stories; one of a meeting at the Bloody Angle,

another of two veterans who swapped their UCV and GAR badges. So enthused was the *New York Times*, in fact, that on July 2nd the paper printed a story incorrectly reporting that the UCV and GAR were planning to merge into a single organization known as the United Veterans of the United States. "The Confederates are wild for it," gushed the reporter who filed the story. "It isn't merely good natured talk; they mean it."[40]

**The Political Agenda**

Given that bylines were scarce in this era, it is difficult to know how fully these reporters really believed what they wrote. However, politicians certainly knew their words were, at best, overly optimistic, and at worst, flagrantly dishonest. The examples of Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson will serve to illustrate this point.

It has been observed already that Grover Cleveland declined to attend the 24th and 25th anniversary Gettysburg reunions, primarily because he would have been out of place as a Democrat and non-veteran. However, his decision not to attend was made much easier by a scandal in which he found himself mired. In April of 1887, several captured Confederate flags were discovered in the War Department. Cleveland, on the advice of his Secretary of War, made arrangements to return them. The move provoked howls of outrage from GAR members across the nation, who were already angry with Cleveland for his consistent vetoes of pension bills.[41] By 1888, he had more reason still to turn down his invitation. Early that year, a GAR event in West Virginia included as its main event a veterans' parade. At the head of the parade was to be a banner bearing the president's likeness. Several GAR units refused to march when they saw the banner, insisting that Democrats were treasonous and disloyal. A near riot ensued, and the parade

crumbled. In short, then, the president had a great deal of firsthand evidence that the wounds left from the war were still raw, regardless of his glowing public statements to the contrary.

Woodrow Wilson knew this as well. When he was invited to speak at the 50th Gettysburg, he was aware that the potential for fallout was enormous, whether he appeared at the event or not. As a Democrat and a non-veteran (like Cleveland), and a Southerner by birth, he knew that if he chose to attend and deliver a speech, his words would be intensely scrutinized for the most minor of missteps. If he chose not to attend, he risked offending Northern voters. He conceded as much to an aide: "If the President should refuse to go this time … it would be hotly resented … it would be suggested that he is out of Southerner and out of sympathy with the nation." Wilson resolved the matter by crafting a speech that focused almost entirely on the present, and all but avoided any analysis of or commentary on the war itself. His approach was evident from the opening lines of his address: "I need not tell you what the Battle of Gettysburg meant…it were an impertinence to discourse upon how the battle went, how it ended, what it signified!"

The politicking of Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson indicates how carefully politicians had to maneuver in order to promote the theme of reconciliation. But they did so nonetheless because they had agendas to promote. Cleveland, as already discussed, used the reenactments to unify his political base and to try to keep himself in office.[42] William McKinley also appeared at veterans' events while seeking election; later he used them to rally Americans behind the Spanish-American War. Theodore Roosevelt, and later Woodrow Wilson, appropriated the veterans in order to sell their program of Progressive reform. Wilson had an additional motive; as an unapologetic racist, nothing pleased him more than unity between the nation's white citizens. Not coincidentally, he began the process of segregating the federal government on July 12, 1913—just one week after speaking at Gettysburg. Calvin Coolidge,

speaking in front of a group of veterans at Gettysburg in 1928, asserted that the best way for Americans to honor the men who fought in the Civil War was to support the work of the Pan American Conference of 1928, so as to make "every effort to prevent any recurrence of war."[43]

For Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 75th anniversary of Gettysburg came at a particularly opportune time, as it occurred in the midst of one national crisis, and on the cusp of another. Indeed, the opportunity to bring the veterans together one final time was deemed so valuable that the president arranged for $1.1 million in funding for the event—a tremendous sum at the height of the Great Depression. In a 1934 speech at Gettysburg and a 1937 address at Antietam, the president used the veterans as a rallying point for Americans in the face of the Depression. At the 1938 Gettysburg reunion, FDR's Secretary of War Harry Woodring continued on this theme, while also anticipating the challenges that the United States would soon face abroad. He ranked "our present troubles" as small to those compared with the ones overcome by the armies of the Blue and Gray. "Inhering from the initiative, the ingenuity, and the courage so manifest thoughout their useful lives," Woodring thundered, "We may rely on your ability and that of our descendents to go forward with America to new heights." It is undoubtedly not a coincidence that the first soldier in the newly created U.S. Army reserve was sworn in on that very day; in some newspapers, the picture of the swearing in ceremony appeared alongside pictures of the Gettysburg event. [44]

**The Reality of Reconciliation**

Again, there was some truth to what the speeches and newspapers articles said, but reporters and politicians dramatically oversimplified and overstated the extent of these sentiments; subsequent historians are guilty of the same. To understand the extent of these misinterpretations, the issue

must be examined from three angles, namely (1) For what reasons did veterans attend the reunions?; (2) How did these attendees conceptualize their participation?; and (3) To what extent did the attendees represent the larger veteran population?

Attending the Reunions: The veterans who chose to attend the earliest reenactments had a many potential reasons for doing so. To start, attendance at reenactments meshed well with the broad goals of the GAR, UCV, and other veterans' groups that were outlined at the beginning of this chapter. It was clear that newspaper coverage of the events would be extensive, which afforded the chance to send a message to the nation—perhaps in favor of specific policy issues like veterans' pensions or national reconciliation, or else in support of broader philosophical concerns like manliness and self-sacrifice. Further, the publicity given to the events guaranteed a large public turnout, giving the veterans the opportunity to discuss and promote their ideas about the history of the war. Finally, the reunions featured a great deal of camaraderie. A GAR member might largely satiate the need for masculine fraternization by participating in the activities of his local post. However, he would rarely have the opportunity to see brothers-in-arms who lived far away, or to see the generals who had led him into battle. The large reenactments offered this opportunity.

For Union veterans, in particular, the reenactments may also have served certain psychological needs. All of the major veterans' reenactments took place on the site of Northern victories, and were heavily influenced by terms dictated by the GAR.[45] Allowing the Southerners to participate, as historian Amy Kinsel has observed, allowed the Northerners to feel magnanimous. At the same time, as historian Robert Hunt has suggested, it forced the Confederates to acknowledge their defeat, and to pay homage to their conquerors. Hunt also

argues that some Northern veterans felt guilty about their behavior during the conflict, particularly their participation in warfare against civilians as part of Sherman's marches. Including Southerners, in his view, helped assuage that guilt. [46]

Finally, it is also worth considering the practical and logistical issues that surely played a role in many veterans' decisions. The big reenactments—the ones that got the news coverage, and the government funding—were infrequent. The opportunity to be lionized, and to be quoted in newspapers did not come often, at least not with the government footing the bill. Further, many veterans were not well off (hence the need for pensions), and the nineteenth century was a time when the majority Americans rarely traveled much beyond their hometowns. The chance to take such a trip, accompanied by one's fellows, was an enormous opportunity and a chance for adventure. We can surely speculate that some veterans were leery of interacting with their former enemies, but nonetheless concluded that benefits of attending outweighed the downsides.

Shaping the Message: Regardless of their reasons for attending the reenactments, veterans were certainly aware that their participation would seem to send the message that all had been forgiven and forgotten. As such, they worked very conscientiously to make clear that their forgiveness only extended so far. Anything that went beyond these boundaries invariably caused tension and dissent.

What the veterans at reenactment were willing to do, in general, was to join together with their former enemies in celebration of their shared experiences as soldiers, and their shared values of manliness and honor. The Union veterans' newspaper *National Tribune* outlined this viewpoint in an 1881 discussion of Confederate flags:

> As ensigns of an unholy cause the Confederate flags are, and of right ought to be, odious to the eyes of loyalty; but as the exponents of manly daring, fortitude, and devotion to an idea

> (although a wrong one) they are entitled to the respect of all men and well worthy of the reverence of those who upheld them so bravely on the field of martial strife.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his 1895 speech before Harvard—which he titled "the Soldier's Faith"—expressed similar sentiments:

> [T]he joy of life is living, is to put out all one's powers as far as they will go; that the measure of power is obstacles overcome; to ride boldly at what is in front of you, be it fence or enemy; to pray, not for comfort, but for combat; to keep the soldier's faith against the doubts of civil life, more besetting and harder to overcome than all the misgivings of the battlefield, and to remember that duty is not to be proved in the evil day, but then to be obeyed unquestioning; to love glory more than the temptations of wallowing ease, but to know that one's final judge and only rival is oneself: with all our failures in act and thought, these things we learned from noble enemies in Virginia or Georgia or on the Mississippi…

If this is the basis upon which Johnny Reb and Billy Yank came together, however, then we should recognize that this did not necessarily represent a dramatic change in attitudes between the end of the war and the 1880s or 1890s. Even while the war was still going on, soldiers from the two sides were willing to fraternize and commiserate on this same limited basis. To take one example, Union soldier S.A. McNeil wrote a 1910 memoir in which he described an encounter between his unit—the 31st Ohio Infantry—and a group of soldiers from Alabama. They relaxed together for an hour and exchanged stories, tobacco, and coffee before returning to their respective armies. "We who had been so chummy with the Alabama boys, almost regretted their sudden departure," recalled McNeil. "They were jolly good fellows and we carried on quite a business with them."[47]

However, despite the fact that (a) McNeil was willing to consort with and befriend the enemy while the war was ongoing, and (b) that he was willing to attend more than one of the Blue-Gray reenactments, and (c) that he was writing 45 years after the war had ended, he still was not willing to let bygones be bygones. Later in his book, he rants at length about the South, with such remarks as:

> "I deeply deplore the vicious sentiment that has gained prominence in recent years and which has been introduced into some of the school books of our country, that the Southern rebellion was not an act of treason."

Clearly, the relationship between Northern and Southern veterans was far more complicated than outsiders presented it, and involved a significant underlying tension.[48]

This lingering tension was also evident in conflicts over reenactment planning, as both sides—but particularly the Northerners—wanted to make certain not to accord too much honor to their former foes. A number of proposed Blue-Gray events of the 1880s failed to materialize in the face of bickering over the placement of flags or monuments. The list of failures very nearly included the very first reenactment—the 24th Gettysburg—which almost broke down due to disagreements over the placement of a monument to Pickett's Charge. The Confederates in the PDA wanted to place the monument at the point of their furthest advance, a segment of wall on the battlefield known as "the Angle." The Union men of the PBA insisted that it be placed at the start of the Confederate advance, a mile and half away from the Angle. The Northerners got their way in the short term, though the monument to Pickett's charge is today in the location favored by the Southerners.

Eventually, organizers became more successful at brokering compromises while planning reenactments. That did not mean that tensions subsided, however, and plans invariably remained tenuous until the days that the events actually took place. At the 1913 Gettysburg reenactment, for example, the Confederates—urged on by editorials in *Confederate Veteran* magazine—refused to use the word 'reunion' to describe the event, and instead called it a "gathering." Several reenactments nearly collapsed over the display of the Confederate Flag, most notable among them the 75th anniversary event at Gettysburg. [49]

Even when the reenactments did take place, they were full reminders that veterans never fully made peace with one another. At the 1888 Gettysburg reenactment, for example, the Confederates refused to participate in most activities, particularly a review parade. The historian Kathleen Georg observes that, "There was not much peace and unity pronounced at this anniversary, where Union veterans still remembered that secession was treason and that the battlefield was a shrine to the Union victory." The situation did not improve with the passage of time. On the first day of the 1913 Gettysburg event, a Union and a Confederate veteran posed for a photo, with the two men shaking hands over a cannon left on the field from the original battle. After the shot had been taken, the Yankee turned towards the Southerner and said: "I'm mighty glad to do this, you know; but still, you know, we did lick you like hell." Two days later, at the Gettysburg Hotel, a Confederate officer's son cursed Abraham Lincoln, and had a bottle thrown at him by a Union veteran. A melee broke out, and the offending Southerner stabbed seven Federals before fleeing. At the 1938 Gettysburg reunion, yet another brawl broke out, triggered when two aged attendees came to blows over the costs of the Civil War. [50]

Perhaps the most prominent example of tensions flaring during a Blue-Gray reenactment occurred in 1900 at an event in Atlanta. The featured speaker on that day was GAR leader Albert D. Shaw. Shaw called upon Southerners to accept the Confederacy's guilt in provoking the war. To teach that the war was justified, said Shaw, "is all out of order, unwise, unjust..." Confederate general John B. Gordon, who was also in attendance, quickly rose and responded to Shaw's remarks, angrily asserting that he would never admit that he was wrong. The exchange inspired a wave of commentary in veterans' journals on both sides, with Northerners condemning Gordon and Southerners Shaw.[51]

The Veteran Population: The truces that took place at veterans' reenactments, then, were both complex and uneasy, and belie the more simplistic interpretation imposed by contemporary commentators and by historians. There is one other major problem with this interpretation, and it is possibly the most significant one. Namely, that it ignores the fact that the Blue-Gray reunions, as tense as they were, were the exception to the rules, and that the overwhelming evidence from the veterans on both sides of the war makes clear that generally preferred not to associate with one another.

To start, cross-sectional reunions nearly always required involvement from the state or federal governments. When the veterans themselves were doing the organizing, they usually chose to fraternize only with their fellows from the same side of the war. An examination of the veterans' events of the 1890s is illustrative. There were two Blue-Gray reenactments over the course of that decade, Chattanooga/Chickamauga (1895) and Atlanta (1899), along with three non-battlefield Blue-Gray reunions in Illinois (1893), Arkansas (1897), and Indiana (1899). During the same time, the GAR held 10 national encampments, while the UCV and other Southern soldiers' groups held 35 national or regional reunions. In other words, large-scale events where only one side was welcome outnumbered cross-sectional events by a ratio of nearly 5 to 1. Some organizations even made a point of publicizing their opposition to the cross-sectional gatherings. One Chicago GAR post, for example, published a circular advising members not to attend Blue-Gray events, explaining that, "we were right in '61 to '65 and our opponents were wrong." On the Southern side, the Association of the Army of the Tennessee passed several similar resolutions.[52]

Even when veterans did attend cross-sectional events, they turned out in relatively small numbers. The reenactments of the 1880s were, as noted, sparsely attended, and could only attract

a handful of Southerners. However, even the most popular events brought together only a very limited segment of the veteran population. The attendance at the 1913 Gettysburg reunion—the most successful of all the veterans' reunions—illustrates this. The Confederate presence was very thin—the men in gray made up only 15% of the total attendance.[53] The 44,000 men who represented the Union were a small minority of the roughly 420,000 Federals still living at the time.[54]

The veterans certainly seem to have voted against reconciliation with their feet, then, with the vast majority avoiding fraternization with their former enemies. Anyone who still wishes to put veterans—and their reunions—at the forefront of national reconciliation has to account for this rather large flaw in the data. The only way to do so is to assume that the men who attended the reunions were representative of those who did not. This is what Paul Buck, for example, asserts in *The Road to Reunion*:

> The number of Confederates attending the [25th anniversary reenactment Gettysburg] was not large. But they came with the approval of their section and were led by men capable of speaking responsibly for those left behind.

In fact, the evidence clearly indicates that the veterans who attended the reunions did not speak for those who were left behind, and did not come with the approval of their sections.[55]

To start, we must consider again the 1913 photograph of veterans shaking hands at the end of the Pickett's Charge reenactment. That image undoubtedly has done more than any speech or book or newspaper article to promote the notion that the veterans of the Civil War eventually forgave and forgot. The difficulty is that the photograph is almost invariably presented out of context, with little information about exactly who the men in the picture are. On closer examination, it would be difficult to imagine a less representative group of soldiers.

As noted, the Union soldiers in the photograph were members of the Philadelphia Brigade. This is the only brigade in the Civil War to draw nearly its whole complement from a single city.[56] In and of itself, this tidbit would simply be a piece of trivia, except that it affords a fairly clear picture of the makeup of the brigade. Philadelphia was at that time populated by a large number of working class Irish Democrats. Consistent with this demographic, the city was also known for its widespread, virulent racism. No less an authority than Frederick Douglass—who, it should be recalled, spent much of his life in the South—remarked that, "There is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than in Philadelphia." The membership of the brigade naturally mirrored the makeup of the town, perhaps even skewing a bit toward the Irish population, as it was partly recruited from local Irish militia units. In any event, it is unlikely that one could find a group of Union veterans more likely to sympathize with the South than one made up primarily of working class white Democrats who were overtly hostile to African Americans. [57]

The Confederates shown in the 1913 photo were, as former members of George Pickett's Division, even further out of the mainstream than the Federals. Following the Civil War, Southern Lost Cause writers sought to assign blame for the Confederacy's loss in the war. To besmirch the great Robert E. Lee would have been heresy, and so they victimized his subordinate James Longstreet, who committed the unpardonable sin of becoming a Republican after the war. These writers focused specifically on Longstreet's performance at the Battle of Gettysburg, and even more specifically on the failure of Pickett's Charge on the third day of the battle. Had Longstreet—and Pickett's men—done a better job during the battle, suggested these Southern interpreters, then the Confederacy would likely have won the war. This interpretation was promulgated primarily in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, edited by former Confederate

general Jubal A. Early. Naturally, the soldiers of the PDA were eager to defend themselves, and produced a fair number of articles doing just that. To silence them, and thus to protect Lee's reputation, they were barred from both the majority of Confederate veterans' events and the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. If Pickett's men wanted to interact with veterans outside their unit, they essentially had no choice to look northward. [58]

The controversy over Longstreet and Pickett affords another hint that the Blue-Gray reunions did not attract a representative sample of Southern soldiers. At the 25th anniversary Gettysburg reenactment, the Confederates received two guests of honor—George Pickett's widow Sallie and James Longstreet. At the 1895 Chickamagua/Chattanooga reenactment, the second largest of all the veterans' reenactments, the most prominent Southern guest was once again James Longstreet, who delivered a speech that earned him rousing cheers. At the 50th anniversary Gettysburg reenactment, the Confederates clamored for a chance to shake hands with a pair of celebrities in attendance: Sallie Pickett and James Longstreet's widow Helen.[59] Given the scorn heaped upon the two generals throughout much of the South, it seems clear that the Confederates at the reenactments did not speak for their sections.

Perhaps the best way to judge the attitudes of veterans, however, is to examine their journals and newspapers. Turning first to the Union side, in 1888 the *National Tribune* reprinted a speech by Brevet Brigadier General J.P.S. Gobin in which he thundered that he was:

> [T]ired of this gush and pretense for the glorification of the veteran simply because he wore a gray uniform with a Southern flag printed on his badge. That badge meant treason and rebellion in 1861, and what it meant then it means now … I want it to be distinctly understood, now and for all time, that the men who wore the gray were everlastingly and eternally wrong.

Three years later, the *Grand Army Record* declared flatly that attendance at Blue-Gray events was wrong, since:

> No Grand Army man in good standing can honorably lend his name to any movement which shall dignify to posterity the name of the traitor Robert E. Lee or shall make him the equal of the loyal, victorious Grant.

In the same year, the *American Tribune* assailed the gatherings, describing them "sickly and spurious sentimentality and an insult to the memory of the Union dead and to the living veterans." In 1896, the *Journal of the Thirtieth Annual Encampment* echoed this sentiment, characterizing the reunions as "blasphemy."[60]

On the Confederate side, the rhetoric was perhaps even more vitriolic. The primary veterans' journal on the Southern side was *Confederate Veteran*. From its first issue to its last, *Confederate Veteran* opposed the Blue-Gray reunions in particular and the North in general. One can quite literally select any issue of *Confederate Veteran* and find articles that bitterly denounce the North. Looking, for example, at the final issues of 1916—nearly 30 years after the reunions had begun, and more than 50 years after the war ended—there is an article arguing that the Civil War was caused by fanatical Northern abolitionists, and another decrying "Northern Conscience and the War." In the latter piece, James H. McNeilly writes:

> Probably no people, their character and institutions, were ever so thoroughly misunderstood and so malignantly misrepresented as those of the Southern section of the United States by the leaders of so-called moral and religious sentiment in the Northern section. And to-day the most insidious efforts to perpetrate those falsehoods and to circulate them in literature are by the preachers and religious writers of the Northern States.

The same issue contains a prominent advertisement for a fawning book about the Ku Klux Klan, promising, "Splendidly illustrated photographs of Nathan Bedford Forrest"—arguably the most unreconstructed Confederate of them all.[61]

**Conclusion**

The veterans who attended the first Civil War reenactments were a small minority and were not a representative sample of the broader veteran population. They went for reasons that were varied and complex, often disregarding the strongly expressed wishes of their peers. On this very shaky foundation, politicans and newspapermen—later followed by historians—built a narrative of the postwar era that improperly placed veterans at the very center of national reconciliation.

The veterans participating in the reenactments recognized the potential for their actions to be misinterpreted. They were careful in trying to place limits on what their attendance meant, and they reacted angrily and sometimes violently when those boundaries were violated. Ultimately, their feelings on the issue mattered very little. The image of Confederates and Federals joining together on the battlefield—reenacting Pickett's charge with handshakes instead of bullets, singing patriotic songs, shaking hands for the camera—was simply too compelling to be ignored.

The last living Civil War veterans missed the centennial by only a handful of years. And with the centennial would come a second generation of reenactors. The reenactments of the 1960s were not the work of veterans, of course, nor even their descendants, necessarily. The reenactors of the 1960s were primarily teenagers, interested only in fun and camaraderie. But with the centennial coming at the height of both the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, their commemorations could not be ignored. As the next chapter will illustrate, the Civil War soldier remained a powerful symbol, even when he was being represented by a facsimile.

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[1] *Pennsylvania Commission. Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission.* Harrisburg, Penn.: Wm. Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1915, 60.

[2] The first quote comes from the July 2, 1913 edition of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The second comes from the July 10, 1913 edition of the *National Tribune*. Both are reproduced in *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission* (Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, 1914), pages 200 and 212, respectively.

[3] Eric T. Dean has been particularly effective in making the argument that we forget the negative elements of the Civil War veterans' experience, because the Civil War was (in contrast to Vietnam) a "good war." See Dean, Eric T. *Shook Over Hell: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Civil War*.

[4] Buck, Paul. *The Road to Reunion*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937, 256; Foster, 112; Shaffer, 7-8; Blight, 8-9; Connell, Stuart. *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992, 190; Reardon, Carol. *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997, p. 101; Silber, Nina. *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Dearing, Mary. *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the G.A.R.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952)

[5] Neff, 241; Harris, 6.

[6] See McConnell, Stuart, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) p. x-x for a discussion of the growth of the GAR in the 1880s and 1890s, and Foster p. 104-8 and 112-14 for the same on the UCV. Foster also observes that the same phenomenon happened with other wars—for example, the Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1890, and the Society of Mayflower Descendants was founded in 1897.

[7] Women were, however, free to join their own organizations, which were often auxiliaries to the men's organizations. The two most prominent were the National Woman's Relief Corps (founded 1884), United Daughters of the Confederacy (founded 1894).

[8] For an excellent discussion of fraternal organizations in Victorian America, and how they helped men cope with the stresses of their lives, see Carnes, Mark C. *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

[9] The generosity of this pension, coupled with the fact that federal revenues were fairly low before the adoption of the income tax, meant that as much as 40% of the entire federal budget was spent on pensions in some

years. For a more thorough discussion of Union veterans' pensions, see McClintock, Megan J., "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families," *Journal of American History* (September 1996), p. 456-480 and Skocpol, Theda, "America's First Social Security System: The Expansion of Benefits for Civil War Veterans," *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 1 (1993), p. 85-116.

[10] For a discussion of the GAR's involvement in politics, see Dearing, Veterans in Politics. For a specific discussion of the organization's early forays into politics, particularly Illinois state politics, see p. 50-88.

[11] For a discussion of the UCV's involvement with the politics of segregation, see Logue, Larry M., To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 125-129.

[12] Logue, 125; Brown, Thomas J. *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004, 49; Benjamin Harrison, U.S. president and GAR member, was a major supporter of the Pledge of Allegiance. At his prompting, it was first used in public schools on October 12, 1892, during Columbus Day observances; Brown, 40-41. Naturally, the inscription was adjusted to match whatever state the monument might be in.

[13] *Journal of the National Encampment, Grand Army of the Republic* (1888), 211. For a discussion of the GAR's efforts to shape history education, see McConnell, 224-232. For a discussion of the UCV's efforts, see Foster, 116-125.

[14] *MacMillian's Magazine* 65 (November 1891-April 1892), 133.

[15] See Foster, 68-70 and Blight, 201-202 for discussion of the Blue-Gray reunions.

[16] The Philadelphia Brigade—as it was known during the Civil War and after—has a pair of unusual distinctions. First, it is the only brigade in the entire Civil War to come entirely from one city. Second, as a courtesy to their commander, Oregon Senator Edward D. Baker and to the people of California, the four infantry regiments were initially known as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th California, despite being from Pennsylvania. When Baker died in October of 1861, at the Battle of Ball's Bluff, the four units were renamed.

[17] McDermott, Anthony W. and Reilly, John E. *History of the 69th Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry, a Predominantly Irish Regiment (Mostly From Philadelphia) Which Saw Extensive Service During the American Civil War*. Philadelphia: D.J. Gallagher & Co. (1889), 53-56.

[18] *The New York Times* (July 3, 1887), 2.

[19] This idea ultimately came to fruition. The "High Water Mark of the Rebellion" monument was dedicated on June 2, 1892.

[20] *The New York Times* (July 3, 1887), 2.

[21] *The New York Times* (July 4, 1887), 1.

[22] *The New York Times* (July 5, 1887), 1.

[23] Reardon, 107; *The New York Times* (July 1, 1887), 5; *The New York Times* (July 10, 1887), 3.

[24] *The New York Times* (June 22, 1887), 4; *The Washington Post* (July 3, 1887), 4; *The New York Times* (July 3, 1887), 1.

[25] They were also generals, as were Chester Arthur (who succeeded the assassinated Garfield) and Benjamin Harrison. William McKinley, the last Civil War veteran to serve in the White House, concluded his career as a soldier with the brevet rank of major.

[26] *The New York Times* (June 24, 1888), p. 3.

[27] The most prominent living general who did not attend was Oliver O. Howard, who commanded the XI Corps during the battle. All other Union and Confederate corps commanders at Gettysburg, as well as overall commanders Robert E. Lee and George Gordon Meade, were either in attendance in 1888 or were dead. Howard did not explain his absence, but rumors circulated that he remained angry about being upstaged by Winfield Scott Hancock during the battle, and therefore refused to help in commemorating it.

[28] The main source for this famous story is Gordon, who recounted it in his 1901 memoir *Reminiscences Of The Civil War*. According to Gordon, he found the injured Barlow as his troops overran Union forces on the first day of the battle. Gordon saw to it that Barlow was attended to, and even allowed the general's wife through the lines to care for him. Fifteen years later, the two men crossed paths unexpectedly in Washington—greeting each other with much delight and surprise, as both had believed the other was dead. Gordon's version of events—written nearly 40 years after the fact—is certainly embellished, and is considered by many scholars to be apocryphal. However, the meeting between Barlow and Gordon at the 1888 reunion suggests that there must be at least some truth to the tale, as Barlow presumably would not consent to reenacting a lie, particularly in front of so many reporters.

[29] In contrast to the 1887 event, this re-enactment covered the same terrain that the original charge had.

[30] *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission,* p. 37.

[31] In the context of the Civil War, "the West" refers to those armies that fought their battles in the southern and western portions of the Confederacy—Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, primarily. By contrast, "the East" refers primarily to the state of Virginia, along with the small handful of battles fought in the North.

[32] Chamberlain died on February 24, 1914. Sickles followed on May 4, 1914.

[33] "Gettysburg Honor To Girls Of '63; Reception to Six of Those Who Welcomed Buford's Men, All That Could Be Found. Sang The Same Old Songs. Breeze Tempers Heat, and Prostrations Are Few. Veteran Found Dead -- May Close Saloons " *New York Times*, July 1 1913, 1.

[34] The various states contributed $1,175,000, with Pennsylvania's $450,000 leading the way. The balance of the $2.1 million was paid by the federal government. See *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission,* p. 37.

[35] For a full breakdown of all the construction projects, and costs, see *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission,* p. 30-70. Eight Union men and one Confederate died, all of them between 65 and 75 years of age.

[36] John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database). Available from World Wide Web: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65370; Joseph Stone to "My Dear Bell," Gettysburg, 30 June 1913, GNMP Archives, VF 11-61.

[37] "Blue and Gray Start Home; Gettysburg Reunion Hailed Success by Departing Veterans" *Los Angeles Times* (July 6, 1938), 17; *New York Times (*July 2, 1913), 1; Because of pension rules, there was much motivation for men to claim veteran status fraudulently. This, coupled with the fact that many Confederate records were destroyed, means that there is much uncertainty about who was really the last Confederate veteran. There are at least a dozen claimaints to the title; all died between 1951 and 1959. As already noted, the last of these to die was Walter Williams, whose status as the last living Confederate veteran was reported in newspapers upon his passing, and whose claim was accepted for more than 40 years, but has been debunked. At present, the likeliest candidates for the honor are Thomas Riddle (1846-1954), William Townsend (1846-1953), William Jordan Bush (1845-1952), and Pleasant Crump (1847-1951). Among these four, only Crump has been conclusively proven to have been a veteran, but the others each have their

advocates. In contrast to the last-living Confederate veterans, Woolson's claim as the last living Union man is universally accepted as valid. However, his age at death is disputed—some sources say he was 108 years old, most say he was 106.

[38] For a discussion of McKinley and his uses of Civil War veterans, see Kelly, Patrick J. "The Election of 1896 and the Restructuring of Civil War Memory" in Fahs, Alice and Joan Waugh, eds. *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004, 180-214; "Union and Honor," *New York Times* (Oct. 12 1869), 4.; Roosevelt, Theodore and Gordon Hunter, ed., *Selected Speeches and Writings of Theodore Roosevelt*. New York: Vintage, 2014, 51;

[39] For a discussion of the late 19th and early 20th century press, see Smythe, Ted Curtis. *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003 and Dicken-Garcia, Hazel. *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989; *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 2, 1913), 1; *New York Times* (July 2, 1913), 1; *Atlanta Constitution* (July 2, 1913), 1; *Charleston News and Courier* (July 5, 1913), 4.

[40] *New York Times (*July 2, 1913), 6.

[41] Cleveland's difficulties with veterans are discussed at length in Jeffers , H. Paul, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*. New York: W. Morrow (2000).

[42] The plan did not work terribly well; he was defeated for reelection in 1888 by Benjamin Harrison, a Civil War veteran. Cleveland reclaimed the White House

[43] John Woolley and Gerhard Peters,The American Presidency Project

[44] *New York Times* (July 2, 1938), 1; See, for example, the front page of the July 2, 1938 issue of the *Los Angeles Times*.

[45] The grand reenactment at Chickamauga and Chattanooga is the only possible exception to this, as it took place on the site of both a Union victory (Chattanooga) and a Confederate victory (Chickamauga).

[46] Kinsel, Amy J. *From These Honored Dead: Gettysburg in American Culture, 1863-1938*. Ph.D. diss., 1992, 274; Hunt, Robert. *The Good Men Who Won the War: Army of the Cumberland Veterans and Emancipation Memory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010, 78-79.

[47] Quoted in McConnell, 191; Posner, Richard. *The Essential Holmes: Selections From the Letters, Speeches, Judicial Opinions, and Other Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr*., Chicago: University of Chicago

Press, 1992, 155; S.A. McNeil, *Personal Recollections of Service in The Army of the Cumberland* (1910), 243-44.

[48] *Ibid*, 266.

[49] Kinsel, 286; Kammen, 417.

[50] Quoted in Neff, 218; *New York Times* (July 1, 1913), 6; *New York Times* (July 2, 1913), 3; *New York Times* (July 1, 1938), 2.

[51] Foster, 164.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] Confederates made up about 40% of the soldiers who served in the war, so with 15% attendance they were exceedingly underrepresented.

[54] Exact figures are difficult to come by here. The 1910 census asked respondents about their service in the Civil War, but the data collected was judged to be so inaccurate that a final tally was never calculated. However, according to Mary Dearing's *Veterans in Politics* (p. 496), GAR membership in 1900 was 276,662, and roughly 40% of Union veterans joined the GAR By extrapolation, there were 691,655 veterans living in 1900. Given the rate at which veterans passed away, on average, roughly 422,000 Union veterans would have been alive in 1913.

[55] Buck, 259.

[56] Roughly 95% of the men in the Philadelphia Brigade came from Philadelphia, of course. The balance came from surrounding counties. The unusual construction of the Brigade is a product of its atypical history; it was raised singlehandedly by Oregon Senator Edward Baker so that he might serve as a general in the field.

[57] Weigley, Russell Frank and Edwin Wolf. *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. Philadelphia: Barra Foundation, 1982, 386.

[58] For an extended discussion of this debate, see "Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman" in Gary Gallagher, ed. *Lee and His Army in Confederate History*, 252-282 and William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987.

[59] "MRS. LONGSTREET WITH BLUE AND GRAY; Widow of Confederate Commander Writes for The Times Her Gettysburg Impressions. WAR HEROINES SLIGHTED. Some Day, She Says, the Nation Will Erect a Monument to the Women Who Waited at Home," *New York Times* (July 2, 1913), 2.

[60] Quoted in Linenthal, Edward. *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991, 95; *Grand Army Record* VI (August 1891), 4; *American Tribune* (October 16, 1891), 4; Department of Massachusetts, Grand Army of the Republic, *Journal of the Thirtieth Annual Encampment 1896*. Boston: Mass. GAR, 1896, 270.

[61] *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 24 No. 12 (December 1916), 570; *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 24 No. 11 (November 1916), 486.

# "Peace Between the Races Has Not Been Secured":

# The Centennial Reenactors

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Ross Kimmel has been fascinated by the Civil War for more than 50 years. The "war without end," as he calls it, "fascinated me from earliest childhood." Growing up in the 1950s, his interest was entirely unremarkable: "all the kids in my neighborhood had dime-store kepis, either blue or gray, depending on their family's allegiance." By the time he was 12, Kimmel had begun pursuing his interest in earnest—reading about antique weapons, building plastic models, and perusing the popular gun catalogues published by Robert Abels.[1]

In 1960, while browsing at a National Rifle Association convention, Kimmel and his father encountered a booth for the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA). Founded in 1950, and still in existence today, the N-SSA is an organization that conducts shooting competitions using Civil War weaponry. In the early 1960s, there were no reproduction arms available, so all the equipment used was original. Kimmel was enthralled—he signed up immediately, and from his first competition he was hooked. "Most teenage boys in the early 1960s idolized sports figures and rock stars," he observes. "I trembled in the presence of N-SSA founders."

By May of 1960, Kimmel was a full-fledged member of the 1st Maryland Infantry— the "Blackhats," as they liked to call themselves. The group was comprised almost entirely of adolescents, except for its charismatic and mercurial leader, Gerry Rolph. The young Kimmel had never taken an interest in sports, so his father was delighted to see him join a male subculture. Kimmel soon learned that the camaraderie between the Blackhats was just as important as the shooting, especially given that "we certainly were not very good shots." Most members had nicknames—Mong, Howdy Doody, Humpty Dumpty, Kingfish, and so forth. The

unit also had initiation rituals—for the amusement of veteran Blackhats, new members were invariably asked to fetch the nonexistent Hyman tool to fix muskets, or equally nonexistent Kleenbore Caps, which supposedly kept guns cleaner when firing. Women, meanwhile, were strictly forbidden. "In those medieval days before modern feminism," Kimmel remembers, the Blackhats' only female member was Henrietta, a stuffed chicken that the unit sometimes carted along to events. The boys in the unit were allowed to smoke, drink, and curse—a first for Kimmel and most of his comrades. It "definitely constituted a right of passage," he says.

That a grown man could spend all his time socializing with teenage boys without raising suspicion, as Gerry Rolph did, reminds us of how long ago 1960 really was. Kimmel acknowledges as much:

> Today, adult male leaders of youths are, for good reason, subject to close scrutiny, but I never encountered any of that sort of thing during the Centennial (nor school, Cub Scouts, summer camp, church groups, or anything that had adult male leaders). I didn't even know what a "homosexual" was until a school chum clued me in at about the 8th grade. I don't believe I was even conscious of knowing a gay male until adulthood. It was a different time.

The relationship with Rolph was not the only element of Ross Kimmel's experience that clearly belongs to a different time. Just as Rolph's role in the Blackhats was not a problem, neither was the fact that minors were playing with real firearms. "There was no anti-gun sentiment in those days," explains Kimmel. Likewise, the Confederate battle flag was not nearly as politically charged as it is today. After a 1960 parade in Annapolis, each of the Blackhats was given a Confederate flag by Maryland officials. "Imagine a state government handing out Confederate flags now!" Kimmel chuckles.

At the same time, much that would be unremarkable today attracted a great deal of attention back then. Kimmel remembers an incident in 1961 where several of the Blackhats were shocked by "some pretty hot women doing some pretty hot dancing." One reenactor breathlessly

described it as "something out of a strip parlor." The dance was the Twist. In 1964, Kimmel grew his hair long, influenced by the example of the Beatles. Though appropriate to his Confederate impression, the hairdo was the subject of much derision, and on occasion even caused him to be denied access to a public restroom while attending a reenactment in the Deep South. This incident opened his eyes to, "how much of a pariah a young man with long hair or a beard was to most people in the 1960s."

In the early months of 1961, Kimmel's involvement with the N-SSA deepened, and he became cognizant of a division in within his unit. Some Blackhats, including Rolph, were primarily interested in shooting and the competitive aspects of the hobby. Others, including Kimmel, were more interested in the theatrical elements. For this group, Kimmel says, "When it came to practicing marksmanship or improving our impressions, the latter got priority." Indeed, though Kimmel's ancestral ties were to the Union, he was primarily willing to join a Confederate unit because of the Blackhats' reputation for having the most authentic equipment and uniforms.

Fortunately for Kimmel and for those who felt as he did, the start of the Civil War Centennial opened up new alternatives to the N-SSA's events. The first large-scale modern reenactment was held at Manassas, Virginia in 1861 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Manassas.[2] Kimmel was ecstatic at the prospect, which would allow him to focus on his costume and performance without having to worry about marksmanship. "No kid waiting for Christmas has done so with more eager anticipation than those of us waiting for Manassas," he remembers.

The Manassas reenactment—as with the rest of the Civil War centennial—occurred during the height of the Cold War. It did not escape the notice of the nation's political leaders—from the president on down—that celebrating the war's anniversary offered an opportunity to

encourage patriotism and national unity. And so, the Manassas reenactment was, in every detail, geared toward that end. The speeches delivered that weekend, the reenactment program, the script for the reenactment itself—all framed the Civil War as a story of Americans overcoming their differences so as to make the nation stronger. In this way, the leaders of the 1960s simply picked up where their predecessors in the 19th and early 20th centuries had left off, utilizing the common soldier of the Civil War as a powerful symbol of national unity.

Some of the reenactors were enthusiastic Cold Warriors. Gerry Rolph, for example, was rumored to have had a rifle and ammunition buried in his backyard for the expected Soviet invasion. He also converted his Volkswagen minibus into a survival vehicle, with supplies of food, water and gas so that he could be ready to run when the missiles came. The teenagers who made up Gerry Rolph's unit, by contrast, were somewhat less passionate. Kimmel, for one, makes clear that he did not reenact in order to make a political statement, or to show his support for the government. At the same time, he did not object to the message that was being sent. "Patriotism was a given in my youth," he explains, "and no reenactor ever questioned that. Not only did everyone (except foreign students) say the Pledge of Allegiance in school every morning, we had prayers and Bible readings as well!" He also admits that, "Vietnam was starting to heat up then, and everyone was in favor of kicking butt there." Though Kimmel did not serve in the war, a great many of his comrades in the Blackhats did.

Besides the battles and parades, Ross Kimmel's career as a Civil War reenactor afforded a number of other interesting opportunities. In October of 1960, the Blackhats were featured in an article for the *Washington Post*. The next year, they traveled to Gettysburg for a meeting with Dwight D. Eisenhower. After a demonstration of Civil War drill, the recently retired President inspected the unit, feeling their uniforms and peppering them with questions about the war. The

Blackhats were afterward treated to lemonade in glasses engraved with five carved stars and the initials DDE. In 1963, Kimmel was one of the principal figures in the creation of the short-lived Hardtack and Coffee museum in Gettysburg. The museum, which featured interactive exhibits and displays about the life of the average Civil War soldier, was an attempt to translate reenactment into something more permanent. It struggled to draw visitors, and ultimately had to close its doors for lack of funds. In 1964, Kimmel again got to meet a celebrity—this time artist Andrew Wyeth. Like Dwight D. Eisenhower, Wyeth was a Civil War enthusiast, fascinated by the material culture of the Civil War.

Side activities notwithstanding, Kimmel's focus remained on the reenactments. But by 1963, the events had become more much complicated. In addition to the Cold War, there was another era-defining event that unfolded in the early 1960s. That, of course, was the Civil Righs movement. The relevance of the Civil War to Civil Rights was obvious, at least to some observers. And so, by the latter part of the Civil War centennial, the reenactments were entwined with both the Cold War and the struggle for Civil Rights, For many Americans on both sides of the civil rights question, Confederate soldiers—even if they were just reenactors—were a powerful symbol of Southern resistance to civil rights.

Some Confederate reenactors were happy to embrace this role. Gerry Rolph, to use him again as an example, regularly used racist language in the presence of the Blackhats to demean civil rights activists. He was not alone in holding such views. "Some events bore an uncomfortable resemblance to white resistance," remembers Kimmel, "and some guys seemed only to be there because there was no Klan event that weekend." However, there was a significant portion of the reenactment population—even among the Confederates—that was exceedingly uncomfortable with the agenda that was being forced upon them. "We certainly had

no ulterior motives as white supremacists," insists Kimmel. Though he concedes he was, "never a Civil Rights activist," Kimmel came to be a strong supporter of the movement's principles, even resigning from his parents' country club because of its segregationist policies.

Ross Kimmel's experience reiterates the ongoing theme explored in both the previous chapter and the next one. The Civil War soldier is an important American symbol. In whatever circumstances he might appear, he is certain to be scrutinized and utilized by outsiders. Kimmel and his comrades were really just kids who wanted to shoot guns. For most of them, politics were incidental. Even if they agreed with the message they were being used to promote, that agreement was largely just a happy coincidence, and had nothing to do with their participation in reenactments. But as with the generation of veteran reenactors that came before them, and the generation that succeeded them, their actual thoughts and feelings mattered little.

Ultimately, for many members of the centennial generation of reenactors, the pressure and the scrutiny heaped upon them became too much. Ross Kimmel, for his part, temporarily ended his career as a reenactor in 1965. He participated that year in the Grand Review of Reenactors, a recreation of the Grand Review of the Union Armies that took place in May of 1865—although in the 1965 version, Confederates were allowed to participate. Thereafter, Kimmel gravitated toward Revolutionary War reenactment. In part, this was because Revolutionary War reenactment promised something exciting and new, but primarily it was because the Revolutionary War was not fraught with political overtones. "Whereas the Civil War bore baggage, especially in regard to civil rights issues," Kimmel recalls, "the Revolutionary War was uncontroversial." His retirement from Civil War reenactment lasted nearly 30 years; he did not return to the ranks until 1994.

**The Second Generation of Reenactors: 1961-1965**

The previous sketch gives a fairly good sense of the general character of the men—the boys—who reenacted during the Civil War centennial. Nonetheless, it is useful to examine them a bit more closely, so as to have a clearer idea of how they differed from the other generations of reenactors.

To start, it must be noted that the reenactments of the centennial drew on many different groups of people. These events were organized by government officials, or else by committees that they appointed. Naturally, organizers preferred participants who were enthusiastic, reasonably knowledgeable, and had their own equipment. As such, they generally turned to the Blackhats and other such groups first. However, there were too few N-SSA volunteers to create a full battle, particularly on the scale that was desired. As such, the ranks were filled by recruiting local National Guardsmen, police officers and other civic employees, and just about anyone else who was willing to volunteer. These latter groups are virtually impossible to document in any meaningful way. Further, such individuals often participated simply because they were doing their civic duty or they were following orders from their commanding officers. Consequently, this chapter will focus on the individuals who populated organizations like the Blackhats. [3]

Of course, as already noted, there were really two different communities even within the Blackhats and other N-SSA groups. The first was made up of people like Gerry Rolph, gun enthusiasts for whom the Civil War was secondary. The second was made up of people like Ross Kimmel, Civil War enthusiasts for whom shooting guns was secondary. Both factions participated enthusiastically and extensively in the centennial. However, as Kimmel notes, the divide between the two became increasingly clear over time. The first faction would ultimately leave reenacting behind and return to full time N-SSA participation. The second was responsible

for evolving the hobby, and so planting the seeds for the third—and current—generation of reenactors.

Whichever of these two directions the centennial reeanctors leaned, however, they certainly had some important commonalities. The first, and most defining characteristic was their youth. Excepting the handful of older males like Gerry Rolph, nearly all of the centennial reenactors were teenagers. Because they were so young, their motivations for participating in reenactment seem to have been the least complex. Chapter 1 explored the various reasons that veteran reenactors participated in veterans' groups and Blue-Gray reunions; Chapter 3 will do the same for modern reenactors. Centennial reenactors, by all evidences, seem to have been motivated almost exclusively by the things that appealed to Ross Kimmel—fun and male camaraderie. Burton Kummerow, who also participated extensively in the Centennial reenactments as a teenager, explains:

> It was more about a bunch of young buddies, discovering the Civil War together, traveling to events that were always a disappointment, but always having fun together and, in a sense, growing up together.[4]

Just as their motivations were simplistic, so too was their understanding of the Civil War. Veteran reenactors, of course, had participated in both the battles and the political debates of the war. Many modern reenactors have spent decades studying the Civil War, often with benefit of a college education. The centennial reenactors had none of these advantages. Further, as will be discussed later in this chapter, they grew up at a time when the popular understanding of the Civil War had become rather oversimplified. As such, the reenactors of the 1960s had little awareness—particularly in the first half of the centennial—that they were being used to advance a slanted interpretation of the Civil War. Some centennial reenactors may have agreed with the Civil Rights movement, others may have favored continued segregation, and some may have

been supporters of the Cold War. But largely, they just did not care very deeply. Kummerow emphasizes this point, in explaining why he chose to join a Confederate Unit:

> This decision had nothing to do with politics and little to do with actual history. I was simply attracted to the look and mystique of true citizen soldiers with limited resources. In any case, my politics never were and never will be even vaguely Southern. I'm still channeling my Yankee ancestors.

The veteran reeactors strove to clarify the meaning of their participation in reenactments; today's reenactors do the same. The centennial reenactors, by contrast, did little to challenge the interpretations imposed upon them by outsiders, given their combination of apathy and youthful naivete. [5]

In addition to their young ages—and the general attitudes and orientation that youth implied—the Centennial reenactors are also distinguished by how rapidly they evolved. Certainly, there are differences between the reenactors of the 1880s and 1930s, or those of the 1980s and 2010s, but they are fairly subtle and took decades to fully emerge. By contrast, there were some striking differences between the reenactors of 1961 and those of 1965. At the start of the centennial, the reenactments were laughable in terms of historical accuracy. The two days worth of battles held in 1961 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the one-day-long First Manassas were characteristic. Some members of the N-SSA wore the best facsimile uniforms they could piece together, but they found themselves surrounded by "National Guardsmen running amok in dime store kepis," according to Kummerow. The Guardsmen and other volunteers generally wore combat boots, blue jeans, and white t-shirts, a decidedly un-Civil War costume. [6]

Even more galling, from the viewpoint of the N-SSA participants, was the weaponry used in the reenactments. The Blackhats all carried antique weapons that had actually been used in the

Civil War. These were vastly outnumbered, however, by the 20th century pistols and rifles—particularly World War II vintage M1 carbines—that were on display. "You did not even need a real Civil War gun," complains Kimmel. "Any .22-caliber rifle or shotgun would do." The cannon in use at Manassas were no better. Facing a shortage of authentic Civil War artillery pieces, organizers arranged for over a hundred World War II howitzers to be arranged around the battlefield. This was not only anachronistic, but quite dangerous. [7]

In addition to butchering the details of Manassas, the participants at the reenactment also did much disservice to the big picture of Civil War history. In the real battle, Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson stood his ground in the face of Union gunfire, earning him the nickname "Stonewall." In the reenacted version, Jackson was gunned down by an overly enthusiastic Union private. The Jackson reenactor tried valiantly to avoid this miscarriage of historical fact, "dodging" a half dozen shots fired at point-blank range before finally consenting to be killed. The same fate befell Union William T. Sherman. He was one of the few Union officers to distinguish himself with his conduct at the battle; afterward, of course, he played a pivotal role in the North's victory in the war. In the 1961 reenactment, by contrast, he only survived for an hour. Some small consolation: "Sherman" was wearing general's insignia, instead of colonel's rank that he should have had. So, either way, he ended his life as a general officer. [8]

Following Manassas, some members of the N-SSA began to invest a great deal of time in trying to make their impression as accurate as was possible. This was an uphill battle. To start, the information and materials needed for an authentic impression were not easily available. Further, they were still surrounded at the reeactments by people—including some N-SSA

members—who cared little for authenticity. As Kummerow observes, "We were trying to time travel and modern America was not cooperating."[9]

At the same time, they also began to think more carefully about their audience. This is a logical progression—proper costuming and props are at their heart issues of performance, and a performance requires an audience (whether that audience is fellow reenactors, or is the public at large). In addition to improving their impressions, some of the reenactors began to visit schools, to do presentations at reenactments, and even—in the case of Ross Kimmel and his friends—to create museums. In assessing his participation in the Civil War Centennial, Kummerow explains that the most important effect it had on him was to get him thinking about these sorts of issues. He concludes:

> The Civil War Centennial ended up being as much about the modern, unfinished business of the war as about any real history. Many of us naively seeking historical truth, however, found a new way to teach public history.[10]

A deep and abiding interest, both in historical accuracy and in reaching the general public, are among the defining characteristics of today's reenactors. As such, the second generation of reenactors planted the seeds for the third generation of reenactors—the group that will be picked up in the next chapter. As they tried to do so, however, the centennial reenactors found themselves engulfed in a political maelstrom. The seeds of that maelstrom, in turn, were planted well before Ross Kimmel or Burt Kummerow ever stepped onto a battlefield.

**Planning the Centennial Reenactments**

The central figure of the Civil War centennial celebration, at least at the start, was a man named Karl Betts. It might well be said that Betts lived his life in reverse. Born in 1892, the critical event of his early life was World War I, where he served as an infantryman. That conflict imbued

him with a deep sense of patriotism, and a fascination with military history. It also gave him his wife of 39 years. "I came back from World War I with a French wife and a German police dog," he would tell friends. "The dog left me but my wife remained for 39 years."[11]

By the time Betts' wife died in 1957, a different war had come to dominate his life. The Civil War had been a passion since childhood, but by the late 1950s it had grown into an obsession. In the 1930s, Betts and a group of friends began taking hikes of Civil War battlefields. These eventually grew into "Battlefield Crackpates," informal Civil War discussion groups. In 1951, Betts and three friends decided a more formal organization was in order, and they founded the Washington, D.C. Civil War Round Table (DCCWRT). The DCCWRT began life with 26 members, and then quickly expanded to over 100. By the end of 1951, the membership rolls included noted historian Bruce Catton, Major General Ulysses S. Grant III, and Rear Admiral John B. Heffernan. The group continued to grow in size though the 1950s, eventually reaching a peak of about 500 members.[12]

In late 1956, the members of the DCCWRT conferred among themselves and decided that it was incumbent upon the federal government to properly commemorate the upcoming Civil War centennial. A centennial subcommittee of the DCCWRT was formed, with Betts as its chair. By December of that year, the committee had completed work on a proposal that called for the establishment of a national Centennial Commission of 25 members. Betts and his fellow DCCWRT members were politically well connected, and so it was not hard for them to gain the attention of Congress, which approved a resolution creating the National Civil War Centennial Commission on September 7, 1957, giving it a budget of $100,000.[13]

At that time, $100,000 was a substantial amount of money for such a project, and the members of Congress had clear expectations as to what they were buying with the government's

money. In 1957, the Cold War was at its height. The Korean War had ended only a few years before, and the United States was increasingly committed to the Middle East and Vietnam, militarily. Nikita Khruschev assumed the premiership of the Soviet Union in 1955, and adopted a militant stance toward the United States. In November of 1956, he made a jingoistic speech addressed to Western political leaders, concluding with the promise that, "We will bury you!" In August of 1957, little more than a week before the Centennial Committee legislation passed, the Soviet Union conducted its first ICBM test. Shortly thereafter, in October of 1957, the USSR would become the first nation to reach space with the launching of Sputnik.

In this context, political leaders saw the Centennial as an invaluable opportunity to promote national unity and civic pride. Expressing his enthusiasm for the project as the Centennial got underway, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed:

> That a Nation which contained hardly more than 30 million people, North and South together, could sustain 600,000 deaths without faltering is a lasting testimonial to something unconquerable in the American spirit. And that a transcending sense of unity and larger common purpose could, in the end, cause the men and women who had suffered so greatly to close ranks once the contest ended to go on together to build a greater, freer, and happier America must be a source of inspiration as long as our country may last.

Other leaders linked the Centennial celebration to the Cold War even more explicitly. Secretary of the Army Wilbur C. Brucker, for example, suggested that Americans should take care to heed the example provided by both sides in the Civil War, for the United States now confronted, "the most ominous challenge since the birth of the nation," from the "Communist conspiracy." Eisenhower and Brucker were simply borrowing from the playbook of Grover Cleveland, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. as discussed in the previous chapter The common soldier of the Civil War, and the distorted narrative of brotherhood and forgiveness developed

during the veterans' reenactments between 1887 and 1937, remained enormously useful in the 1950s and 1960s. [14]

In 1958, leadership of the Centennial Commission was placed in the hands of Ulysess S. Grant III and Karl Betts, as chairman and executive director, respectively. Both men had a clear understanding of the Commission's purpose. "We are confident," Grant asserted, "That the results will lead to a better popular understanding of America's days of greatness, a more unified country." Betts concurred, writing that, "Every section of our land and our people won from the Civil War the treasure of our national unity. And that is what Americans will glory in when the Centennial rolls its curtain."[15]

Apparently, neither Grant nor Betts had any idea that their approach might be controversial. When asked about the possibility in 1959, Betts replied, "We don't fight these battles any more, we study them." Grant and Betts were both Northerners by birth, but their ideas about the war were exceedingly Southern in character. There is an old cliché that "history is written by the victors," but by the early 20th century, the Lost Cause—intermixed with a healthy dollop of Reconciliationist thinking—became the preeminent interpretation of the war across the nation. This was evident in popular films like *Gone With the Wind* (1939), as well as the books of such authors as Douglas Southall Freeman, Thomas Nelson Page, and Mary Tucker Magill. These authors were succeeded, in turn, by the generation of writers that included Bruce Catton—the most popular Civil War writer of the 1950s and 1960s. The work of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Catton and his peers evolved the interpretation even further, minimizing questions of race and slavery while retaining the storied elements. It was this hybrid Lost Cause-Reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War—one honoring the heroism and honor of both

North and South, focusing on drama and inspiration, and celebrating the reunification of the country—that held sway when the centennial began. At least, it did among white Americans. [16]

**Manassas, 1961**

Held on the weekend closest to the 100th anniversary of the First Battle of Bull Run, the reenactment at Manassas was not the first event of the Civil War Centennial, but it was certainly the first great success, attracting an estimated 100,000 spectators. According to newspaper accounts, the attendees were about equally divided between Northerners and Southerners, and included people from each of the 50 states as well as Canada. The reenactment itself lasted three hours, and was staged on both Saturday and Sunday of the centennial weekend.[17]

The Manassas reenactment resulted from a remarkable amount of cooperation between various groups. Local businesses sponsored the event, while local residents volunteered their manpower. The federal government, in the form of the National Park Service, allowed the use of the battlefield itself, and also helped a great deal with the planning. The National Civil War Centennial Committee, while not directly in charge of the event, provided advice and substantial logistical and financial support. The state government of Virginia, and the Virginia Civil War Centennial commission also provided financial support. The state governments of every other state that had sent troops to the original battle sent a contingency of men to participate in the reenactment. The groups that made the centennial commemoration and reenactment possible, then, represented many different segments and stratums of society, all coming together in service of the same agenda.

As the federal government had hoped, an emphasis on national unity permeated the Manassas event. In 1960, President Eisenhower sent a letter to the Manassas Centennial

Corporation that reiterated his previously expressed thoughts about the Centennial. He noted his approval of the Manassas reenactment, arguing that it would, "…serve to remind all Americans of the bonds which now unite us." His letter was reprinted on the front page of the program handed out to the 100,000 attendees, making clear to all what the theme of the event was to be. Eisenhower was so enthusiastic about the plans to reenact the battle that, as noted, he hosted Ross Kimmel and the Blackhats at the Gettysburg farm to which he had retired, inspecting them and observing a drill demonstration.[18]

To maintain the unity theme, event organizers bent over backwards to treat the South and North as absolute equals. For example, the script provided to reenactment participants explained that Manassas was where "35,000 untried men under Union General Irwin McDowell matched their raw courage against 34,000 equally courageous but untested Southerners." The event program made a similar assertion: "On this field the guns of Ricketts and Griffin thundered the courage that would be the Union army's in battles yet to come, and Southern boys showed a determination that indicated the war would be more than a three months' affair."[19]

Of course, the most powerful statement of the organizers' message was the reenactment itself. Reenactments inherently promote the message that North and South were not especially different, by eliminating political, economic, and social differences between the two sides, thus reducing the combat to what the soldiers had in common, their bravery and their willingness to sacrifice. The Manassas reenactment went even further than this, however. In the real battle, the defeated Federals turned tail and fled back towards Washington, D.C. The reenacted version, however, concluded with Northerners and Southerners joining together in the middle of the battlefield to sing "God Bless America."[20]

Meanwhile, as Manassas event organizers worked to promote unity, they strove to silence any mention of race issues. In this, they were successful, for one of the most notable aspects of the event was the absolute absence of people of color. Because the event was large and well attended, it was very well documented. The paperwork generated by the organizing committee was carefully preserved. Newspapers from across the country covered the event. Several filmmakers were paid to document the reenactment, in hopes that the National Park Service could use the footage as an interpretive aid. And throughout all of these different documentary sources, African Americans are entirely invisible. There is no reference to emancipation or civil rights or slavery in any document in the National Park Service's files on the Manassas Centennial Commemoration. No speech or letter raised these issues. Newspapers from both Northern and Southern towns were satisfied to ignore the race issue. In the film footage of the reenactment, no African-Americans can be discerned among the thousands of spectators or the participants.

Naturally, nothing could have pleased Southern partisans more than downplaying the race issue. But there were also other, more subtle ways in which the event reflected a heavily Southern perspective. To begin with, Manassas is the Southern name for the battle, and organizers were careful to use it exclusively, and to avoid using the Northern name, Bull Run. Additionally, the stories of how Manassas was the place where "The Rebel Yell was born" and "Stonewall Jackson earned his name" were repeated ad infinitum—in advertisements for the event, in the script for the reenactment, in the program, and so forth. Both of these stories are important parts of Southern mythology. To take yet another example, several different internal memoranda, press releases, and other official documents created by the event's planners refer to the "gallantry" of the soldiers.[21] 'Gallant' is not a word that occurs much in everyday usage, but

it perfectly encapsulates Southerners' Lost Cause-inspired view of the Confederate soldiers as latter-day chevaliers. That being the case, the repeated use of the word in official correspondence seems a clear indication of how deeply the Southern perspective had permeated even the subconscious minds of the individuals staging the reenactment.

**Interlude**

Karl Betts was thrilled with the Manassas reenactment. He boasted that it had drawn, "The greatest audience ever to witness an outdoor spectacle in America." He was particularly pleased that the South had gotten its due at the event, reportedly even boasting that the Confederacy may not have won the war, but it surely was going to win the Centennial.[22]

Others shared Betts' enthusiasm. The Manassas Centennial Commission received letters expressing satisfaction with the reenactment from across the nation; from Massachusetts and Georgia, from Maine and Mississippi, from Minnesota and South Carolina. Teachers, parents, authors, politicians and career military men all gave positive feedback. That the event had an essentially Southern character was confirmed when letters from the Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy arrived, commenting on how much their members had enjoyed the celebration.[23]

Indeed, so positive was the response that other states scrambled to organize their own reenactments. Plans for events were soon underway in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee, and a host of other states. Members of the Vermont Civil War Centennial Commission gloated that they were the only New England state to see action during the Civil War, and promptly organized a reenactment of their "battle," even though it was only a small skirmish involving Confederate troops that had crossed the border from Canada.[24]

Members of the Florida Civil War Centennial Commission complained that no battles had taken place in their state, and that the primary military presence during the Civil War had been blockaders. "The destruction of Jacksonville … and the capture of Pensacola and its forts are events not easily re-enacted, to say the least," lamented one Florida Centennial Commission member. There is no way to be certain exactly how many reenactments were held between 1961 and 1965, but it was surely more than a hundred, most of them very well attended.[25]

Despite the enthusiastic response, not all Americans were happy with the Manassas reenactment. Critics suggested that reenactments were not an appropriate way to commemorate the centennial. The Manassas event was "The Civil War with popcorn," sniffed the *Nation*. Other journals concurred, describing the event as a "shabby circus," and "grisly pantomime." One reporter even expressed his hope that the reenactors would begin using live rounds, so that the country would "be free of one of the sicker elements," of the population. Most professional historians agreed with this assessment. Bruce Catton, though a favorite among the reenactors, felt that re-creating battles made light of "the appalling bloodshed of this most sanguinary conflict." John Hope Franklin wondered "Why is it that a mature, somewhat sophisticated, and indisputably powerful nation would subject itself to ridicule before the entire world with the vulgar reenactment of the Battle of Bull Run?" [26]

National Park Service officials were also in the chorus of naysayers. In a report on the Manassas event, Regional Director Leonard J. Volz remarked on the "Coney Island" atmosphere of the reenactment, and advised that no further reenactments be allowed on National Park Service grounds, writing:

> [I]t is suggested that the Reenactment of the Battle of First Manassas be considered an exception to our policy regarding reenactments and that we firmly adhere to the policy hereafter. I don't think any battle reenactment can be conducted, no matter how well

> intentioned, that won't finally appear as a "show" or celebration rather than an appropriate commemoration of a solemn event in our history.

Ultimately, Volz had his way. Most future reenactments were not held on NPS grounds, with the 1962 Antietam event and the 1963 Gettysburg event as the only exceptions.[27]

As controversial as the form of the Manassas reenactment was, its message was perhaps even more problematic. African American leaders quickly joined with white Northern and Southern liberals to express their dismay at the extent to which the Centennial celebrations, particularly Manassas, were ignoring slavery and race. African-American activist A. Philip Randolph asserted that "There is no doubt that this whole Civil War Centennial commemoration is a stupendous brain-washing exercise to make the Civil War leaders of the South on a par with the Civil War leaders of the North, and to strike a blow against men of color and human dignity." Jesse Lemisch, a white leftist, described the Manassas reenactment as a, "surrender to the South." Meanwhile, African-American scholar and civil rights activist Lawrence Reddick called for Confederate symbols to be gathered up and burned, in order to expose, "the Confederate myth for the unhistorical romance much of it is."[28]

African-American leaders throughout the country quickly got to work to keep the South from dominating the Centennial. They sought to integrate themselves into future centennial planning and commemorations. They held their own commemorative events, most notably a well-attended rally at Abraham Lincoln's tomb in 1962. They also urged President John F. Kennedy to issue a second Emancipation Proclamation on the centennial of the first. Having depended on Southern votes in order to take office, Kennedy declined the proposal.

Karl Betts had believed that race issues could be muted during the centennial celebrations. In 1959, he predicted that, "any possible complications resulting from the integration problem will soon disappear." How wrong he was. By the time the Manassas reenactment came to an end,

his downfall was already underway, and it was entirely due to an "integration problem." Ironically enough, the city where the remaking of the Civil War Centennial Commission started was Charleston, South Carolina, site of the Commission's 1961 national assembly.[29]

The purpose of the national assembly, which met annually beginning in 1958, was to gather the state Civil War commissions and various other local groups to discuss their plans. To maintain a geographic balance, the site of the meeting was alternated between a Northern and Southern location each year, and so it was that Charleston was chosen. As representatives from the various Civil War organizations began to make their travel arrangements for the meeting, it came to light that Karl Betts had chosen a segregated hotel for the meeting, and that the handful of African-American delegates to the National Assembly would not be allowed to stay there. Such an oversight might have been forgiven if it had been promptly rectified, but Betts refused to take any action at all to correct the problem, arguing that it was beyond his control. Outraged, several state delegations threatened a boycott of the Assembly. Ultimately, President Kennedy intervened, arranging for the use of a local military base in place of the segregated hotel.

Although a crisis had been averted, Betts' and Grant's days of leading the National Civil War Centennial Commission were numbered. The Manassas reenactment added more fuel to the fire. So too did a number of skeletons from Grant's closet that came to light. In the late 1940s, he had worked with Washington, D.C. businessmen to secure the passage of segregation ordinances. In 1959, as commander in chief of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Grant had allowed an article to be included in the organization's newsletter that argued that Jewish financiers had helped cause the Civil War.[30]

Finally, on August 30, 1961, the members of the Centennial Commission required Grant to convene an emergency meeting. After a brief debate, Betts was ordered to submit his resignation.

Shortly thereafter, Grant also resigned. Officially, Grant attributed the departure to his wife's ill health, but the truth was that he was angry about Betts' removal, and also concerned that Congress might soon remove him as well. Following Grant's departure, the Kennedy administration purged the rest of the committee of any other individuals with similar racial politics.[31]

In short order, Grant and Betts were replaced by historians Allan Nevins and James I. Robertson, Jr. In a statement released shortly after assuming the chairmanship of the National Centennial Commission, Nevins made clear that while he appreciated the importance of promoting national unity, there were other issues that could not be ignored:

> Southerners died for what they believed a just cause. A host of white Northerners died for what they held a sacred duty; a host of Negroes died, many in the uniform of the United States, for the achievement of freedom and human equality. We must honor them all.[32]

Nevins and Robertson also had different priorities as to how the Centennial should be commemorated. They immediately poured their energies and their funds into a series of scholarly projects. These included publishing the papers of Jefferson Davis and Ulysses S. Grant and commissioning a series of books about the impact of the Civil War on various facets of American life, including religion, the economy, government, and race relations.[33]

Nevins and Robertson were also willing to support certain types of commemorative ceremonies, but reenactments were not among them. Nevins felt that the Manassas event had a "carnival atmosphere," and had been "an affront to good taste." "If the National Commission tries to reenact [another] battle," he wrote, "My dead body will be the first found on the field." Robertson agreed, remarking that, "we feel that reenactments possess too much celebrative spirit and too little commemorative reverence. The soldier playing mocks the dead." By no means did

the reenactments stop, but no longer would they have the support of the Centennial Commission.[34]

And so, there were big changes in the National Civil War Centennial Commission between the Manassas and Gettysburg reenactments. And even bigger changes were happening across the nation. Between July of 1961, and July of 1963, the Civil Rights movement took several leaps forward. The "freedom rides" into the South began. Several students at North Carolina A&T refused to vacate the "whites only" seats at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized the Southern Christian Leadership conference and began staging demonstrations. African-American students attempted to enroll at the University of Alabama, and were denied access by Governor George Wallace.

Consequently, when the centennial reenactment was held at Gettysburg, the nation's political climate was substantially different than it had been two years before. And where the Manassas event had offered only one interpretation of what the war had really been about, the Gettysburg reenactment and its associated events was witness to three different interpretations.[35]

**Gettysburg, 1963**

On June 28, 1963, the reenactors—and the rest of the people involved with the 100th Gettysburg—got an indication of what was to come, with the publication of the *Gettysburg Times*' centennial commemorative issue. Included in the issue were letters from the current governor of each of the states who had sent troops to fight at Gettysburg. Many of the letters embraced an obviously Emancipationist interpretation of the war. Typical of these was the submission from Edmund "Pat" Brown of California, who wrote:

> In observing the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, it might be well to remind ourselves that peace between the races has not been secured and that all of us share the

> responsibility to fulfill the promise of this country's founding pledge that "all men" will receive equal treatment under the law.

Brown's sentiments were seconded by several other governors, notably Harold Hughes of Iowa and John Chafee of Rhode Island.[36]

The civil rights issue continued to be raised over and over again as the centennial celebration got underway. On July 1st, Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr. was the keynote speaker. In his remarks, Carver focused almost entirely on civil rights, saying:

> We search for peaceful solution to the civil rights issues of 1963. Peaceful solutions have been found in many areas of this subject, principally through the high principles, the vision and the dedication of constitutional guarantees enunciated by an enlightened judiciary and by far-ranging executive action to assure that these guarantees are not denied, through artifice or legalistic sleight of hand. The president has now called for a new dedication to the equality under law which Lincoln defined as the purpose behind a bloody struggle a century ago. It is time for the Congress to respond—to give positive expression to the ideals for which men fought in the past…

Carver was immediately followed on the speaker's platform by Pennsylvania governor William Scranton. Scranton also addressed civil rights, emphasizing the importance of "driving prejudice out of the human heart at least as rapidly as we are learning to drive men into outer space."[37]

John Carver's speech was particularly important. As an assistant cabinet secretary, Carver was speaking on behalf of the Kennedy administration. During the centennial events of 1961, Kennedy had largely distanced himself from the civil rights question. He had solved the Charleston hotel incident through a compromise, rather than by insisting upon desegregation. As already noted, Kennedy declined to issue a "Second Emancipation Proclamation" in 1962, and he backed out of an invitation to speak at the ceremonies commemorating the first one. For a member of the administration to explicitly call on Congress to pass civil rights legislation in July of 1963, then, represents an abrupt and significant reversal.

Carver and Scranton were not the only people to deliver a speech on the civil rights question, however. On July 2nd, 5,000 people attended a mass held at the Gettysburg Peace Memorial. Officiating at the mass was Notre Dame president Reverend Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, who condemned "The appalling death of freedom for millions of Negro Americans, today, in voting, in employment, in housing, in education, in public accommodations and in administration of justice." On July 4th, several political leaders made speeches at the monuments for their states. In an address at the New Jersey monument, Governor Richard J. Hughes expressed his belief that the United States was "…witnessing an historic movement of the Negro in America, the emergence of their spirit of self-reliance." Meanwhile, speaking at the Florida monument, Representative Sam M. Gibbons warned of the danger of America's leadership ending up in the hands of "racial extremists."[38]

Gibbons' remarks about racial extremists were delivered with one person in mind, and his entire audience knew it. Shortly before the Gettysburg centennial, segregationist Alabama governor George Wallace had made clear his intentions to run for the presidency in 1964. And as he came under attack, Wallace's commitment to segregation deepened. In his governor's letter for the special issue of *Gettysburg Times*, Wallace gave his own, decidedly white supremacist, interpretation of what the Civil War had been about. He expressed concerns about the interference of the federal government in the affairs of state governments, what he called "destructive centralization." And Wallace did not let it stand at that. He decided to appear in person at Gettysburg to deliver a speech in which he defended his actions in denying black students the opportunity to enroll at the University of Alabama. Calling the decision to desegregate Alabama's schools "silly" and "absurd", Wallace explained that he taken the actions he had in order to "protect local government."[39]

Wallace was not the only one to take up the Southern cause, and the Gettysburg reenactment featured a number of celebrations to honor the Confederacy. The best attended was held at the monument to North Carolina troops, located at the east end of the battlefield. Several thousand people waving Confederate battle flags gathered at the monument to adorn it with wreaths and flowers and to hear speeches from prominent North Carolinians. North Carolina State Senator Hector McLean was the keynote speaker, and in his remarks he suggested that "the great victory of the men who followed General Lee came after they had met what the world called defeat."[40]

Meanwhile, other Southern leaders may not have shared Wallace's and McLean's willingness to go to a northern city and condemn the Civil Rights Movement, but several took their letters to the *Gettysburg Times* as an opportunity to advance the Southern perspective. Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, for example, wrote that, "We believe all Americans should recognize legitimate differences in problems of the states, and leave to the states the powers originally authorized by the United States Constitution. It is essential to our progress and security that state sovereignty be maintained…"[41]

Even in the face of increased militancy from both civil rights activists and Southern partisans, however, a Lost Cause/Reconciliationist unity-centered interpretation of the war was still in evidence at Gettysburg. Indications of this sort of thinking were ubiquitous in the official materials, down to the most minute details. Robert E. Lee, for example, is lionized throughout the Gettysburg memorial program, which advises readers that, "Lee is no longer Southern, he belongs to all of us." Describing the reenactment of the third day's battle and how it will differ from the actual battle, the memorial program says, "This time 1,000 men will join in brotherhood and devotion to the Stars and Stripes."[42]

Indeed, while the organizers of the Manassas reenactment were certainly not subtle of the message they were promoting, the Gettysburg event was characterized by the utter lack of guile that was employed, presumably a product of the extent to which the unity message was under attack. In contrast to the Manassas committee, the organizers of the Gettysburg event chose an official theme: "Strength through Unity." In honor of this theme, a commemorative poem by James Van Alen was commissioned and included in the memorial program. Van Alen, a direct descendant of a Union general, selected George Pickett's July 3rd charge as his subject:

> That distillate of bravey, which the world would shortly know
> As "Pickett's Charge" relentlessly was brewing to a boil.
> On Cemetery Ridge's smooth approaches soon would flow
> The best blood in America, to darken the red soil!
>
> The year was eighteen sixty-three, the day July the third,
> And the armies of the Stars and Stripes and Stars and Bars were met.
> The scorching sun had reached its peak, no breeze the treetops stirred,
> The air was quivering with the heat, the troops were bathed in sweat.
>
> For two full days before, from dawn till dark those flags had flown
> Above sons of America locked fast in mortal strife,
> Each fighting for a principle, the height of courage shown,
> The North to save the Union and the South its way of life…
>
> Americans of North and South may justly think with price
> Forever on the way both Blue and Grey fought on that day,
> From start until the bitter end their courage never died,
> Our nation's loss such bravery had so high a price to pay.

This bit of doggerel is only an excerpt. The full version contains 57 verses and, accompanied by illustrations, took up 15 pages in the program. [43]

Many of the political leaders asked to provide their thoughts on the Gettysburg reenactment focused on this theme of brotherhood and unity. In their letters to the *Gettysburg Times*, Carl Sanders of Georgia, John Reed of Maine, and J. Millard Tawes of Maryland, among others, addressed the issue. The comments of Orval Faubus of Arkansas are representative:

> We all learned a costly and tragic lesson in that conflict between brothers one hundred years ago. We learned that our one great nation under God is, in fact, indivisible, and that we must remain united if we are to endure as a nation in this world of turmoil and external dissension.[44]

There were also a number of speeches focusing on the necessity of unity, most notably one delivered by the omnipresent Dwight D. Eisenhower. When asked to speak at the reenactment, he was more than willing, and he was named the keynote speaker on July 2nd. In explaining the need for unity in his address, Eisenhower reiterated his belief that all Americans that the nation had to join together in order to survive the "external threats posed by Communistic dictatorship."[45]

Naturally, the actual reenactors at Gettysburg had no control over any of this. Ross Kimmel, Burton Kummerow, and others of like mind spent most of their energy being frustrated at the anachronistic elements of the reenactment. There was, for example, a dog that kept running across the battlefield, interrupting the solemnity of the occasion. There were helicopters overhead, and spectators who insisted on sitting upon the stone wall, which placed them in the middle of Pickett's Charge. There were speakers that blared corny cannon and gunfire sound effects, and there was even a woman in the ranks. When the Union Army ran out of volunteers, 15-year-old Betsy Carey was given a gun and told to stand at the end of the Federal line. When pressed on the matter, she said, "They just handed it to me."[46]

Beyond venting their irritation, and perhaps enjoying some male camaraderie, the reenactors did they were told, following the script and performing for the crowd. At Gettysburg, that meant not only recreating the battle, but also joining together at the end of each day to sing the Star Spangled Banner. They bore no responsibility for this script, nor for the words of politicians, nor for the controversy that had engulfed the centennial and the nation. Nonetheless,

their pictures appeared in newspapers across the nation, deployed as a symbol of national unity in some places, and of the fight for or against civil rights in others.

**Conclusion**

The Gettysburg event was the last of the large battle reenactments, for a host of reasons. To begin with, after two years, people had grown a bit weary of them, and of the Civil War in general. The opposition of the National Park Service and the Civil War Centennial Commission was also partly to blame. In addition, Southern state commissions sponsored or provided significant funding for most of the reenactments, and Union successes in 1864 and 1865 meant that in 1964 and 1965, there were not nearly as many anniversaries that Southerners cared to commemorate.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the events had grown too politically fraught and too controversial. No city or government agency welcomes that kind of scrutiny and tension. And so, after 1963, the second generation of Civil War reenactment began to draw to a close. There were a handful of events, most notably the Grand Review of reenactors in 1965, but they were few in number and were generally sparsely attended.

After the centennial, Civil War reenactment survived, but just barely. Many reenactors drifted away, because they really preferred shooting to reenacting and so returned to the N-SSA, or else they were bored, or they were tired of the scrutiny, or because staging fake battles seemed inappropriate when a real war was taking place. However, despite this, the seeds for the third generation of reenactment were planted during the centennial, and today's reenactors owe a debt to people like Kimmel and Burt Kummerow.

The centennial had another impact on modern reenactment, this one far less helpful. Thanks to the efforts of George Wallace and other Southern partisans, the meaning of the Confederate soldier and of the South in American culture changed dramatically. This set the stage for the scrutiny that the third generation of reenactors would have to cope with, which will be the primary subject of the next chapter.

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[1] The information about Kimmel comes from his eight-part series, "Confessions of a Blackhat Reenactor" in the 1990 issues of the *Camp Chase Gazette*, and from an interviews conducted with him on July 6, 2006.

[2] As most anyone who has passing familiarity with the Civil War knows, many battles had both a Southern name and a Northern name. Southerners tended to name battles after nearby towns (Manassas, Sharpsburg, Murfreesboro) while Northerners tended to name battles after nearby rivers or other geographical features (Bull Run, Antietam, Stones River). Today, when there are two names, historians generally use the Northern names for battles, though there are a few exceptions (the most prominent example is Shiloh, which was known in the North as Pittsburg Landing). In any event, during the centennial, most of the reenactments were staged in the South and planned by Southerners (or by people with Southern sympathies). As such, most of the reenactments were staged using the Southern names for the battles. That, then, is the convention that will be used here.

[3] For an excellent overview of the logistics and organization of the centennial, see Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

[4] Interview with Burton Kummerow, July 18, 2006.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] Interview with Ross Kimmel, July 6, 2006.

[8] The details in this paragraph are based on footage of the reenactment in the Manassass National Battlefield Park archives.

[9] Interview with Burton Kummerow, July 18, 2006.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Quoted in Victor Gondos, Jr., "Karl S. Betts and the Civil War Centennial Commission," in *Military Affairs* 27:2 (Summer 1963), 52.

[12] *Ibid*., 52-53.

[13] This budget was renewed in most, but not all, of the years between 1958 and 1965.

[14] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Proclamation on the Centennial," December 8, 1960, quoted in Civil War Centennial Commission, *The Civil War Centennial: A Report to the Congress*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968, 11; *Washington Post* (Apr. 9, 1958), B7.

[15] Minutes of the Civil War Centennial Commission, June 5, 1960, Records of the Civil War Centennial Commission (henceforth RCWCC), box 20, National Archives; Karl S. Betts, "A Centennial For All Americans," February , 1960, quoted in Gondos, 56-57.

[16] See, for example, Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study In Command* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1942-44) and *R. E. Lee, A Biography*. New York: Scribner, 1934-35, Page's *Meh Lady: A Story of the War*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893 and *The Old Dominion; Her Making and Her Manners*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908, and Magill's *History of Virginia for the Use of Schools*. Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell Co., 1889. For Catton, see his "Civil War Trilogy": *The Coming Fury*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961; *Terrible Swift Sword*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963; and *Never Call Retreat*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965 as well as . In the books, Catton regularly acknowledges the evils of human bondage, with such remarks as "At the very bottom of American life, under its highest ideals and its most dazzling hopes, lay the deep intolerable wrong of slavery." At the same time, Catton—who was not an academic—regarded himself as a storyteller more than a historian and so his books are populated with many exciting stories of the brilliance of Robert E. Lee, the daring of Stonewall Jackson, and the bravado of J.E.B. Stuart. A Michigander by birth with no particular Southern bias, he was reiterating much of the conventional wisdom of that time. For a fuller analysis of his thinking on the war, and his evolution over

the course of his career, see Blight, David W. American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011, 81-128.

[17] *Rome (N.Y.) Daily Sentinel* (July 24, 1961), 8.

[18] Dwight D. Eisenhower to Manassas Centennial Commission, August 10, 1960, Records of the Manassas Centennial Commission (henceforth RMCC), Manassas National Battlefield.

[19] Francis F. Wilshin and David Thompson, "Script for the Reenactment of the Battle of First Manassas," RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield. Manassas Centennial Program, RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] For examples, see J. Leonard Volz, "Reenactment of the Battle of First Manassas," RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield; Manassas; Francis F. Wilshin and David Thompson, "Script for the Reenactment of the Battle of First Manassas," RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield; Manassas Centennial Program, RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield.

[22] Betts speech, August 7, 1961, RCWCC, Box 31, National Archives. Karl Betts, "The Civil War and Our Unity," *America* 107:42 (Nov. 10, 1962), 1048.

[23] See, for representative examples, John Andrews to James C. Fry, July 24, 1961; Jackie Mumbower to Manassas Centennial Corporation, July 24, 1961; Gloria Scorboria to Manassas Centennial Corporation, July 25, 1961; Fritz S. Updike to James C. Fry, July 25, 1961; Robert L. Henderson to James C. Fry, August 1, 1961; Lucy Fitzhugh Kurtz to Francis F. Wilson, September 12, 1961. All of these letters can be found in the RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield.

[24] This was the St. Albans Raid, which took place on October 19, 1864. It involved less than two dozen Confederates and no Union soldiers. Two civilians and one soldier were wounded, another civilian was killed.

[25] The skirmish in Vermont is known generally as the raid on St. Alban's, and occurred on October 19, 1864. Adam G. Adams, "Activities and Accomplishments, Florida Civil War Commission," April 8, 1963, RCWCC, Box 74, National Archives, quoted in Fried, *The Russians Are Coming!*, 134.

[26] *The Nation*, January 30, 1960, 22; *Holiday*, July 1961, 31; *New York Times*, July 29, 1961, 7; *Richmond Post-Dispatch*, July 26, 1961, 11; *Richmond News-Leader*, May 2, 1961, 8. Franklin, "A Century of Civil War Observance," 104.

[27] J. Leonard Volz, "Suggested Guidelines for Large Scale Special Events, Based Upon Reenactment of First Manassas Experience," August 11, 1961, RMCC, Manassas National Battlefield.

[28] A. Philip Randolph to Howard N. Meyer, July 13, 1961, Bayard Rustin Papers, reel 2, A. Philip Randolph Institute, quoted in Cook, "Un)Furl That Banner," 897. *The Nation*, May 22, 1961. *New York Times*, April 23, 1961.

[29] Karl Betts to Wint Smith, February 6, 1959, RCWCC, Box 71, National Archives.

[30] The Washington Post, June 20, 1959. Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 592. In some small way, Grant III was channeling Grant I. Arguably the most infamous event of the elder Grant's career involved an 1862 order--General Order No. 11--that required the removal all Jewish merchants from his military district. Grant was convinced they were facilitating a black market in Southern cotton. The order was promptly revoked by President Lincoln.

[31] Interview with James I. Robertson, Jr., July 3, 2003.

[32] Allan Nevins, RCWCC, Box 97, National Archives.

[33] In addition to the RCWCC at the National Archives, information and commentary on these projects can be found in Nevins' personal papers, found at the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

[34] Nevins quotes taken from *The Civil War Centennial: A Report to the Congress* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 14, 45. Robertson quoted in Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 215.

[35] It should be clear that the Gettysburg centennial commemoration was staged by the Gettysburg Centennial Commission, and received only minimal guidance from the National Centennial Commission. This made it possible for the reenactment to be staged.

[36] *Gettysburg Times* (June 28, 1963), 22.

[37] Louis M. Simon, *Gettysburg 1963: An Account of the Centennial Commemoration* (Harrisburg, Pa.: W. S. Ray, State Printer 1964), 32-35.

[38] *Gettysburg Times* (July 3, 1963), 1; *Gettysburg Times* (July 5, 1963), 2.

[39] *Gettysburg Times* (June 28, 1963), 13; *Gettysburg Times* (July 1, 1963), 2.

[40] McLean was chosen because his father, A.J. McLean, was governor of North Carolina when the monument was first dedicated. His remarks were printed in the *Gettysburg Times* (July 5, 1963), 3-4.

[41] *Gettysburg Times* (June 28, 1963), 11.

[42] Reenactment script, Records of the Gettysburg Centennial Commission (henceforth RGCC), Gettysburg National Battlefield.

[43] Gettyburg Centennial Program, RGCC, Gettysburg National Battlefield.

[44] *Gettysburg Times* (June 28, 1963), 20; *Gettysburg Times* (July 1, 1963), 1.

[45] *Gettysburg Times* (June 28, 1963), 20; *Gettysburg Times* (July 1, 1963), 1.

[46] *Los Angeles Times* (July 4, 1963), 1.

# "Rebels With a (Lost) Cause"

## Modern Reenactors

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Captain Vern Padgett is a member of the Richmond Howitzers, an artillery unit that includes roughly 20 men. A California native, he is among the more die-hard Confederate reenactors—not in terms of his devotion to an accurate impression, but in his commitment to the "Southern cause." He often writes e-mail messages with titles like, "Rebuttal to ravings of misinformed Yankee propagandists." He thinks nothing of lecturing his fellow reenactors on the "facts the historians leave out," in hopes of correcting what he calls "Northern platitudes."[1]

Padgett is best known—both within reenactment circles and without—for his passionate advocacy of the notion that the Confederate Army included significant numbers of black soldiers. The fact that academic historians categorically reject—and even deride—this idea only serves to inspire Padgett. He has a lengthy and very polished lecture on the subject that he has delivered at dozens of Civil War Round Tables and other Civil War-related gatherings in California.

Padgett's lecture makes use of as much hard evidence as he has been able to gather—a few photographs, a handful of quotations and diary excerpts, and a few other odds and ends. The centerpiece of his argument, however, is creative mathematics. Working backwards from a single piece of information—that a dozen African Americans qualified for a veterans' pension in Tennessee in 1905—he "calculates" how many black soldiers actually served in the Confederate Army. By his figuring, Tennessee had about 10 percent of the South's population in 1905, and so those 12 pensioners actually represent 120 soldiers if extrapolated across the entire South. Further, he notes that only 20% of Civil War soldiers lived until 1905, and so he presumes that

those 120 people really represent 600 soldiers. Padgett continues through several more points in this manner, using what some would call mathematical sleight of hand, and ultimately reaching the conclusion that the Confederate Army included as many as 50,000 to 100,000 black soldiers. This is a staggering number, given that the entire Confederate Army at its height numbered perhaps 1 million soldiers. When pressed as to why a group that—in his analysis—comprised as much as 10% of the Confederate Army has left so little evidence of their existence behind, Padgett falls back on the other main theme of his lecture: that politicians and professional historians like to hide information.[2]

On those occasions that Padgett attends a reenactment as a Confederate, he invariably finds himself with a lot of company. Roughly two-thirds of reenactors portray Southerners. If those individuals who do both a Union and a Confederate impression—'galvanizers,' in reenactor parlance—are included, then the percentage of the community that at least occasionally does a Southern impression jumps to something like 80%.[3] In many places, the imbalance between the two sides is so overwhelming that new reenactors are required to portray Union soldiers for a period of several months to a year, just so there are enough Federals to actually stage a battle. And while it may not be surprising that this is the case in the South, the imbalance between Union and Confederacy also exists beyond the Mason-Dixon line. Of the 50 states, only Massachusetts is known to have more Union reenactors than Confederates, in large part due to the many African-American units based there.[4] Among foreign Civil War reenactment groups, the same imbalance exists.

These numbers—with Confederate outnumbering Federal reenactors about 2-to-1—are essentially the inverse of the actual Civil War. During the war itself, the Union army was comprised of roughly 2.4 million men.[5] This means that the Union enjoyed a manpower

advantage of about 2.5-to-1. This was primarily because the states of the North and West had far more people than those of the South. It was also due to the fact that—regardless of what Vern Padgett says—the Union government could draw on its working classes when building its army, while the South's 7 million slaves were not available to the Confederate Army.[6]

These things were true of the South in the 1860s, and they remain true for reenactment today. That is to say, the states of the North and West—not to mention the nations of Europe—still have far more people than the South. It is also the case that the reenacted Confederate Army largely cannot draw on African-Americans.[7] This being the case, it is intriguing that the majority of reenactors are Confederates. This is the side, after all, that lost the war. The easy answer to this conundrum is that reenactors are politically motivated, that they are maladjusted, reactionary Southern apologists who are either secretly or overtly racist and are trying in some way to rewrite history. This assumption is reflected in the works of scholars like Elizabeth Young and Jim Cullen. It is advanced by documentaries like Jessica Yu's *Men of Reenaction* and Glenn Kirschbaum's *The Unfinished Civil War*. It is perpetuated in popular films and television programs including *Family Guy*, *Borat*, and *30 Rock*. Outspoken characters like Vern Padgett—who are, of course, the most likely individuals to be interviewed by a reporter or a documentarian—certainly help to encourage this impression.

The manner in which outsiders view reenactors does not speak to the actual mindset of the movement, however. In fact, the perception of today's reenactor is primarily a product of factors that are wholly beyond the control of the reenactment community. Continuing with a theme raised in each of the previous two chapters, the Civil War soldier remains a powerful symbol in American culture. Since the 1950s, *actual* backward-looking racists—the Ku Klux Klan, the League of the South, Dixie Republic, some neo-Nazi groups—have made extensive use of the

Confederacy and its symbols, particularly the Confederate battle flag and the common soldier of the Confederate army. The South in general, and any person who utilizes or affiliates with these symbols in particular, has suffered by association. And thus, like the veteran reenactors and the centennial reenactors before them, the current generation of reenactors has little power to change the meaning that outsiders ascribe to their activities. The average reenactor is hardly a tree-hugging Prius-driving, granola-eating, sandal-wearing, ACLU-card-carrying liberal, but even if he were, it would not much matter.

Of course, this still leaves the question of why the South is so popular at reenactments. If donning the gray is not a political statement, then what is the attraction? The answer lies primarily with the "Lost Cause"—the interpretation of the Civil War that was developed by the South in order to cope with their defeat. As discussed in the introduction, the Lost Cause began as a political agenda—one that downplayed slavery and the unlawfulness of secession—wrapped in a pleasant package of chivalry, honor, and heroic figures like Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson. The political and racial elements were muted over time, but the appealing dramatic elements came to dominate national thinking about the war, at least until the mid-to-late-1960s.

The enduring influence of the Lost Cause—or, at least, a watered down version—was evident in the thinking of the Civil War Centennial commission. It was evident in at the large reenactments of the Centennial, particularly Manassas in 1961. It was evident in Civil War-themed television programs like *Gray Ghost* (1957-58). It was also evident in the books of the time, particularly Bruce Catton's *American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War,* which draws liberally on Lost Cause iconography. These things, particularly the books, had an enormous influence on the baby boomers that grew up at this time and fell in love with the Civil War. Those individuals are now the core of the modern reenactment movement. They are

certainly aware of the baggage that choosing the South entails, and most try to distance themselves from the unsavory elements of Confederate and Southern history. But as with the veterans before them, such efforts at clarifying the meaning of their participation have been essentially futile.

**The Third Generation of Reenactors: 1965–Present**

As noted, reenactment requires that a certain critical mass of participants be in the same place at the same time in order to stage a battle. Reaching that critical mass proved very difficult in the years immediately after the centennial, for a number of reasons. One key factor was the loss of government support. Local and state centennial committees had provided funding and, more importantly, the organization for the centennial reenactments. In their absence, it was difficult for reenactment groups to make contact with one another. And without these connections, it was difficult to muster the number of troops needed to stage a suitable event. There were number of attempts to create a central governing body, among them the Sons of Veterans Reserve (SVR), National Re-enactment Society (NRS), Army of Northern Virginia (ANV), and the new Grand Army of the Republic. None of these groups proved all that successful, however, as there was constant infighting over politics, and over what constituted an acceptable level of accuracy.

Beyond the lack of central authority, post-centennial reenactment was undermined by a serious decrease in the number of people who wished to stick with the hobby. Many of the N-SSA members left, of course, finding that they were happier shooting than they were reenacting. Even among those who wished to continue staging battles, there was a divide. Some individuals were interested in remaining with the Civil War. A great many others, however, were weary after spending five years in the 19th century. They were tired of being at the center of political

controversy and were mindful that the Bicentennial would be the next great national celebration. So, although these individuals continued reenacting, they abandoned the Civil War for the Revolutionary War.

Finally, the tenor of the times worked against reenactment. Early Civil Rights agitation, the death of JFK, and the Cold War began to steal wind from the sails of reenactment as early as 1963. This phenomenon only multiplied as the Vietnam War got underway, the counterculture came into being, the nation suffered through a wave of assassinations in 1968, and so forth. As centennial reenactor Ross Kimmel observes, "The social pressures of the times—pacifism, drugs, tune in, drop out—were mitigating strongly against the military history hobby."[8]

Consequently, Civil War reenactment hobbled along—kept on life support by Bill Keitz and a few thousand die-hards—and slowly rebounding from the post-centennial doldrums. In 1970, 40 soldiers was a "large" reenactment; by 1975 attendances in the hundreds were not uncommon. Then came a major infusion of new members, as the United States celebrated its bicentennial. It was a year of much historical pageantry, something that has had deep resonance with Americans through the centuries. Americans were once again eager to celebrate their past, and reenactments did not seem quite so passé as they had in, say, 1967. "There is no longer the distaste of for our hobby as during the Vietnam years," editorialized Keitz in the *Camp Chase Gazette*. Though the eighteenth century was the primary focus of bicentennial events, many organizers found time for the nineteenth century as well. There were a number of well-attended battle recreations, the most notable held at Shiloh. And a July 4th re-creation of Pickett's charge was nationally televised. [9]

The bicentennial awakened an interest in history, particularly "hands-on" history, for many Americans. Some—perhaps many—of those individuals might have chosen to join

Revolutionary War reenactment units, but such groups were fairly rare.[10] Civil War reenactors were much better established, by contrast, and so an eighteenth-century celebration served to bring many people into the nineteenth century fold. It also became easier in the 1970s for Civil War reenactors to create an accurate impression. Sources of information on Civil War soldiers became more readily available with the reprinting of such classics as Bell Wiley's *Johnny Reb*, and John Billings' *Hardtack and Coffee*. In addition, a number of entrepreneurs went into the business of providing relatively accurate replica Civil War arms and equipment. Subsequent developments in the national media—the airing of *Roots* on network television in 1977, coverage of reenactments held during the war's 125th anniversary in the second half of the 1980s, the production of the movies *Glory* in 1989 and *Gettysburg* in 1993, and most importantly Ken Burns' wildly popular 1990 documentary *The Civil War*—attracted even more recruits for the reenactment movement. From a few thousand members in the early 1970s, the community grew was being estimated at 50,000 individuals by the early 1990s.[11]

The character of the third generation of reenactors was, as noted, quite different than that of the second generation. To start, the reenactors of the centennial were, as noted, primarily gun hobbyists. They agreed to reenact largely because it was an opportunity to fire their guns (with blanks, of course) in front of an audience. Outside of a few Ross Kimmels and Burton Kummerows, they were fairly nonchalant about mounting an impressive or accurate performance. By contrast, the individuals who launched the third generation of reenactment split off from the N-SSA specifically because they enjoyed and cared about theatricality far more than they cared about gunplay. They were eventually joined by thousands of people who were drawn into the hobby by the pageantry of the bicentennial, or by dramatic documentaries, television programs, and movies. Nearly all of these individuals were deeply interested in performance.

This meant creating (or buying) appropriate weapons, costumes, and equipment. Accuracy quickly became a paramount concern.

The demographics of the third generation of reenactors were also quite different from those of the second generation. Centennial reenactors were generally chosen for the job because they were local. As most Civil War battles were fought in the South, most centennial reenactments were held in the South, and so therefore most reenactors came from the South. Further, there was no place for African Americans at centennial reenactments, so the reenactors of the 1960s were all white. By contrast, the reenactors of the third generation are far more diverse. There are, members of the community in all 50 states and many foreign countries, along with an African American presence and a small Latin and Asian contingent. The third generation of reenactors is also considerably older than the centennial reenactors; most were middle-aged in the 1990s, now many are old enough to join AARP. While the centennial reenactors were almost all teenagers, the third generation is made up primarily of family men. As noted, some like to bring their wives and kids along. As such, the third generation of reenactment is the first to include substantial female participation—nurses, female soldiers, grieving widows, and so forth.

The third generation of reenactors also came of age in their own unique political and social context. Most members of the third generation of reenactors were children in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. They are the last generation to grow up during the time when the Lost Cause/Reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War reigned supreme. By the time they became adults and reenactors, however, circumstances had changed dramatically, as reactionary whites had re-politicized the Confederate war effort in the 1960s. Metaphorically speaking, the Civil War rug was yanked out from under them.

**Modern Reenactors Under Attack**

To analysts who feel that reenactment is essentially about racism and other forms of conservative backlash, an important element of their argument is the notion that Civil War reenactment is a more "socially acceptable" way to express such sentiments, as opposed to becoming a Neo-nazi or a Klansman. This notion simply does not stand up to scrutiny. Modern reenactors are nearly always presented in a negative fashion by outsiders—embodying one or more elements of the of the modern Southern "redneck" stereotype. This is particularly true of Confederate reenactors, though even Union reenactors are not immune. It would be nigh-on impossible to look at how the reenactors have been viewed by outsiders and to conclude that this is a "socially acceptable" activity.

To start, professional scholars have generally been quite critical of reenactment. Elizabeth Young has published an essay she reveals her suspicion that many reenactors are likely closeted homosexuals, while also asserting that "the collective impact of an admiring reanimation of the Confederacy is the renewal of racism." Sociologist Amanda Elizabeth Kennedy concurs on the latter point, asserting that reenactments "idealize a racist past." These scholars are both deeply interested in gender as well, and so both also find time to denounce reenactors for their sexism, with Young insisting that, "reenactment implicitly wards off contemporary feminism" and Kennedy writing that, "sexism is openly expressed at reenactments, manifested in the donning of traditional female roles, discriminatory treatment at the reenactment itself, and more stringent standards of authenticity for women." Jim Cullen has also examined Civil War reenactment. Interested primarily in issues of race, he reaches a similar conclusion to those of Young and Kennedy in his essay "Patriotic Gore," observing that reenactments make him uneasy, "because it is a way that white Americans assure themselves they have a past, too." Fitzhugh Brundage is

even more disdainful—if that's possible—writing that, "Civil War reenacting is an insignificant pastime of white men who otherwise would build elaborate model train sets, bass fish, or compulsively groom their lawns." Folklorist Rory Turner describes the hobby as a, "vehicle of right-wing reactionary thought," and sociologist Edward Sebesta asserts that, "Confederate reenacting is a form of anti-government militia training." Sebesta is the co-editor of the volume *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*, and is one of several scholars—Brian Britt and Lain Hart are among the others—who draw a connection between Civil War reenactment and the reactionary, right-wing neo-Confederate movement. [12]

The national media has also been critical of reenactors. For example, *Washington Post* reporter Alex Heard attended a reenactment of the Battle of Chickamauga. In his story, he reported that:

> [T]he crackno-American presence was a factor. On Sunday morning I met a Florida participant who had spent Saturday night in camp with the Rebs. He was wide-eyed and pale. Fueled by not-so-authentic cases of Old Milwaukee, they'd let their hair down. "There was ... a lot of racist commentary," he said. "And they all seem to think that if the South had won, they'd be the aristocrats."

On the other side of the country, *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Beth Spotswood visited a reenactment of the Battle of Duncan's Creek. She interviewed a Confederate nurse named Emilie and was surprised to learn that:

> She wasn't in the Confederate camp because she's a redneck or a racist. She looked at her role in her Civil War reenacting hobby as maintaining accurate history. Turns out, her family was on the Confederate side. The flag blowing in the wind nearby wasn't her opinion on domestic policy. It was just what happened 150 years ago, and she was more than happy to tell us about it.

It is not difficult to find similar statements in dozens of other newspapers and magazines. [13]

Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic* is also a significant part of this story. In the book explores many different iterations of Civil War memory as expressed in the modern-day South, from the exceedingly troublesome (an unapologetic white supremacist and anti-Semite named Walt, for example) to the quaint (the *Gone With the Wind* museum, the oldest living Confederate widow). One of the central characters of the book—he appears on the cover, in fact—is Robert Lee Hodge, a Confederate reenactor devoted to capturing the past as accurately as he possibly can (usually through long, punishing marches with inadequate food and shelter), while combating farbs—the reenactors' word for those who are inauthentic—wherever possible. Though Horwitz makes very clear that he is presenting a wide spectrum of belief in his book, the juxtaposition of Hodge with people like Walt served largely to affirm conceptions of Civil War reenactors as unrepentant racists. Consider, for example, these reader reviews of the book posted on amazon.com:

> Required reading for neo-Confederates and those who want to understand them. The material on the "hard-core" Civil War reenactor fringe is at once both fascinating and pathetic.
>
> I have concluded that hardcore reenactors and others who worship the battle flag are suffering from an acute case of inferiority. Why don't white southerners take pride in the great writers from that region or music and folk art admired around the world? The first presidents were all Virginians, and half of the 13 original states were southern. Why can't southerners take pride in these things instead of living up to the stereotypes of racism and ignorance imposed on them by others?
>
> I personally know one of the men that Horwitz interviewed and commented about. Horwitz did a great disservice to this individual in completely misrepresenting him and his motives and activities in the hobby. Instead of presenting him as the calm, thoughtful, introspective individual I know him to be, Horwitz presented him as a rabid extremist.

Horwitz has repeatedly affirmed that portraying Hodge, et. al. as a bigot was not the point, but to no avail.[14]

The documentarians that have examined reenactment have been among the community's worst enemies. Jessica Yu's *Men of Reenaction* focuses largely on the racial dimensions of

reenactment, alternating between interviews of African American reenactors and unreconstructed Confederates, with the latter interviewees insisting that the war had nothing to do with slavery, and that bondsmen were treated well on Southern plantations. Far more troublesome, from the reenactors' standpoint, was Kirschbaum's 2001 reenactment documentary *The Unfinished Civil War*, which received repeated airings on the History Channel. The producers of that program got extensive support from the members of the reenactment community, including hundreds of hours of interviews. When it finally aired, the reenactors were shocked and horrified to hear the program's narrator make liberal use of terms like "wild-eyed wackos" and "flag-waving racists." Perhaps worst of all, the program featured lengthy clips of interviews with former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke, implying a relationship between reenactment and the KKK. The reenactors were so angry about this that they mounted a petition drive—unsuccessful—to have the program permanently removed from the History Channel's library.[15]

Social activists have also weighed in against reenactment. Tim Wise, who advertises himself as an "antiracist essayist, author, and educator" and "one of the most brilliant, articulate and courageous critics of white privilege in the nation" had decried reenactments as "racist bunk."[16] The NAACP has also waded into the debate, expressing general opposition to reenactments across the country. Their position got particular attention in 2003, when Beauregard-Vernon chapter head Reverend James Piper demanded that a planned reenactment in Western Louisiana be canceled. His asserted that reenactments "disrupt harmony" and "disrupt social and civil peace" and explained that he sould not "sit still for something that represents racism."

The entertainment media have been particularly effective at marginalizing reenactors as kooks and racists. As noted, it is a rare modern crime drama that has not had a "reenactment

episode." Confederate reenactors make excellent suspects, presented as social outcasts who are odd, maladjusted, and well armed. A pair of examples will serve to illustrate the general tenor of these programs. In the *CSI* episode "Way to Go," Confederate reenactor Caleb Carson is a social pariah who wears a tight corset at all times in order to make his waist narrower and more accurate to the 19th century.[17] While attending a reenactment, he becomes enraged at a Union soldier who dares to use a cell phone during a battle, and so challenges him to a duel.[18] Unbeknownst to the poor Union reenactor, Carson appears at the duel with live ammunition in his Civil War era revolver. A misfire kills Caleb and saves the hapless Union infantryman's life.

In the *Without a Trace* episode "Cloudy with a Chance of Gettysburg," the viewer first sees a flashback of young Kirby Morris, who is humiliated by having his pants torn off in front of his entire high school while receiving a prize for his historical essays. This causes him to become psychotic, and given that fact along with his love of history, he gravitates toward Civil War reenactment. In the present, we learn that he is in competition with a George Pickett impersonator for the affections of a young Confederate nurse. When Pickett turns up missing, Morris is the key suspect, though the ultimate culprit proves to be a Robert E. Lee impersonator. At the conclusion of the episode, the police detectives comment on how strange the reenactment community is, with one remarking that, "this [case] was an odd one," and the other agreeing that it was, "like being in a Salvador Dali painting."

While crime dramas tend to focus on the notion that reenactors—particularly Confederate reenactors—are maladjusted outcasts, comedies tend to emphasize that they are drunkards, reactionaries, closet homosexuals, and racists. The movie *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* falls into this category, for example. In *Borat*, the foreign-born title character attends a reenactment as a Southerner, convincing his comrades-

in-arms to pray that they will win the war, or at least will avoid being sodomized by the victorious Union armies. Consistent with the general approach of the movie, the purpose of the ruse is cause discomfort and thus to hint at the reenactors' homophobia. In the *Family Guy* episode "To Love and Die in Dixie," main characters Brian and Peter Griffin attend a Civil War reenactment in which a drunken Ulysses S. Grant is knocked to the ground by Robert E. Lee. Lee declares a Confederate victory, and Peter objects, insisting that the North won the Civil War. A riot nearly ensues until Brian distracts the reenactors by shouting, "Hey, look over there! It's a newly married interracial gay couple burning the American flag!" In *The Jeff Dunham Show* episode "Civil War Games," a black puppet named Sweet Daddy Dee visits Confederate reenactors and warns them not to try to sell him into slavery. In the 30 Rock episode "When it Rains, It Pours," a Southern reenactor gives main character Liz Lemon a cassette with Civil War songs and warns her that it's "very authentic, so don't play it around your black friends." And in the *SpongeBob Squarepants* episode "The Battle of Bikini Bottom" reenactors fight a battle that will decide whether or not it is necessary for one to wash one's hands after using the bathroom. Naturally, the Confederates are the dirty, anti-hand-washing faction. [19]

Generally speaking, these various groups of social elites—academics, documentarians, journalists, entertainers—have done a very effective job of stigmatizing Civil War reenactors. Recently, the news site CNN.com ran a story on a Civil War reenactment that generated more than 600 responses. The comments included the following, and many others like them:

> If it was up to these losers, slavery would still be legal and women wouldn't have rights. It's almost been 150 years since the war ended and yet they still fantasize about these "glory days." BOTTOM LINE: YOU LOST! Take that stupid flag down and actually try to help the nation PROGRESS, not REGRESS.
>
> What's more redneck: Civil War Reenactments or NASCAR?
>
> These people are scary. No doubt about it.

> It is a redneck hobby. We should be grateful that they are providing these "history lessons" and not breeding.
>
> It's still a redneck sport in my opinion. When you talk about honoring Confederates who fought and died for slavery, and wanting to mainly pretend to be the Confederate (the bad guy btw), then it's stupid. It's like reenacting the holocaust and wanting to be the Nazis. Granted I've never been to one, but based on what I read, including this article, there just seems to be no moral at these reenactments, no message on why the confederates lost the importance of the union prevailing.

As with the "reconciliationist" veterans, there may be some shade of truth to these characterizations. Reenactors—again, particularly Confederates—are a bit iconoclastic, sometimes to the point of being social outsiders. And there are certainly people like Vern Padgett who are willing to express opinions that some would label "politically incorrect" and others would call "racist." On balance, however, the interpretation of reenactment that has been foisted on the community by outsiders is a serious exaggeration. The community's image is partly its own doing, but is mostly beyond the reenactors' control. Modern stereotypes of the South began to develop centuries before they were born, and hardened into their modern form when most were still teenagers.[20]

**A Brief History of the Southern Image**

Almost from its founding, the South had a distinct regional identity. The North was colonized by sturdy religious folk from northern England who engaged in manufacturing and trade. The South, by contrast, was colonized by adventurers, brigands, and castoffs from the south of England. The latter individuals looked to make their fortune in plantation agriculture and did not hesitate to settle their difficulties with fists or weapons. There is some evidence that distinctive Southern stereotypes had already emerged by the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries—Virginia planter William Byrd, for example, wrote a widely circulated essay in 1728 in which he drew a distinction between respectable Virginians like himself and poor, backcountry "lubbers."

And since this time, dozens of epithets have been applied to part or all of the Southern population. They are slurred as sand hillers, tackies, hillbillies, tar heels, clay eaters, lintheads, peckerwoods, trailer trash, wool hats, mountain men, yokels, hicks, bumpkins, Okies, crackers, and of course, rednecks. Southern stereotypes have been evolving for centuries, though the general trend has been for them to grow more negative over time.[21]

By the nineteenth century, Southern stereotypes had truly begun to blossom. Thomas Jefferson—himself a Southerner, of course—wrote that the people of the South were "hotheaded, indolent, unstable, and unjust" while those of the North were "cool tempered, sober, persistent, and upright." Outside observers, like the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, drew similar distinctions. In *Democracy in America*, he writes that the Ohioan "regards temporal prosperity as the principal aim of his existence…and his avidity in the pursuit of gain amounts to a species of heroism" while the Kentuckian, "scorns not only labour, but all the undertaking which labour promotes…his tastes are those of an idle man…he covets wealth much less than pleasure."[22]

Alexis de Tocqueville was critical of slavery, and with his comparison he hoped to draw attention to the damaging effects of the institution. Writing in the 1830s, he was a fairly early adopter of that viewpoint. However, as the slavery issue became more heated in the 1840s and 1850s, broad negative generalizations about Southerners became more commonplace. Virginian Hinton Rowan Helper, for example, was a Southerner-turned-abolitionist. In his 1857 essay "The Poor Illiterate Whites of the South," he wrote "Thousands of [poor Southern whites] die at an advanced age, as ignorant of the common alphabet as if it had never been invented. All are more or less impressed with a belief in witches, ghosts, and supernatural signs. Few are exempt from habits of sensuality and pleasure." Helper's fellow Southern critic, Alabamian David Hundley, felt similarly. Writing in 1860, he sniffed that:

> [Poor Southern whites] are about the laziest two-legged animals that walk erect on the face of the Earth. Even their motions are slow, and their speech is a sickening drawl, worse a deal sight than the most down-eastern of all the Down-Easters; while their thoughts and ideas seem likewise to creep along at a snail's pace. All they seem to care for, is, to live from hand to mouth; to get drunk, provided they can do so without Page 263 having to trudge too far after their liquor… Lank, lean, angular, and bony, with flaming red, or flaxen, or sandy, or carroty-colored hair, sallow complexion, awkward manners, and a natural stupidity or dullness of intellect that almost surpasses belief; they present in the main a very pitiable sight to the truly benevolent, as well as a ludicrous one to those who are mirthfully disposed.

In short, then, many of the central features of modern Southern stereotypes were in place before the Civil War had even started. When the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter, many Americans already perceived poor white Southerners as slow, stupid, lazy, shiftless, and immoral. [23]

One might anticipate that these stereotypes would grow more pronounced following the Confederacy's defeat and then the South's angry response to Reconstruction and to racial equality. But that's largely not what happened, thanks to the Lost Cause writers—particularly Jubal Early, John Esten Cooke, Thomas Nelson Page, and Edward A. Pollard. The bedrock of the Lost Cause was romantic imagery—gentlemanly Robert E. Lee, daring Stonewall Jackson, magnolias and cotton fields, the idyllic life of the plantations—in which was wrapped a political agenda, full reinstatement into the Union (under white leadership). The architects of the Lost Cause were remarkably successful in their task, as the interpretation gained traction on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. Scholars Karen L. Cox, Nina Silber, and Robert Wiebe, among others, have observed that a South that symbolized an older, simpler America and a life of leisure, individualism, honor, and romance was very reassuring at a time when the world was modernizing, industrializing, and speeding up. Entrepreneurs in all parts of the country seized on this opportunity, creating what Tara McPherson characterizes as a "vast nostalgia industry." Southerners developed a bustling tourist trade, showcasing their region at a number of high-profile events, including the New Orleans Universal Exposition and World's Fair of 1884, the

Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895, and the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition of 1901. Northern novelists such as Owen Wister, John William DeForest, Frank R. Stockton, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich made frequent use of romantic southern settings and symbols, while *Harper's Monthly*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Lippincott's*, and *Munsey's* regularly published extensive southern travelogues.[24]

By the early decades of the twentieth century, as Gaines M. Foster has noted, the Lost Cause had served its purposes—the South had been reintegrated into the United States, and the Civil War generation had either passed from the scene or coped with defeat. Nonetheless, the mythology of the Lost Cause remained salient and even continued to grow. Madison Avenue advertising agencies fashioned product names and mascots that referenced the antebellum South—Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Dixie cups. Tin Pan Alley composers, many of whom had never visited the region, produced tune after tune that celebrated southern heritage: "Swanee" (1919), "Carolina in the Morning" (1922), "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" (1922), and "Sweet Georgia Brown" (1925). Filmmakers had a particularly profound impact, and the "Old South" genre was a Hollywood mainstay for many years. Examples include *The Fighting Coward* (1924), *The River of Romance* (1929), *Hearts in Dixie* (1929), *Mississippi* (1935), *So Red the Rose* (1935), *Way Down South* (1939), *Song of the South* (1946), *The Mississippi Gambler* (1953), *Band of Angels* (1957), and—most famously—*The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Historians, both within the academy and without, also played a role in sustaining a positive image of the South and of the Confederate war effort, foremost among them Douglass Southall Freeman.[25]

Though a generally favorable conception of the South and the Confederacy remained predominant until the 1960s, the first signs of a negative counterimage began to appear in the

1920s. Southern writers—William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Lillian Hellman—set their novels in a South that had its charms but was deeply flawed. At the same time, news events—the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, labor violence, the Scopes trial of 1925, outbreaks of hookworm and pellagra, the Dust Bowl of the 1930s—had some scholars and observers speaking of a "benighted" South. This trend reached its apex in the 1950s and 1960s, when Americans across the nation watched peaceful civil rights protesters face off against white southerners, many of whom were very angry and violent. For the first time since Reconstruction, the South's image among citizens outside the region was arguably more negative than positive. In particular, the symbols of the Confederacy—utilized extensively by opponents of the civil rights movement—took on connotations of racism and oppression that the Lost Cause interpretation had very successfully countermanded for more than half a century.

The blow to the South's image was immediately evident in newspapers. By 1951, the *Chicago Tribune* was editorializing against "Bigotry and Ignorance in [the] Deep South." In 1956 the *Los Angeles Times* characterized southerners as "the prejudiced, the ignorant, and the arrogant." The next year, when nine black students attempted to enroll at Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas and were rebuffed by Governor Orval Faubus, the *Washington Post* spoke of the "nation's disgust." In 1961 the *New York Times* lamented that New Orleans, previously known for its "spirit of tolerance," had become a focal point for "racial hate." Four years later the paper decried "a conspiracy against the law and for the suppression of Negroes." A 1957 poll conducted by George Gallup is particularly instructive: 74 percent of northerners said they would never consider living in the South; among the reasons they cited were the following:

> Southerners are fine people, but they're a little behind the times.

I think they're kinda slow.

They're fine, if they'd only stop fighting the Civil War.

They're lazy, shiftless and ignorant.

They carry their racial prejudice too far.

Similarly, in a 1970 study northern college students were asked to pick the word they felt best described southerners. The most popular responses included three positive descriptors—friendly, hospitable, and polite—and ten negative ones—lazy, shiftless, unambitious, backward, ignorant, low class, uneducated, intolerant, bigoted, and segregationist.[26]

The change in popular perceptions of the South also became apparent in the world of cinema. Although positive filmic portrayals of the region did not disappear after the 1960s—think *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), *Steel Magnolias* (1989), and *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991), as well as the television programs *The Golden Girls* (1985), *Designing Women* (1986), and *Evening Shade* (1990)—the "Old South" genre was effectively dead. Further, movies that used the South as a setting for plots centered on racism, ignorance, and other forms of deviance became quite common. Examples include *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969), *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), *The Color Purple* (1985), and *Mississippi Burning* (1988). Perhaps the most memorable specimen of this genre is the 1972 film *Deliverance*, which follows four Atlanta businessmen on a camping trip through the rural South as they are terrorized and raped by a group of backwoods southerners.[27]

Evolving attitudes about the South also resulted in a pair of notable rhetorical developments in American English. First, as sociologist John Shelton Reed has demonstrated, the term 'dixie'—which carried pleasing connotations of the moonlight and magnolias of the

antebellum South—fell out of favor, supplanted by the more generic 'south.' At the same time, there was a change in the meaning of the term 'redneck.' In the nineteenth century, the term simply referred to poor, uneducated southerners who had to work in the fields and thus ended up with sunburned necks. It slowly grew more negative over time and then took a dramatic downward turn in the 1960s. By the end of that decade, rednecks were no longer just poor and stupid; they were also toothless, inbred, and racist. And they were no longer found only in rural areas; they lived all across the South.[28]

The connection between the redneck stereotype and the Confederacy was evident in an April 1965 article in *Time* magazine entitled "The Various Shady Lives of the Ku Klux Klan." It featured a picture of Ku Klux Klan imperial wizard Robert Shelton in front of a Confederate flag, along with this explanation:

> No longer a monolithic organization, the Klan today consists of several ragtag independent groups, the best known of which is the United Klans of America, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., headquartered in Tuscaloosa, Ala. with an ex–tire salesman named Robert Shelton as its Imperial Wizard. Estimates of Klan strength range from 10,000 to 40,000 members, many of whom for some peculiar reason seem to be rural service-station attendants. Most members, in any case, are deluded rednecks whose only skill is sharpshooting.

The Confederate soldier cannot easily be separated from his flag or his nation, so when the Confederacy and its battle flag were appropriated and transformed by anti–civil rights activists, the Confederate soldier was taken along for the ride. Johnny Reb and the Confederate flag became the embodiment of defiance of the federal government, racism, and a host of other unflattering characteristics ascribed to southerners. As James C. Cobb observes, "[When] the Civil Rights Movement unfolded, 'Dixie' soon evoked a vision not of happy darkies on the plantation but of decidedly unhappy rednecks waving the Confederate flag and spewing contempt for national authority."[29]

Such an extended discourse on the evolution of the southern image may seem to be a sidebar to a discussion of reenactors. But it is critical to understand that the sharpening of the redneck stereotype and its pairing with the Confederate flag and Confederate soldier happened rather quickly and at a critical time not only in the nation's history but also in the lives of most reenactors. Many of today's reenactors were drawn to the Civil War as children by an understanding of the South that was heroic and dramatic and that largely ignored issues of race. They are arguably the last generation of Americans who can legitimately claim to have embraced the Confederacy absent the racial overtones that are now associated with the southern soldier and battle flag. They were steeped in a decidedly Lost Cause/Reconciliationist understanding of the Civil War. By contrast, Americans under the age of fifty—among them most of today's academics, journalists, and Hollywood filmmakers—are all overwhelmingly likely to think in terms of the negative understanding of the Confederacy and its symbols that emerged from the civil rights era. For these individuals, the battle flag and Confederate soldiers are signs of a white supremacist interpretation of the war. This, in a nutshell, is Civil War reenactors tend to presented in a negative fashion by outsiders—as embodying one or more elements of the modern southern redneck stereotype, particularly racism.

**Reenacting the South**

To gain a fuller understanding why reenactors favor the South, it seems reasonable that—rather than simply assume they are backwards-looking racists—we should ask them why they prefer the gray. A good starting place is Robert Lee Hodge, the star of *Confederates in the Attic*. He explains:

> My father is from Alabama and my mother's folks are from Tennessee, so even though I am from Ohio, I had a kinship with the south early on. Named after Lee and born on the same

> day as Jackson's birthday, I tend to lean the gray way. My folks were not rabid neo-Confeds, but my dad used to tease my mom for being a Yankee…
>
> For me it is easy to get wrapped up in the Confederacy; All I had to do was read. The other huge aspect is the visuals. To me, at least, my image of Johnnies looks more connected with the land—homespun, if you will. Civilian soldiers in often earth-colored uniforms, bedrolls, big slouch hats, bloused trousers, etc. Fighting against the massive federal government soldiers in their dark blue (almost black) uniforms gives me the feeling of David fighting Goliath.
>
> The image of Southern soldiers is attractive. As a child, I wanted to be a part of it. Part of me still wants to time-travel and "be there" (at least as a fly on the wall), but I say that with hesitation for fear of being labeled as a bad person. When you like the South, you can be beat up on, overtly or tactfully, via the media pretty darn fast. It is all very cliché. When the Comedy Channel called me several times to be in one of their programs, I yawned. I knew what the plan was because I researched the producer. She recently had produced a show on Trekkies—excellent.

In the interviews done for this study, this same basic answer was given dozens and dozens of times. For example, Duke Harless portrays a soldier from the 3rd Georgia Infantry. He asks:

> Is it because we can be more colorful and dashing as Confederates? Is it because if we do Union Infantry we are limited in dress to dark blue coat, light blue pants and a kepi? Is not a trusty Springfield Musket enough? Do we have to have sabers, pistols and shotguns? Do we just like being underdogs, defying the "oppressive government"? Are we worried about our Great Great Granddaddy doing monkey flips in his grave if we wore Union Blue? Maybe the Union Coat of blue and the trappings of an infantryman don't seem to have as much panache' as the gaudy vests, feather and animal part hats and the arsenal hanging from the belts of a Reb Cavalryman?

John Quimby, who does both Rebel and Union impressions, ties the appeal of the Confederate soldier even more explicitly to the Lost Cause interpretation of the war:

> We've all consumed the tales of the desperate southern warrior, down to his last patched pair of trousers and barefoot in the mud. This symbolic image was promoted in the post war era - a time when southerners were struggling with their own self image. The Barefoot Rebel is a heroic icon of the "Lost Cause."

Indeed, it might fairly be said that a reenactment is the living embodiment of the Lost Cause, in the sense that it embodies all the positive elements of the Confederate war effort—the glory, the valor, the honor—and few of the negative elements. [30]

It is not surprising that reenactors embrace the heroic elements of the Lost Cause—as noted, this is what most of them grew up with. However, they are also aware that the political elements of the Lost Cause—particularly as understood by many white Southerners—are problematic. Historian Alan Nolan has identified a number of common motifs in the writings of the Lost Cause; an examination of the most important motifs and their place in the reenactment community makes clear the extent to which most of the community tries to retain the heroic elements of the interpretation while distancing themselves from the political elements.[31]

*Heroic Motif #1 - Lee and Jackson*: Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson are the great heroic figures of the Lost Cause, joined to a lesser extent by a handful of other Confederates—J.E.B. Stuart, George Pickett, and Nathan Bedford Forrest. The Lost Cause also has its villains, most prominently the Confederate general James Longstreet, along with the men who led the North to victory, Ulysses S. Grant and (particularly) William T. Sherman.

The preeminence of Lee and Jackson is not evident at the reenactments themselves. Portraying specific individuals, particularly high-ranking officers, is not common, so one will only find a Lee or a Jackson at very large reenactments. However, the popularity of these leaders in the minds of reenactors is evident in other ways. While the *Camp Chase Gazette* tries to maintain a balance in the articles it publishes, the content of its advertisements is beyond the editors' control. And like every other popular magazine devoted to the Civil War, the ads are skewed heavily in favor of the Confederacy in general, and Lee and Jackson in particular. There are Lee and Jackson prints, posters, statues, and books.[32]

The "Observation Post" section of the *Camp Chase Gazette*, a collection of news items and announcements provided entirely by readers, is also imbalanced in favor of Lee and Jackson.

One can learn about efforts to preserve Lee's post-Civil War residence, monuments to Lee and Jackson being erected in Southern cities, and the Stonewall Jackson Society's annual symposium. As is the case with *Camp Chase's* advertisements, Northern generals are not invisible, but they are not nearly as prominent. Meanwhile, James Longstreet's name has not appeared in an Observation Post item even once in the past ten years. With 10 issues per year, and roughly 15 announcements per magazine, that is a total of 1,200 times he has been ignored.

The popularity of Lee and Jackson also comes through in the interviews conducted for this project. More than 30% of reenactors identified either Lee or Jackson as the Civil War as one of the figures they admired the most. The sentiments of reenactor Mark Silber are representative:

> I am a northerner by birth and residence, but I admire Robert E. Lee as one of the greatest and finest Americans to walk on this earth. He is a man of honor, courage, and duty. Robert E. Lee has earned the love of millions of his fellow Southerners and other Americans over the decades.

Other Lost Cause heroes, including Stuart (8%) and Pickett (6%) are also widely admired, more so than the Northerners Grant (5%) and Sherman (4%), and the hapless Longstreet (1%).[33]

*Heroic Motif #2 - The Preeminence of Virginia:* An adjunct to the veneration of Lee and Jackson is the Lost Cause ideology's focus on the military theater of Virginia, and the two armies that fought there, the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac. To use a term employed by historian Gary Gallagher, Lost Cause writers presented Virginia as the "cockpit" of the Civil War. They claimed that Richmond was always the main focus of the Union army, and that the most significant fighting occurred in the area around the Confederate capital. This area, of course, was where Lee and Jackson scored all of their dramatic victories. [34]

There are two ways in which the preeminence of the Virginia theater is reflected in reenactment. The first is in the choice of location for each year's grand anniversary reenactment. The Civil War was four years long. As such, in four out of every five years, there is an "important" anniversary—one divisible by five—for an entire year's worth of Civil War battles. For example, the year 2007 was the 145th anniversary of the battles fought in 1862—Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, and Murfreesboro, among others.

In each of these anniversary years, there is one reenactment that gets the broadest attention and attendance. And invariably, that reenactment is a re-creation of a battle between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia. For 1861 (1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016), the grand reenactment was First Bull Run. For 1862 (1997, 2002, 2007, 2012), it was Antietam. For 1863 (1998, 2003, 2008, 2013), it was Gettysburg. For 1864 (1999, 2004, 2010, 2015), it was the Wilderness. For each of these years, there are alternate non-Virginia options that might be more justifiable in terms of importance to the Civil War—Fort Sumter for 1861, Shiloh for 1862, Vicksburg for 1863, Chattanooga and Chickamauga for 1864. But while some reenactors gamely attempt to stage events at these locations, the Virginia battles invariably draw many more attendees.[35]

The centrality of Virginia is also reflected in reenactors' choice of units to portray. Of the 3.4 million men who fought in the Civil War, roughly 600,000—17%—served in one of the Virginia theater armies for at least part of the war.[36] Of the 211 reenactment groups that appear to be currently active, 137 portray units that were either part of the Army of Northern Virginia or the Army of the Potomac for some portion of the war. That is nearly 65%. In other words, the average reenactor is four times more likely to be in one of the great armies of the Virginia theater army than the average Civil War soldier.

*Heroic Motif #3 - The Idealized Confederate Soldier*: The Lost Cause interpretation has a central place of honor for the common soldier of the Confederacy. He was, as Alan Nolan puts explains, portrayed as "heroic, indefatigable, gallant, and law-abiding." It is not difficult to find similar sentiments among reenactors. When asked why he chooses to reenact a Southerner, David Upton of the Third Tennessee says:

> I think of Confederate soldiers as being a bit more admirable than their Union counterparts. First of all, their sacrifice was greater, given the suffering that they had to endure due to lack of food, supplies, and so forth. Second, they were fighting to protect their homes, and I can identify with that.

Jonah Begone of the 7th Virginia echoes these sentiments:

> The Confederates are the real heroes of the war. They were at such a great disadvantage that they were doomed to lose. And yet, they fought hard and they kept the war going for four years.

There is also another, more subtle, way in which the idealized notion of the Confederate Soldier is evident in reenactment. A common perception in the reenactment community is that the men who portray Confederates are more likely to be blue-collar than their Union counterparts. Joseph Bolivard of the 9th New York observes:

> The people who [are] middle class will have a tendency to join a Union group. This may show in the education profile as to the amount of education one has as to which side he joins … I would say Union reenactors have a higher income than Confederate soldiers.

David Pleger of the 2nd Vermont shares this perception:

> Confederate reenactors are more likely to be truck drivers or construction workers. Union reenactors are more likely to be doctors, lawyers or teachers.

What is interesting about this perception is that it is apparently not true. Among the interviews conducted for this study, there have been dozens of Confederates in white-collar professions and dozens of Federals in blue-collar professions. In his analysis of income patterns among reenactors, Mark L. Shanks found that there is no particular disparity between the two groups. The average income of the 380 Confederates he surveyed was $61,900. Among the 349 Union reenactors that responded, the average income was $63,800. In other words, the average Confederate reenactor and the average Union reenactor are both comfortably middle class.[37]

This being the case, the perception that Confederate reenactors are generally blue-collar is false. And yet the perception is certainly present and is widely held. Lost Cause authors always portrayed the experience of Southern soldiers as being vastly more challenging than that of the Union soldiers. Due to shortages of men and materials, Confederate soldiers were regularly forced to march hard and fight hard, often without adequate food or supplies. Meanwhile, Union soldiers are understood as having a much more comfortable existence, due to overwhelmingly superior numbers and almost endless amounts of food and supplies. To some extent these perceptions are based in truth, but only to an extent. There were many cases where Confederate soldiers were well supplied and Union soldiers were the ones who had to march hard and to fight with less than adequate supplies. In any case, it seems reasonable to suggest that the Lost Cause's presentation of Confederates as hard working, hard marching, rag tag military men has translated into the perception that Confederate reenactors are also rag tag blue-collar types.

*Political Motif #1 - The Lawfulness of Secession:* A critical element of the Lost Cause was its assertion that the South did nothing wrong, because secession was legal. This argument was justified largely by drawing on the ideas of antebellum political leaders, particularly Thomas

Jefferson and John C. Calhoun. This was a critical issue in the 1870s, as it spoke to what rights the South could or could not claim as they attempted to rejoin the Union.

As already noted, most reenactors will downplay or ignore the large, contentious political issues of the war whenever possible—a very reconciliationst thing to do. It is relatively easy to do this with the issue of secession, which was of great concern 150 years ago, but is not terribly relevant today. The lawfulness of secession is something of an arcane legal issue, one that is rather beside the point in modern America. When a discussion of secession does arise, however, most reenactors stand in opposition. To take one example, in a public email addressed to a listserv with hundreds of reenactors, Marshall Neal—who does both Union and Confederate impressions—wrote:

> What we detest is secession. The firing upon Ft. Sumter and the start of a war that killed so many Americans. And for what? To protect a state's right to allow slavery?

His message generated many positive responses, from both sides of the battlefield.[38]

*Political Motif #2 – Slavery:* The most important political issue addressed by the Lost Cause, at least for modern Americans, is southern slavery and its role in provoking the Civil War. The Lost Cause writers, for their part, have advanced a number of assertions about slavery: that the South did not go to war to protect its "peculiar institution," that slavery would have disappeared eventually, and that the slaves were generally happy with their lot in life.

There are, broadly speaking, three different approaches to the issue of slavery on display in the reenactment community. The first is to confront the issue head-on. Neal, for example, makes this declaration:

> It was slavery that everyone was talking about. The war of words was started with slavery. The excuses of Union and Rights were thrown on to fool little boys into signing up and dying. And now, southerners who don't want to be associated with slavery, because it is no longer PC, divorce themselves from the issue and insist that economics and rights and yadda yadda is what it was really about. It gives one the impression that slavery was never mentioned before or during the war. As if slavery were a side issue. "Oh by the way, you know those negroes in the fields?" "What negroes?-- Oh yeah, those…what about them?".

According to Greg Romaneck, who also does both Confederate and Union impressions, "A reenactor who does not understand the effects of race and slavery on that time period is not coming to grips with one of, if not the most important, factors which resulted in the carnage of 1861–65." Confederate reenactor Levi Miller puts things even more succinctly: "I'm real glad that I was born into the US of A where racial equality is actively promoted, and where on weekends I can freely play the role of a nineteenth century armed secessionist." [39]

A second approach to slavery—certainly the most common one in the reenactment community—is to downplay the importance of the issue. This is, presumably, the most effective way to make the Civil War a "usable past." A little less than 50 percent of reenactors interviews for this study argued that the Civil War was caused by an issue or issues other than slavery. That may seem to affirm a reactionary worldview, but it is worth observing that does not particularly put them outside the mainstream; a 2011 CNN survey found that 42% of Americans agree with that assessment. It is also the case that the "peculiar institution" is not typically in evidence at reenactments, but it is difficult to know how meaningful that is, as slave reenactment tends to be very uncomfortable for both those playing the role and those witnessing the performance. [40]

The third approach to slavery is the "black Confederate" argument of Padgett and others. It is ostensibly a sign of progress that the myth of "happy slaves," portrayed in movies and books before the 1960s, is dead. Not even the most die-hard Confederate reenactor would argue this position today. The black Confederate argument is only slightly better; the implication is

obvious: if slaves were willing to fight for the Confederacy, then their lives were not so bad and their masters were not as evil or wrongheaded as they might seem. While it is unquestionably offensive to downplay the horrors of slavery, a fair and full assessment of Padgett and his fellows requires noting that the primary goals of this argument appear to be non-racist in nature—that is, the purpose is not to assert white supremacy or black inferiority—but to express disdain for academic elites and their views on the war and to apologize for and "redeem" the South.

And whatever their position on the question of slavery—which is, after all, a nineteenth-century issue—reenactors are all but unanimous in their abhorrence of racism. Because they know that the media and the general public are suspicious of their hobby, they usually show great sensitivity to this issue; that includes the Vern Padgetts of the community. Though it tends to avoid the touchy subject of slavery, the *Camp Chase Gazette* regularly tackles racial issues. For example, a 2001 article entitled "Racism: An Issue for Living Historians" exhorts reenactors to remember that perspectives on race have changed in the last 140 years and asks them to be careful not to incorporate the attitudes and language of the past into their impressions.[41]

Confederate reenactors tend to be particularly careful when it comes to this issue. For example, several years ago, Temple University history professor and Union reenactor Gregory Urwin served as a consultant on a short film. In one scene, three Confederate reenactors were asked to use a rather serious racial slur. Regardless of how much the director pleaded, they simply would not use the word, which eventually had to be looped in during postproduction. There are also a number of stories of Confederate reenactors publicly confronting racists at reenactment events. For example, at a September 2006 reenactment in Gettysburg, twenty

Klansmen made an appearance. The first group to stand in their way and to insist that they take their Confederate flags and leave was the Thirty-Seventh Texas Infantry.[42]

Beyond dramatic incidents such as these, Confederate reenactors commonly issue careful disclaimers about their racial predilections whenever they feel it is necessary. This one appears in Jonah Begone's article "Advancing the Southern Cause":

> The traditional Southern point of view…is one of political and social conservatism. I am for a restrained federal government, more political power given to the states, Second Amendment rights (good luck reenacting without them), an awareness and respect for heritage…and the maintenance of the usual social customs and traditions. Racism, obviously, is not one of the customs I would endorse.

Nearly every southern reenactment group that has a website includes a similar disclaimer. For example, www.9thvirginia.com advises visitors and recruits: "We portray a Confederate cavalry regiment as it would have looked in 1863. We are not a 'reb' unit, we do not tolerate extremists or racism." Likewise, www.texas-brigade.org announces that the unit's members "denounce racism, racial supremacists, hate groups and other groups or individuals that misuse or desecrate the symbols of the United States of America and/or the former Confederate States of America; and [it] has no modern political agenda or status."[43]

Similarly, as the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) and other organizations have grown more friendly to white supremacy in the last decade, many members of the reenactment community have urged them to change their ways or, failing that, for reenactors to separate from such groups. Confederate reenactor Walter C. Hilderman III, who hosts a website dedicated to this issue, writes:

> [If] SCV reenactors bring their in-your-face attitudes and new found political activism into the hobby, Confederate reenacting will come to be viewed by the public, liberal activists and the authorities with the same suspicion that the entire SCV has generated in recent years. . . . Civil War reenacting has become a popular American teaching and learning experience, complete with big budgets, vendors, permits, first responders, and inevitably, insurance

> policies. Reenactments, large and small, require public acceptance and support. Without the public's trust in our reasons for being Confederate reenactors, our hobby and our mission of teaching American history through reenacting will end.

And finally, to give Robert Lee Hodge the last word on the issue: "I don't give a shit if my sister marries a black guy. Unless he's a farb."[44]

**Conclusion**

The above discussion illustrates two important points. The first is the enduring power of the Lost Cause, a 150-year-old interpretation of the Civil War whose dramatic elements still have enough salience to resonate with Americans, particularly those who grew up prior to the 1960s. The storybook elements of the Lost Cause do much more to explain the enduring popularity of the Confederate soldier than does the notion that Confederate reenactment is a socially acceptable way to express hidden racist sentiments. Of particular concern is the tendency for some observers to deploy the term 'neo-Confederate' in discussing Confederate reenactment. The Southern Poverty Law Center is the foremost authority on white supremacist groups in the United States, and it offers this definition:

> The term neo-Confederacy is used to describe twentieth and twenty-first century revivals of pro-Confederate sentiment in the United States. Strongly nativist and advocating measures to end immigration, neo-Confederacy claims to pursue Christianity and heritage and other supposedly fundamental values that modern Americans are seen to have abandoned.
>
> Neo-Confederacy also incorporates advocacy of traditional gender roles, is hostile towards democracy, strongly opposes homosexuality, and exhibits an understanding of race that favors segregation and suggests white supremacy. In many cases, neo-Confederates are openly secessionist.

There is simply no evidence for the existence of these views among the vast majority of Confederate reenactors, and to argue or imply otherwise is a gross distortion.[45]

The second point is that we must be careful about painting groups such as Civil War reenactors with too broad a brush. There is no reason to assume that all members of a group this large have the same or even similar viewpoints, or that their reasons for reenacting are the same. The next two chapters will attempt to make this point much more fully.

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[1] These quotes are taken from emails written by Vern Padgett on May 2, 2001; August 23, 2002; and July 5, 2001.

[2] The "black Confederate" argument has become a common trope in the last 15-20 years, and has been the subject of a number of books and articles. See, for example, Barrow, Charles Kelly, J. H. Segars, and R. B. Rosenburg, eds. *Black Confederates*. Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing, 2001.

[3] Because there are no central organizations with which reenactors register, it is difficult to estimate these numbers accurately. This number is based on the interviews done for this paper, the authors for the articles submitted to "Camp Chase Gazette," and membership rolls from several local organizations around the country, and the demographic work of Mark Shanks.

[4] Many of these African-American units, not surprisingly, portray the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, subject of the film *Glory*.

[5] The size of the Confederate and Union armies is reported differently in different sources. The *Official Records* puts the size of the Union army at nearly 3 million, but this number is not reliable because it does not account for soldiers who enlisted more than once. Most other sources give numbers within 100,000 of the ones I use here.

[6] In desperation, due to severe manpower shortages and a crumbling war effort, the South finally did make arrangements to begin conscripting slaves in December of 1864. However, before these units could be assembled and trained, the war came to a close.

[7] There are a few exceptions, most notably the reenacted 37th Texas, which is made up almost exclusively of African Americans.

[8] Interview with Ross Kimmel, July 6, 2006.

[9] The Bicentennial is discussed extensively in Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993; Americans' taste for pageantry is addressed in Glassberg, David, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990; Keitz, William. "Editorial." *Camp Chase Gazette* 6 (May 1976), 11.

[10] Even today, Revolutionary War reenactment does not have broad participation, at least not in the same form as Civil War reenactment. Revolutionary War clothing and accouterments are very expensive, and tend to be somewhat delicate. As such, the number of Revolutionary War reenactors is small, and they tend to prefer not to re-create battles. Instead, Revolutionary War reenactors do classroom presentations and living history events.

[11] Hadden, R. Lee. *Reliving the Civil War: A Reenactor's Handbook*. Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 1996, 2.

[12] Young, 293; Amanda Elizabeth Kennedy, *The Social Rules of Engagement: Race and Gender Relations in Civil War Reenactment*. Master's Thesis, 2004, 6; Young, 288; Kennedy, 6; Cullen, Jim. *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, 199; Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. "Commemoration and Conflict: Forgetting and Remembering the Civil War." The Georgia Historical Quarterly 3 (Fall 1998): 561; Turner, Rory. "Play of History: Civil War Reenactments and Their Use of the Past." Folklore Forum 21:1/2 (1989), 567; Sebesta wrote this in is blog at http://newtknight.blogspot.com/2007_06_01_archive.html#.Vt9X6mQrIy4 (accessed March 1, 2016); Hart, Lain. "Authentic Recreation: Living History and Leisure." *Museum and Society* 2 (July 2007): 103-24; Britt, Brian. "Neo-Confederate Culture." *Z Magazine* 9:1 (December 1996): 26-30.

[13] *Washington Post Magazine* (October 23, 1988) 33; *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 21, 2010), C7.

[14] Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998, 81–86, 282–311, 336–51; Amazon.com customer reviews for *Confederates in the Attic*, http://www.amazon.com/Confederates-Attic-Dispatches-Unfinished-Civil/product-reviews/067975833X (accessed March 1, 2016).

[15] See, for example, Fagan, Laureen. "Re-enactors Rip TV Flag Documentary; History Drives Them, Not Political Agenda," *South Bend Tribune* (March 15, 2001), 33; Scott, Jeffry. "History Channel Film Draws Ire of

Reenactors," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (March 13, 2001), 2C; Bauder, David. "Civil War Re-enactors Push for Boycott; The History Channel: Many Believe that the Network Is Portraying Them as Racists," *Telegraph Herald* (March 17, 2001), A8.

[16] See http://www.timwise.org/2010/09/south-carolina-republicans-show-their-racist-asses-again-this-is-a-historical-constant-actually/ (accessed March 1, 2016); *Lake Charles American Press* (February 16, 2003), 15.

[17] There is something of a historical misunderstanding going on here among the writing staff of this show; narrow waists were desirable among 19th century women, not 19th century men. Whether the misunderstanding was deliberate or inadvertent is unknown; the staff did not reply to requests for clarification.

[18] Another historical misunderstanding among the writing staff; dueling was out of favor by the 1860s, and Civil War soldiers most certainly did not duel. Though the Confederate officers did threaten to, on occasion.

[19] *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Writ. Sacha Baron Cohen and Anthony Hines. Dir. Larry Charles. Four by Two Films, 2006; "To Love and Die in Dixie." *Family Guy*. Writ. Steve Callaghan. Dir. Dan Povenmire. Fox Television Animation, 2001; "Episode #1.5." *The Jeff Dunham Show*. Writ. Ian Busch, Cece Pleasants. Dir. Manny Rodriguez, Matthew McNeil. Levity Productions, 2009; "When It Rains, It Pours." *30 Rock*. Writ. Robert Carlock. Dir. Don Scardino. Broadway Video, 2010; "The Battle for Bikini Bottom." *Spongebob SquarePants*. Dir. Shiraz Akmal. Nickelodeon Animation Studios, 2003.

[20] These comments, which were not moderated, all appeared beneath a story headlined "Living History' on Civil War Battlefields," http://www.cnn.com/2011/LIVING/04/09/civil.war.reenacting/index.html (accessed March 1, 2016).

[21] Much scholarly attention has been given to Southern image and stereotypes, and their evolution over time. See, in particular Owsley, Frank Lawrence. *Plain Folk of the Old South*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1949; McWhiney, Grady. *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1988; West, Stephen A. *From Yeoman to Redneck in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1850-1915*. Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2008; and Goad, Jim. *The Redneck Manifesto: How Hillbillies, Hicks, and White Trash Became America's Scapegoats*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1997.

[22] McWhiney, xiii ; de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America* (2 vol., 1830, 1834). Reprinted 1904, pages 388-89.

[23] Helper, Hinton Rowan. *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It.* New York: Burdick Brothers, 1857, 381; Hundley, Daniel Robinson. *Social Relations in Our Southern States*. New York: Henry B. Price, 1860, 262-264.

[24] See Cox, Karen L., *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011; Silber, Nina, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993; and Wiebe, Robert H., *The Search for Order, 1877–1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1966; McPherson, Tara *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2003, 3. Other key books on this subject include Kirby, Jack Temple Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986; Applebome, Peter, *Dixie Rising*. New York: Times Books, 1996; and Watts, Rebecca Bridges. *Contemporary Southern Identity: Community through Controversy*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008.

[25] For an extended discussion of 20th century marketing of the South, see Stanonis, Anthony J., ed., *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008 and Hale, Grace Elizabeth, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940*. New York: Pantheon, 1998; There are relatively few overviews of the South's portrayal in popular music, as most studies focus on specific eras or genres. The best available general treatment is Mark Kemp, *Dixie Lullaby: A Story of Music, Race, and New Beginnings in a New South*. New York: Free Press, 2004; The portrayal of the South in film, by contrast, has received extensive attention. See Heidler, Karl G., ed., *Images of the South: Constructing a Regional Culture on Film and Video*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993; French, Warren, ed., *The South and Film*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981; Barker, Deborah E. and Kathryn McKee, eds., *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011; Graham, Allison, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001; and Chadwick, Bruce, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film*. New York: Vintage Books, 2002.

[26] Cavendish, Henry, "Bigotry and Ignorance in Deep South," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 22, 1951), 114; Holmes, Alexander, "Another Side of Segregation in the South," *Los Angeles Times* (January 9, 1956), A5; Baker, Robert E. "Shame Abating Arkansas Fever: Little Rock Feeling a Nation's Disgust," *Washington Post* (September 15, 1957), E3; Kane, Harnett T. "Change in the Mardi Gras Spirit," *New York Times* (January 29, 1961), SM10; Redding, Saunders, "The South and Society," *New York Times* (October 31, 1965), BR88; Gallup, George, "How North, South View Each Other," *Los Angeles Times* (May 27, 1957), 30; Reed, John Shelton, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972, 25.

[27] The dramatic change in filmic portrayals of the South is discussed in Von Doviak, Scott, *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005 and Leiter, Andrew B., ed., *Southerners on Film: Essays on Hollywood Portrayals since the 1970s*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011.

[28] Reed, 51–65; For a discussion of the "declension" of the redneck stereotype, see Cobb, James C. Away *Down South: A History of Southern Identity*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

[29] "The Various Shady Lives of the Ku Klux Klan," *Time* (April 9, 1965), 24–25; Cobb, 1.

[30] Interview with Robert Lee Hodge, October 25, 2006; Interview with Duke Harless, April 20, 2001; Interview with John Quimby, May 2, 2001.

[31] Nolan, Alan T. "The Anatomy of the Myth" in Gallagher and Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000, 11-34.

[32] The portrayal of the Confederacy in popular magazines is addressed in detail in Gallagher's *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War*.

[33] Interview with Mark Silber, January 22, 2015.

[34] Gallagher, Gary W. "Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy" in Gallagher and Nolan, 35-59.

[35] To take one example, the Gettysburg reenactment of 1998 drew 30,000 reenactors, while the Vicksburg reenactment on the same days drew 4,000.

[36] These numbers are even more difficult to assess than the overall troop strength of the two armies, because many units were transferred in and out of one or the other of the two armies. Nonetheless, this estimate was affirmed for me by noted expert Robert Krick.

[37] Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, 17; Interview with David Upton, January 11, 1999; Interview with Jonah Begone, March 22, 2002; Interview with Joseph Bolivard, August 15, 2015; Interview with David Pleger, February 12, 1999; Shanks, 56-57.

[38] Interview with Marshall Neal, July 5, 2001.

[39] *Ibid*; Romaneck, Greg. A Civil War Reenactor's Guidebook: *Tips and Suggestions from the Field. Berwyn Heights*, Md.: Heritage Books, 2009, 30; Miller, Levi "Letters to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 22:10 (December 2005), 4.

[40] See http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2011/images/04/11/rel6b.pdf (accessed March 1, 2016); Colonial Williamsburg had the same experience when they tried to introduce slave interpreters into their living history demonstrations; see Leon, Warren and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989, 73-75.

[41] Greg M. Romaneck, "Racism: An Issue for Living Historians," *Camp Chase Gazette* 18:7 (October 2001), 50–51.

[42] Interview with Gregory Urwin, September 6, 2004; For a thorough narrative of the incident, see "Protesting the Klan at Gettysburg," http://www.bivouacbooks.com/bbv5i3s2.htm (accessed March 1, 2016).

[43] Jonah Begone, "Advancing the Southern Cause," *Camp Chase Gazette* 17:7 (October 2000), 56–57; http://9thvirginia.com/ (accessed March 1, 2016); http://www.texas-brigade.org/ (accessed March 1, 2016).

[44] Save the SCV homepage, http://www.savethescv.org/ (accessed March 1, 2016); Horwitz, 246.

[45] Southern Poverty Law Center, http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/neo-confederate (accessed March 1, 2016).

# "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground":

# Why People Reenact

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There was a time, not too long ago, when Andrea Kent had nothing but disdain for Civil War reenactors. She thought of them as, "those sick people who end up spending a fortune on 'the hobby' and get obsessed with 'authenticity.'" Kent has academic training in history, and her instinctive response to reenactors was similar to that of many outsiders: "They must be very limited people. People with nothing else to do except watch NASCAR and indulge in racist generalities."[1]

Kent's feelings might have remained unchanged, if not for her 11-year-old daughter. The two were watching a documentary on the Revolutionary War, when the fifth grader turned to her mother and asked if that was the war in which her grandfather had served. Kent was horrified. "I put my face in my hands," she recalls. "Clearly the schools were not going to teach my children about their history and heritage, so I had to take the job into my own hands. I took the children to their first reenactment as a spectator a few weeks later."

The ruse worked—the reenactment sparked the youngster's interest in history. She begged her mother to make her a costume like the ones the reenactors were wearing. And so the family took a trip to Gettysburg—less than an hour away from their Pennsylvania home. A pattern was purchased, a dress was sewn, and soon both mother and daughter were, "pretty well obsessed." The pair, ultimately joined by the rest of their family, did extensive research into the clothing and mannerisms of the period, and into their familial connections to the war. Kent is now a well-known civilian reenactor, one of the leading members of The Atlantic Guard Soldiers' Aid Society, a prominent reenacting organization.[2]

For Andrea Kent, reenactment has an enormously rewarding experience—"a deeply emotional, sometimes spiritual, process of self-discovery," in her words. There are a great many reasons that she participates in the hobby. She explains:

> There is a great peace to be found in reliving, however temporarily, the lifestyle of the past century. When I sit on the veranda at Mount Bleak and sew clothes for my children, no stereo screams Marilyn Manson at me; there are no traffic jams or vulgar TV shows or noisy machinery. No lawn mower roars and stinks on a Saturday afternoon; the grass is quietly cropped by a cow. Food is pure, fresh, and seasonal, a concept we are only rediscovering today. I can let my children run around like wild animals with no fear for their safety. And in the afternoons my sewing forces me to sit down on the porch or by the fireside to talk quietly with friends, while one of them sweetly plays her fiddle or another fingers her guitar. I have no opportunity or cause to fight traffic and run endless errands or exhaust myself in the corporate jungle. I cannot see the endless strip malls and high-tension lines and subdivisions of modern suburbia, but see only farms and fields and charming old houses.

Kent also lists other factors that drive her participation, among them educating the public, raising money for the preservation of historic sites, and honoring her ancestors. In the end, however, she concedes that first and foremost, she reenacts for her own pleasure. And, she says, "the pleasures are very great." She recalls:

> On one summer's night last year … I stood atop a mountain in the Blue Ridge, surveying the Crooked Run Valley. It was very dark; I was far from a city and the sky was strewn with the billion brilliant stars of the country night. I could see the moon glimmering on a distant lake, but no sign of modern life. Below me glowed the tiny village of Paris, little changed since the early nineteenth century. The beauty of the moonlit fields and mountains was so staggering that I was moved to gratitude that I could see such a thing.
>
> From below, borne on a breeze, came a few chords of music. I walked down the mountainside to Mount Bleak, a handsome stone house that was one of Mosby's redoubts. Now a group of Confederate soldiers sat by a fire in the front yard of the house, just as they must have done in 1861. They were passing around a little bottle of 'shine and singing songs of the period. They were startled as my mezzo-soprano came out of the darkness to join them in singing "Young Roddy McCorley goes to die on the bridge at Toome today." That night I went to bed by the dying firelight in an eighteenth-century building, and fell asleep to the sounds of a soldier's harmonica.
>
> What other sport or hobby would let me experience something so lovely? In what other way could I gain entree to some of the most important and beautiful historic houses in America, to walk in places closed to the public, to dance to music no longer widely heard or enjoy the pleasures my great-great-great grandparents knew?

Given her academic training, it is not surprising that Kent should have thought carefully about her motivations for reenacting. And what Kent—and every other reenactor—knows, the list of reasons for why reenactors participate in the hobby is equally long and complex. "There are as many different motives for being a reenactor," observes Confederate reenactor Dave Watkins, "As there are reenactors."[3]

Exploring those different motives—specifically, about reenactment as a form of activity—will be the central focus of this chapter. However, in understanding the appeal of reenactment, there is another important observation to be made. Americans—and their forebears—have a long history of interacting with and utilizing the past in various ways: collecting artifacts, researching and documenting family histories, staging historical pageants, and visiting graveyards, to name a few. Most history-related activities—antique collecting, for example—draw on one or two of these traditions. What makes reenactment unusual is that it has room for just about *all* of them. Civil War reenactment blends many different ways of using the past into a single activity. Whatever particular history-related interest or interests a participant might have—collecting, being part of a community, developing their intellect, honoring their ancestors—can be pursued as part of the hobby. That so many different kinds of interests and goals can be pursued simultaneously is large part of the hobby's attraction, and is critical to understanding why new members join. As Glenna Jo Christen notes, "I realized I wanted to be a reenactor before I knew that it even existed."[4]

**Politics**

Commingling historical events and modern political issues is a common way for people to engage with the past. This is especially true in the case of the Civil War, and has been since the

conflict ended. As noted in earlier chapters, the Grand Army of the Republic used the war to elect candidates to political office, while Jubal Early and the other advocates of the "Lost Cause" interpretation used the memory of the war to reintegrate the South into national politics. In the twentieth century, the Civil War was appropriated by Americans who were fighting both for and against Civil Rights, by politicians who wished to create unity in the face of the Cold War, and by countless other individuals and groups.

Some reenactors are driven almost exclusively by a political agenda. As noted in Chapter 3, the presumption tends to be that the reenactors are ultra-conservative reactionaries. Some of them are, certainly, but far more common amongst reenactors on that end of the spectrum is a far more libertarian outlook—one that stands in opposition to over-reaching government power. In fact, Vern Padgett—he of the 'black Confederates' fame—is a registered libertarian, not a Republican or member of some other right-wing faction. Meanwhile, on the other end of the political spectrum from Padgett are reenactors like Charles "Ben" Hawley. Hawley, who at the age of 74 is somewhat older than most members of the community, has ancestors who served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Several years ago, he became disturbed by the apathy he saw in the young people he met, and by how little today's students knew about the fight for racial equality. In response, he organized a group to reenact the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, to make certain that the story of black troops was not ignored at local reenactments. He also began making classroom visits, to speak to students about the nation's long struggle for civil rights. Ultimately, he decided that even this was not enough, and he formed a youth reenactment program, where students attend lectures, wear uniforms, and participate in parades.

Those scholars who see a political subtext to reenactment are not wrong, then. However, it is important to understand that reenactors like Padgett and Hawley are in the minority. Most reenactors prefer to be apolitical when reenacting, to whatever extent that being apolitical is possible. "I limit my discussion of and participation in politics at events to that appropriate to the event historical scenario," asserts Nicky Hughes. "I leave my views on current events … at home." The 3rd Georgia's Don Worth agrees: "I second the motion to leave partisan comments out of our discussions. Unless it's comments from Barn Burners, Peace Democrats, Black Republicans, Nativists, Doughfaces, or Free Soilers!" So too does Jon F. Willen: "Reenacting is apolitical. We are attempting to educate and entertain the public. We are not trying to promote any type of political agenda." [5]

There are a number of reasons that reenactors prefer to avoid politics. To begin with, they are well aware that a fair segment of the general public views their hobby with disdain. Openly embracing a right wing agenda would tend to confirm the public's stereotypes, and would raise the possibility of losing their audience. "If people begin associating some reenactors with fringe political movements," remarks William K. Jackson, "The credibility of the entire hobby stands to suffer." Further, one of the most important reasons that people reenact is to have a sense of community. Introducing contemporary political issues and disputes is invariably divisive and serves to undermine that sense of community. Finally, some reenactors believe that linking modern politics with the Civil War is offensive and an affront to the memory of those who served. For example, Susan Lyons Hughes says:

> [T]o equate the political issues of the mid-19th century with those of the 20th century at a ceremony intended to honor the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers defiles and profanes the meaning of such a service. These issues had no meaning for Civil War soldiers; they are entirely irrelevant and inappropriate in the context of such a memorial service … Doing so when the non-reenacting public is present is irresponsible, and may have serious consequences to our continued ability to interpret the Civil War for the public. [6]

Interestingly, the desire to avoid engagement with modern political issues is a major attraction for the many thousands of foreign reenactors of the Civil War. For Americans, many of the issues the war raised still resonate in powerful ways. For Australians, and Britons, and Germans, and Italians, this is much less true. And so, by adopting an event from U.S. history, foreign reenactors can enjoy the benefits of reenacting while avoiding the painful issues of their own nation's histories. Stephen Gapps, a member of an Australian group that reenacts the 62nd New York Zouaves explains: "Many Australians have a tendency to avoid reenacting their own colonial history as it is fraught with conflict and racism. Overseas histories are thus more attractive."[7]

Although most reenactors prefer to remain apolitical, they recognize that they do not exist in a vacuum, and that they can never entirely divorce themselves from current events, particularly when those current events involve war and violence. When the Persian Gulf War began in 1991, for example, many reenactors were wary about their continued participation in the hobby. Dave Foxen noted at the time that, "I have heard some in the ranks query whether or not they would want to reenact battle with real battles filling the screen on prime time news. Somehow make believe combat would seem almost sacrilegious when faced by the stark reality of war in which real blood was being shed." Similar sentiments followed the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Jay Paddock spoke for many reenactors when he wrote, on that day:

> Out of respect and concern for our fellow Americans I think the event should be cancelled this weekend … We do no good playing war when a real war has been brought to our doorsteps. Thousand of Americans are dead. I understand the urge to play, but it is time to postpone and stick close to home with our families. God Bless All of the USA.

Ultimately, nearly every reenactor wrestles with the fact that they participate in an activity based on violence—fake violence, but violence nonetheless—in a world full of real violence. As T. Jeff Driscoll observes:

> There are few things more satisfying than sitting around a campfire at night, boiling up a cup of coffee, swapping tales, talking in "first person," or singing Civil War songs. But how is it glorious? The answer to that question worries me, because I don't believe we should be glorifying war at all. We should be honoring men who really fought in the Civil War—of that I'm sure we would all agree—but sometimes I sense that visitors view reenactments as a huge game, and that young people may see them as a reinforcement of their belief that war can really be a good time.

Ted Brennan concurs, explaining that, "There is no glory in war -- only pain, suffering and death. This is not lost on reenactors, many of whom are Vietnam, Korea and even World War II veterans. All know the gravity of what they do." Clearly, reenactors are ultimately able to reconcile the "fun" violence of their hobby with the real violence of the world in which they live. But it is a struggle, and is one way in which the political and social issues of the present intrude on the hobby, even when reenactors would prefer otherwise. Now, not every issue that reenactors must address is so weighty. Apropos to the milieu of the 1970s, one of the *Camp Chase Gazette's* very first issues editorialized that: "Due to the increased popularity of STREAKING, it is necessary to issue a policy concerning guide lines for STREAKING by all re-enactors." [8]

In sum—and this sidebar is something of an addition to the main argument of Chapter 3—there is certainly a political dimension to reenactment, some of it intentional, some of it inadvertent. However, it is only one dimension among many in a multi-faceted activity. If we conclude that reenactment is entirely, or even mostly, about modern politics, we do a disservice to our understanding of this community, roughly tantamount to concluding that all Civil War soldiers fought to end slavery. Any discussion of the reasons that people reenact must necessarily move beyond politics to incorporate many other motivations.

**Performance**

Just as there is a long tradition of blending history and politics in America, so too is there an extensive tradition of exploring history through performance. There have been times in American history where this impulse was particularly strong. In the early twentieth century, for example, re-creations of past events—historical pageants, as they were known—were a very popular form of entertainment, and were staged by communities throughout the country. The nation's bicentennial saw another wave of history-based performances, as Americans re-created Civil War battles, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Washington's crossing of the Delaware, and other scenes from the nation's past.[9]

In contemporary American culture, the impulse to perform the past is mostly expressed in the form of movies, television series, theater, and the occasional elementary school pageant—modes of presentation that are largely inaccessible to the average adult. Reenactment is there to fill the breach, however, and the element of performance is a key attraction for many reenactors. In fact, the aphorism "the root word of 'reenactor' is 'actor'," is a common mantra of the reenactment community. Reenactors often speak of the joys of performing for an audience. Steve Shelley is typical:

> [My favorite part of reenactment is] getting the 'oh!' from a spectator, that moment when the 'light bulb goes on' and they've come to realize something they've never considered. For example, we were doing a living history at Gettysburg National Park with about 25 rifles. After forming up, our commentator noted that the group of soldiers the spectators were viewing was about the size of Co. D, 7th Tennessee prior to the first day. Half of us then about faced, retreated about 10 yards and about halted. The commentator then told the audience that the remaining soldiers represented the size of the company after Pickett's Charge. You could hear the 'oh!'...[10]

Many reenactors approach their performances in a manner that, among professionals, would be called method acting—total immersion in the part. Joseph Pereira describes one such reenactor:

> One guy who comes to mind is a fellow Confederate I encounter here in the Northeast a few times a year. He is affectionately known as "road kill" and he was a campaigner long before the movement existed, let alone became popular. His MO is to not bathe for a number of days before an event. Since he is a laborer, this makes for an aromatic file partner. He eats a meager diet, and in preparation for an event, will only eat foods that would have been common or accessible to a soldier of the day, not just at the event, but for a few days before. He has never owned a piece of canvas and always makes do at an event, regardless of weather. His uniform was meticulously handmade once upon a time and has weathered, been patched, taken on a life all its own. He is not the most socially acceptable character on the field, but he insists that he is having a far superior experience to the rest of us.

"Road Kill" is not the only reenactor who delights in giving an authentic performance. Many participants in the hobby have signature routines for which they are known. Gary Daniel, for example, has a particularly dramatic death ritual, in which he staggers across the battlefield and collapses behind the lines. Robert Lee Hodge is known for his ability to re-create the look of a dead, bloated body. One of John Mount's compatriots has a false leg, and shocks crowds by having it blown off by cannon fire, or "amputated" at the surgical tent. And for those who are unable to develop their performances on their own, the *Camp Chase Gazette* is full of helpful articles, such as "The Quick Step: How to Obtain, Simulate, and Cure it!" [11]

When a performer at a reenactment is successful, the effect can be quite powerful, both for audience members, and the reenactors themselves. Margaret Gilbert recalls one such incident:

> It is September 2000, medical demo after a battle. We have many wounded being treated by several different surgeons. I am working with [my friend] Jason as he is operating on a soldier with a bad chest wound. This soldier dies on the table. Jason starts screaming, "I have killed my brother" and drops to his knees beside the operating table. I pick this man up and move him about 10 feet to a chair. At some point here it is not 2000, but 1862. I am trying to comfort this surgeon and we both end up hysterical and crying for over an hour. Friends moved us into the tent, away from the public. Neither of us has looked on re-enacting the same way since.[12]

As with most performances, reenactors are expected to play by certain rules in order to maintain the integrity of the drama. Although fake explosions are allowed, fake blood is frowned upon. Obvious anachronisms are likewise strongly discouraged. John Mount, for example, bemoans, "Cigarette smoking, CD players playing modern country-western music, cowboy hats, and pointy-toed boots." Further, reenactors are expected to be reasonable in making sure to die when shot. Those whose survival seems to defy all odds engender complaints about "gray Kevlar" or "blue Kevlar." Reenactors also prefer to keep a certain distance between performer and role. It is acceptable to adopt the outward appearance of a Civil War soldier, but it not generally tolerable to actually presume to be them. First person interpretations—in which a reenactor speaks in character, as if they were that person—are therefore very uncommon at reenactments. [13]

Those reenactors who fail as performers can expect to be the object of enmity from their colleagues. Ed Mann, for example, complains that:

> One of my pet peeves about reenactors is that they forget that they must be, in fact, actors if they are to convey the real sense of war to their audiences … They forget that they should be portraying men with the appearance of either grim determination, fear, or confusion crossing their face throughout the battle, among many other emotions.

Many reenactors are also frustrated by performances that are too theatrical. Dale Himebaugh is among those who feel this way:

> [It is] what I call "Civil War Exhibitionism". People want the public to look at them personally and so they pick outrageous activities to draw attention to themselves. From the "Yaa-hoo" charges, to the exotic uniforms, to bowie knives and chicken feathers in their hats or bandanas around their knees, they are attempts to get public to look at them. You might as well get to the flagpole in the middle of field and "moon" the crowd. You will get about the same reaction.

Duke Harless seconds Himebaugh's sentiment:

> What I question … is the need to do things that are geared more to "attention grabbing" and "slapstick" than "telling it like it was." Some examples of this type of behavior would be "The Drunk Surgeon cuts off the wrong man's arm," "The Payroll Robbery," "The Shotgun Wedding," [and] "Drunken Paddy gets punished for stealing the Chaplain's Whiskey."

Of course, not all reenactors are quite so serious about their performances as Mann and Harless and Himebaugh. Many recognize that having mostly overweight 50-somethings—tubby bearded guys, or TBGs, in reenactor vernacular—recreate battles that were waged largely by underweight 20-somethings is inherently a trifle absurd. In light of that, most amateurish behavior tends to be tolerated, if not embraced. As one reenactor, and World War II veteran, remarks: "I'm sure the original Civil War soldiers would be laughing their asses off if they could see us out in the field."[14]

**Intellectual Pursuit**

For the academic historian, history is first and foremost an intellectual exercise—a mass of information must be documented, studied, digested, analyzed, and organized. The professionalization of the discipline, a process that in the United States began in the late nineteenth century, has afforded scholars the time and resources necessary to master exceedingly broad and complex bodies of knowledge.[15]

Naturally, reenactors cannot hope to engage the past in as substantive a manner as professionals. With limited time to devote to the task, it is not terribly practical to do original research on, say, antebellum slavery, while also keeping abreast of the latest literature on the subject. However, that does not mean that reenactors are uninterested in history as an intellectual exercise. Reenactor Rich Kilar explains that:

> Part of the fun of this hobby is the pursuit of the "Holy Grail" of knowledge and continuous improvement in unit and individual impressions and presentation. We will never get there, but we can sure keep trying and hopefully have fun in the process. Those with the knowledge should most definitely share with those thirsting for knowledge.[16]

Given the time constraints under which they operate, reenactors have developed several strategies that allow them to engage the past in a manner similar to that of scholars in the academy. In his analysis of reenactment, Jim Cullen observes that, "amateur historians generally overlook historiography." This statement is correct if we define historiography in the way that professional historians do. To return to the example above, no reenactment has ever featured a discussion of the extent to which Eugene Genovese's work corrected for the mistakes made by Ulrich B. Phillips. However, reenactors have their own version of historiographic debates, with the most obvious ones centering on battle tactics and strategy. [17]

The details and questions surrounding the battles of the Civil War have been argued for nearly a century and a half. There are countless primary and secondary sources that address these questions, most of them widely available. Further, one can grasp the basic debates about a battle, and the most significant viewpoints in those debates, in a very short period of time, perhaps as little as an hour or two. Jeb Cole is typical—like many reenactors, he is fascinated by the questions that surround the Battle of Gettysburg: He asks:

> Why did Lee fight at Gettysburg? Without Stuart he was blind, he had a new command structure with two untried Corps commanders, despite this his orders were vague enough to be misunderstood by a first year cadet. Especially after Fredricksburg, what made him think that Longstreet could take the center of the Union line with Pickett's division and two other scratch divisions? There are enough questions about Gettysburg alone to keep one interested for life, so they will do for starters.

The reenactors' approach to these discussions is cursory and shallow by the standards of a professional historian. Cullen notes, with some disdain, that in the reenactment community, "A thorough mastery of military events may coexist with little knowledge of political, cultural, and

social movements before, during, and after the war." This is often true. However, while professional scholars may understand the past in a more substantial and comprehensive manner than reenactors, it does not change the fact that both groups are attracted to history as an intellectual pursuit, and that there are similarities in how the two groups pursue that interest. [18]

Beyond participating in their version of historiographic debates, reenactors also do their own original research. Here again, they are constrained by the time and resources available to them, and so they tend to choose subjects that are exceedingly narrow in focus. Further, like professional historians, they want their research to be of value to their colleagues. As such, their efforts tend to focus on either the personalities or the material culture of the war. Uniforms are a particular area of interest, and individual reenactors will sometimes develop special areas of expertise—buttons on 1862 Eastern Theater Confederate uniforms, or stitch patterns on Union officers' lapels, for example. Members of the community regularly pen highly specific articles about their research on material culture, with the *Camp Chase Gazette* serving as the journal in which they publish their findings. Nicky Hughes' work is characteristic. An expert in Civil War tents, he has published work on the subject several times, most notably a four-page essay entitled "Civil War Shelter Tent Pegs For Use In Living History Settings."[19]

A popular topic of research among reenactors is, naturally enough, the history of the regiment they reenact. This is a very manageable subject, for the amount of available information on most regiments is generally quite finite, and is fairly accessible. For example, the 3rd Georgia's Don Worth has collected, and digitized, the handful of regimental histories written about the unit. He has also gathered photographs, rosters, articles, and reports about the regiment. As the 3rd Georgia was a relatively prominent unit, the amount of information available to be collected was not insubstantial, but was still manageable in Worth's spare time. [20]

While many reenactors are attracted to the task of learning about one of the war's famous regiments—the 54th Massachusetts, the 20th Maine, the 69th New York, the 26th North Carolina—others prefer to "rescue" more obscure or ignominious regiments with their research. Dave Sanders, for example, explains that when he and his friends were choosing a unit to reenact, "We used a wargames uniforms source book and chose what the author described as the shoddiest, most disreputable Union regiment, the 62nd New York Infantry."[21] As the 62nd was drawn from the poor areas of New York City, its soldiers were largely illiterate, and so left no unit histories behind. Sanders and his colleagues have had to be detectives, then, scouring other sources for information about, and references to, the 62nd. After more than 10 years of research, unit member Stephen Gapps is now persuaded that, "the 62nd were perhaps the most [unfairly] maligned regiment of the war."[22]

Reenactors' research is not limited only to whole units, of course. Many reenactor-researchers take a keen interest in learning more about specific individuals. In the case of famous politicians and officers—Lincoln, Lee, Grant, and so forth—original research is not terribly practical, given the volume of material available coupled with reenactors' time constraints. Nor is it terribly useful, since these subjects have been covered quite adequately in print. This is not to say that reenactors ignore these people entirely, merely that they do not tend to do extensive original research on them. Instead, reenactor-researchers tend to gravitate towards individuals who have largely been overlooked, and whose life stories are more manageable. If those individuals are controversial, dramatic, or shrouded in mystery, all the better.

A perfect subject, under the circumstances, is someone like William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson. A pro-Confederate guerrilla leader, Anderson is best known for participating in the dramatic raid on Lawrence, Kansaes in August of 1863. He died in a skirmish in 1864, but years

thereafter, a man claiming to be Anderson surfaced, insisting that the body that had been identified as his was really another member of his command.[23] This is all very appealing to reenactors, and indeed, there is an entire email list set up specifically for members of the community to discuss the "Bloody Bill Anderson Mystery."[24] The activity level on the list indicates the sort of focus—or perhaps obsession is a better word—worthy of the most die-hard scholars. In the year 2015, for example, members posted 4,708 messages discussing Anderson's life and career—an average of 13 a day. Other individuals popular among reenactor-researchers are soldiers-turned-outlaws Frank and Jesse James, guerilla leader William Clarke Quantrill, Abraham Lincoln's hapless bodyguard John Parker, and Confederate cavalryman John Hunt Morgan.[25]

It is common, both within the academy and without, to view the American public as anti-intellectual.[26] And it is easy enough to view reenactment through this lens–certainly Jim Cullen does. However, if we consider the reenactors on their own terms—that is to say, individuals with limited resources and time—and we slightly broaden our definition of "intellectual inquiry," then we cannot avoid the conclusion that many reenactors are not anti-intellectual, and that an important part of the hobby for them is the opportunity to develop their minds and their understanding of the past, using much the same approach that professional scholars use.

**Community**

Human beings regularly use history as a tool for creating a sense of community. This strategy is a part of every major religion—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in particular. It is also central to the creation of the modern nation-state, where leaders unify diverse peoples based on their common past. Abraham Lincoln, for example, was a skilled practitioner of this tactic. His

proclamation of Thanksgiving, Gettysburg Address, and First Inaugural Address all drew on the past to bring Americans together in the present. Since Lincoln's time, American politicians have, in turn, regularly used him to unify Americans behind their particular political programs.[27]

Not all social groups may qualify as 'communities,' but reenactors certainly do. As a group, they have a clear sense of collective identity, rules that members are expected to follow, a vocabulary for describing themselves and their activities, and tools for communicating information to one another. The opportunity to be part of this community is one of the main attractions of reenactment—particularly for those individuals who find something to be lacking in their daily lives. Kate Walters, for example, explains that:

> The hobby has been everything my husband promised and more. I have met the most interesting people, too many to name, who have enriched my life beyond measure. I have learned more than I had imagined. I have become particularly interested in the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which ties into my modern interest in volunteer organizations. The willingness of people in this hobby to help someone keep on the right track with their research is overwhelming. In the 21st century, I am a lawyer. My colleagues have difficulty imagining me in 19th century surroundings and cannot understand why we enjoy the hobby so much. I try to explain that one of the best things participating in this hobby has given me is the people I have come to know and appreciate that I would never have had the opportunity to encounter. Most of them a much more interesting that nearly every lawyer I know!

For Walters, participation in the reenactment community serves as a corrective for the things missing in her professional community—reenactors are diverse, interesting, and generous, while her lawyer colleagues are presumably much less so. John Tubbesing echoes Walters' sentiments, particularly as regards the diversity of the community:

> Doesn't matter who you are in the real world, at a reenactment you are part of a group … who share a very special experience.. You sleep with, slog through the rain with & share "hardships" with them (for at least a weekend). On my wall at work is picture of my group reenacting at the Wilderness in Virginia in 94. I ask fellow employees to pick out of the crowd of raggedy-ass Confederates who is the emergency room doctor, who builds the explosive bolts on the space shuttle, who owns his own software company, who is the auto mechanic, who are the retailers, and finally who is the lawyer. Diverse group united by a sense of comradeship and shared interest. [28]

In the case of individuals like Kate Walters and John Tubbesing, being part of the reenactment community allows them to fill in the gaps they perceive in their daily lives. For some reenactors, participation in the community addresses a much deeper problem. Rob Robitaille, for example, is among those mindful of the legacy of the Vietnam War. His perception, not uncommon among reenactors, is that a true sense of community does not exist in the present, and can only be found in a return to the past. "It's a nice feeling," he explains, "When you're rallying around the flag and everybody's kicking in and doing the same thing for a common goal. When's the last time we had a common goal? World War II?" This general assessment comports exactly with the analysis of political scientist Robert D. Putnam, who famously argued in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* that in the post-World War II years, American society has been disintegrating, and people have grown more distant from their friends, family, and neighbors. [29]

Reenactors regularly draw on the community in times of tragedy. Their responses to the September 11 attacks serve as an excellent example. On that Tuesday, Tim Grottenthaler sent this message to his reenacting compatriots based at Fort Tejon:

> Please show up at the Fort this weekend and show your support for those poor souls that died in this attack, and to help your fellow reenactors try to make sense of all of this. I for one don't see any good coming from stewing at home when we obviously have a strong support group at the Fort. We have a crutch to lean on in each other, and from what I've read here, we're all brothers and sisters needing to lean on one another during this tragedy in our Nations history. I hope to see all of you at the Fort this weekend. I need a hug.

Dozens of his fellow reenactors seconded Grottenthaler's sentiment, among them Michael Aguirre:

> I know you all are in the same deep shock and confusion I am regarding the events of today...in our Capitol and New York City May I suggest we have a special moment of silence at our morning muster this Sunday at the fort, and may I lead a special prayer for the souls of all that were lost this day. [30]

Besides facing national calamaties together, Reenactors also rally around one another in times of personal tragedy, particularly the death of a reenactor or the family member of a reenactor. The pages of the *Camp Chase Gazette*, for example, regularly contain letters like this one:

> I wanted to express my gratitude to the reenactment community for the cards, emails and support given my wife Sue and I on the passing of our son, Murphy. As reenactors we strive to find out what it might have been like for those soldiers we emulate. That's what we like to do. But one thing we don't want to find out about is their pain, the pain of their sufferings.

Tributes like this are also a regular feature in the *Gazette*:

> The [reenactment] community is reeling to the very sad and tragic loss of Steve Boulton, who died of a massive heart attack last October. He was 49 years old.
>
> He was a good friend to all of us and in turn I was proud to call him my friend and Sir when the rank structure permitted. He will be missed very much by us all. Steve leaves a wife Donna, and daughter Sarah, who is becoming an accomplished musician in our Company. They are both in our thoughts and prayers at this sad time. Steve Boulton was laid to rest with full military honours being observed and as he was such a proponent of the Confederate Army of Virginia, was cremated in his beloved frockcoat and coffin draped with an ANV battle flag.

When a particularly well-known and highly regarded member of the community dies, the *Gazette* will often dedicate an entire issue to them. Such was the case when popular Confederate reenactor Chuck Hillsman, who portrayed Stonewall Jackson at large events, died in 2000. Donald B. Hubbard, Jr.—who began reenacting during the Civil War centennial and remained with the hobby for 40 years—received the same honor upon his passing in 2003. For more than a few reenactors who have passed—Brian Pohanka, for example—the community has been important enough to them that they even commemorated their membership on their tombstones. [31]

In addition to leaning on each other in times of tragedy, the reenactment community also shares in members' triumphs. Sometimes, they celebrate collective accomplishments. For

example, most members of the community are interested in battlefield preservation and improvement. When something positive happens on this front—almost invariably with the help of reenactor manpower and dollars—it is a cause for jubilation. Such was the case when the observation tower at Gettysburg—an eyesore that ruined the battlefield, in the view of many reenactors–was torn down.[32]

On other occasions, the community joins together to recognize individual milestones. For example, Katherine R. Valentine and E. Christian Martens met through a personal ad in the pages of the *Camp Chase Gazette*. Their dates were largely trips to reenactments, where she portrays a civilian and he a Confederate colonel. When they were married they decided, appropriately enough, to have the wedding at a reenactment. Their guests—mostly fellow reenactors who attended in their Civil War uniforms—were treated to period-appropriate food, decorations, and entertainment. Such weddings are not uncommon.[33]

The sense of community that reenactment offers is absolutely vital to the survival of the hobby. A few years into their careers, most reenactors reach a point at which things get a little stale, where they have sampled every experience that the battlefield or the campground can offer. If all of these individuals simply faded away, then the hobby would no longer have the critical mass necessary to stage events. However, a great number of reenactors who have burned out on the hobby stay nonetheless, because they don't want to leave the community. Bob Sullivan explains:

> Now the fact is that the lifecycle of most reenactors is five years. So I think the real question is, why do you stay? I stay because I find I know my reenactment friends better than I know most of my neighbors, and quite honestly I would really miss seeing [them] if I stopped. That's one of the reasons I like the really big events, even though I don't make many of them. When I do, it's catching up with old friends.

Mark Brian Swart, who has written a memoir of his experiences reenacting as a Confederate, concurs:

> The time spent around the campfire with one's great friends and peers is certainly one of the big motivators to come to a reenactment, even if the weather is not cooperating to the extent that we all would wish. Released from public scrutiny, we tend to loosen up quite a bit and concentrate on some of the Good Things in Life; relaxing, eating, drinking, laughing, singing, raising hell and just being with each other.

Those who disdain reenactors tend to focus on the battles; this overlooks the fact that for many—and perhaps—most members of the community, the time spent tenting on the old camp ground is actually more significant.[34]

**Collecting and Competing**

For some individuals, the preferred way to explore the past is to come into physical contact with it—to see, touch, and own historical artifacts. This impulse dates back thousands of years. From the early days of the Christian religion, for example, practitioners sought to view and obtain relics related to saints and other religious figures. Christian reliquaries, in turn, provided the inspiration for the antiquarians of the 16th through 19th centuries. Antiquarians were collectors of historical and natural objects. The collections of the antiquarians, often quite vast, became the basis for the first historical museums, and for the academic discipline of archaeology.[35]

Given their capitalistic roots, it is unsurprising, perhaps, that Americans have always been enthusiastic collectors of historical objects. After the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson encouraged Americans to collect objects related to the event, observing that, "Small things may, perhaps, like the relics of saints, help to nourish our devotion to this holy bond of Union, and keep it longer alive and warm in our affections." Civil War-era Americans were particularly interested in collecting. When John Brown was executed, observers

took pieces of the gallows home with them. Battlefields were likewise combed for souvenirs once the armies had passed. Abraham Lincoln was asked regularly for autographs, and for signed copies of speeches. Such prizes were often auctioned off to raise funds for charitable organizations like the U.S. Sanitary Commission. When the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia was signed in the parlor of Wilmer McLean, the room's furniture was quickly purchased by those is attendance–the table on which the surrender terms were written out, for example, was claimed by Union general Philip Sheridan for the then-princely sum of $20. [36]

Reenactors necessarily enjoy collecting, as participation in the hobby requires a great deal in the way of proper clothing and accouterments. Lee Draughton's feelings are typical:

> I was born and raised in Georgia and have several Confederate veterans as ancestors. Their uniforms and equipment always fascinated me. One of my earliest memories I hold is asking my great-grandmother what happened to her father-in-law's Confederate uniform. I figured it had been stored away carefully as had my father's World War II uniform. Of course, by 1873 when she was born, whatever he walked home in was long worn out. Recall that those were hard times in the country. There was also a prohibition on displaying any insignia of the Confederacy. No buttons, belt buckles, etc. So no uniform from a soldier in the 17th Georgia. Volunteer Infantry was there for me. It did spark my interest to look for these things.[37]

Some reenactors collect actual Civil War artifacts, but they are in the minority. For the majority of reenactors, contact with Civil War relics comes at museums and other historical sites, where they pay excruciatingly close attention to the most minute details, often preparing reports for their comrades—or 'pards,' in reenactor parlance. After a trip to Confederate Memorial Hall, for example, John Quimby penned detailed observations about each of the exhibits he saw, including this description of a tobacco pouch:

> This pouch was crocheted of fine blue green thread and was about four to five inches long, and about 3 to 4 inches across. The overall shape was shield-like with a wide top narrowing at the bottom. The pattern at the bottom was a flower, like a daisy, with the center at the very bottom, and the petals reaching up toward the middle. A tassel of the same thread was attached to the bottom. The crochet work in center was a more open pattern which then joined a tighter pattern at the top forming a ring or band around the

> top. A pull string was inserted in the band and tassels of the same thread were attached to the ends of thicker string of the same color. The inside was lined with a very fine linen, acting as a bag which was inserted into and fastened onto the outer crocheted cover. Hand made, fine work, probably by a wife, sister or sweetheart.

Such detailed descriptions—blueprints, really—are valuable because the equipment used at reenactments is, without exception, reproduced. Unlike the reenactors of more recent wars, not to mention the Centennial reenactors, modern-day Civil War reenactors never use vintage equipment. In part, this is a product of their respect for original artifacts, which they do not wish to see damaged. In part, it is a practical consideration. The clothing worn by Civil War-era Americans would be too small to accommodate the larger girths of modern day reenactors, while most vintage equipment would either be non-functional or would be unsafe to use. [38]

The fact that the equipment at reenactments is reproduced does not mean it is cheap, however. While reenactors handcraft some of their gear, much equipment is purchased from the businesses—sutlers, in reenactor parlance—that exist to provide authentic replica equipment for members of the community.[39] Typically, the easiest and least costly impression for buying "off the rack" is Union infantryman, where a proper kit—coat, trousers and braces, hat, shoes, gun, cartridge box, cap pouch, belt, canteen, bayonet with scabbard, haversack, blanket, poncho—will run roughly $5,000. Optional equipment—great coat, vest, watch, mess gear, gloves, lantern, tin cup, coffee pot, frying pan, knapsack, knife—will drive the price up even further. Officers' and Confederates' uniforms are generally even more costly that those of a Union infantryman, as some items for these impressions must be custom made. Even more expensive still are specialist impressions—cavalry, artillery, surgery, and so forth. A replica Civil War cannon with limber, for example, costs upward of $20,000. New members of the community—having begun their reenactment careers with borrowed equipment—are often stunned by the financial commitment that is required, even if they make some of their equipment themselves. "Next time you post a

recruiting poster," complained one rookie, "Make sure at the bottom, in LARGE print, you have 'only the rich need apply." This response frustrates reenactment veterans like Tom Baker, who writes:

> [Let me] touch upon the subject of "low income area" reenactors. I think this can be addressed with one sentence: If you can't afford it, don't do it. It's been a rule in reenacting for decades now … that reenacting costs money, and if you don't have the money for it, save up and get loaner equipment, but don't start until you're ready. [40]

The monetary costs that reenactors are willing to bear in order to carry high quality replicas speaks to their attachment to historical artifacts. It also brings into play another element of the hobby that is of great appeal to many reenactors—competition. It is not uncommon, in American culture, to use the past as a basis for competition in one way or another. In some cases, the challenge is to carry the banner of those who came before. Such is the case at many older universities and prep schools, where incoming students are divided into "houses" and encouraged to compete with one another to bring honor to themselves and to those who came before them. In other cases, the competition is built around the ability to most accurately capture the past. Such is the case with classic car enthusiasts, performers at Renaissance Faires, and even Elvis impersonators.

As noted in the introduction, Civil War reenactments actually emerged from a form of historical competition—the North-South Skirmish Association (NSSA). Although the reenactment community eschewed target shooting long ago, competition is nonetheless an element of every reenactment event. The goal of the competition, to use reenactor parlance, is "authenticity." The most authentic reenactors are those who give the most realistic performance, and who have the most accurately reproduced replica costumes and equipment. This competition is, far and away, the primary source of tension in the reenactment community. From the earliest

days of the *Camp Chase Gazette*, its pages have been filled with letters and articles debating issues related to authenticity. The discussion often turns quite nasty, as in this letter to the editor regarding the cover of the magazine's April 1998 issue (right):

> Shame on you! That cover photo of the young drummer is terrible! No CW drummer would ever have held his sticks that way! That left hand is more than a blatant anachronism - it is typical of the WORLD OF IGNORANCE that is reenactor drumming!
>
> After GB 135, I am soooooooo tired of hearing bad drummers - and then I see THAT on your cover!
>
> It wouldn't hurt to have a REAL musician take a look at that, ya know.

The editor—by then, a reenactor named Bill Holschuh—offered this reply:

> You are correct in stating that the grip used by the drummer in the photo would not have been formally taught during the Civil War. Only recently has the so-called matched grip replaced the old rudimental style of holding the sticks, However, I would be willing to bet that a large number of self-taught CW drummers who learned to play without formal instruction held their sticks EXACTLY this way. It is natural. Hand any child a pair of drumsticks, and this is the way they hold them. In my opinion, the statement that, "No CW drummer would have ever held his sticks that way" is typical of the WORLD OF IGNORANCE that is the arrogant, pompous, know-it-all, experts who are soooooooo prevalent in our hobby.

On several occasions, the letters in the *Camp Chase Gazette* have become so vitriolic that the editors have banned discussions of authenticity from the magazine's pages. Little matter, however, as reenactors are happy to turn to alternatives—listservs, message boards, the campfire—to vent their frustratons.[41]

In this competition, the most successful reenactors—that is to say, the winners—are known as 'hardcores.' For those who embrace the competition, the title is the ultimate honor, and the finest compliment one can receive from one's pards. Commonly, hardcore behavior involves physical privations—eating bad food, marching without shoes, sleeping without a blanket—or else donning unusually grimy or disheveled uniforms. Jay Callaham gives examples of what it takes to be hardcore:

> There was a Confederate who always dressed in rags and had some kind of dead animal on him—it was a dead fish for three days at one event. He brought a live chicken to another, hanging from his belt. Then there was a group who had a "foraged" Virginia Ham hanging from a tree branch in their camp—WITHOUT cooking, they would simply cut off a slab and eat it (thinking that since it was smoked, it was safe—WRONG!). They came down with a very authentic dose of the flux!!

Most reenactors are unwilling to go to such lengths, and many view such behavior as either odd or amusing. This has given rise to another synonym for hardcore: button pisser. Usually meant tongue-in-cheek, the name is an allusion to hardcores' supposed habit of urinating on their brass buttons to give them an appropriate level of tarnish.[42]

On the other end of the spectrum from the hardcores are the less successful reenactors—the losers of the competiton—who are known, as noted in the previous chapter, as 'farbs'.[43] Farb is the supreme insult in the reenactment community. A synonym for fake or phony, farb is a remarkably versatile word. It can be a noun (farb, farbs), a verb (farbed, farbing), an adverb (farbily), an adjective (farby, farbish), or even a unit of measure (farb factor). The etymology of the word is uncertain, though most reenactors have one explanation or another that they prefer. Some believe it is short for "Far be it from me to be authentic." Others believe it is an anagram or 'barf;' or an acronym of 'fallacious accoutrements & reprehensible baggage' or 'fast and researchless buying'; or a portmanteau of 'fake' and 'garb.' Many members of the community insist the word derives from the German word 'farbische', meaning 'manufactured,' while others suggest it is an abbreviation of 'farberware', a particularly inauthentic-looking brand of camp equipment.[44]

Whatever the origin of the word farb, no reenactor likes to be branded with the label. While most members of the community do not presume to lay claim to hardcore status, none wants to be thought of as fake. Those reenactors who believe they are not farbs and know they are not hardcores prefer to be called 'mainstreamers' or 'progressives'. The difficulty is that, in

the competition to be authentic, there are no clear guidelines or rules. Some event organizers will appoint an authenticity coordinator or will develop some sort of requirements for participants, but usually the issue is left to the judgment of each individual reenactor. Not surprisingly, many reenactors are overly generous in declaring themselves to be suitably authentic—that is to say, the winners of the competition—and overly quick to declare others to be farbs—that is to say, the losers of the competition. Such behavior is all-but-guaranteed to engender an angry response like this one, sent by Ed Mann to his fellow reenactors via email:

> I can't stand it. This message is not intended to apply to all who would include themselves in the category loosely known as "authentics," just those who I like to describe as "obnoxious authentics." You [are] obnoxious pedants who elevate millinery matters relating to thread count above good manners and the civil exchange of ideas … It has also been my experience that so many of the "obnoxious authentics" disappear from their uncomfortable camps on Saturday night and head into Frazier Park for pizza and pool … Yet, like Walter Mitty, you see yourself as the authentic Confederate who, if transported back 136 years, could have blended seamlessly with those marching toward Cold Harbor. Dream on, pal. Now, keep your sarcastic remarks to yourself, and let's return this list to the civil exchange of e-mail messages on all subjects, including authenticity.

These disputes often lead to permanent divisions within reenactment groups, as more competitive members leave comrades behind to establish units that they consider to be more suitably authentic.[45]

**Death and the Supernatural**

Collecting or re-creating artifacts is one way to come into direct contact the past. For some people, however, this is not enough—they want an even more intense or intimate connection. Often, such individuals will seek to satisfy this urge by communing, in one way or another, with the dead. This is an old practice, perhaps more ancient than any other described in this chapter. The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* was written more than 3,000 years ago, for 2,000 years

Christians have practiced rituals that create metaphorical contact with the body of Christ, and communion with dead ancestors is central to many Asian cultures, to name but three examples.

The impulse to come in contact with the dead has long had a place in American society, from the witchcraft of the seventeenth century up through the Ouija boards of the present. Victorian-era Americans were particularly attracted to the idea of contacting the dead. Between 1840 and the early 1900s, millions of them joined the spiritualist movement—a religion centered on mediums that claimed to be able to contact spirits for information about the afterlife. Among Victorians who did not join the spiritualist movement, many dabbled with the occult in other ways, some through Oriental mysticism, others through séances and psychics. In addition, the Victorians had enormously complicated and long-lasting death rituals. The death of a married man, for example, dictated his widow's dress for as much as two years. Given that Civil War reenactors are re-creating an event from the Victorian period, it is not surprising that many of them share the Victorians' interest in the dead. [46]

Death and the supernatural are regular elements of reenactment events. There are, of course, the soldiers who "die" on the battlefield—some are left to lie where they fell, others are carried off by their pards, and a rare few are treated to a proper military funeral. Among civilian reenactors, the grieving widow is a popular role to play; this allows for a lengthy presentation on Victorian death customs for the audience. Sometimes, participants in reenactments will re-create other occult-related activities. Robert L. Hadden, who has written a book about the community, remembers that "It used to be you couldn't go to an event without tripping over all the ghost hunters, tarot card readings or odd women with crystal balls wandering about, searching either for their channelling partner or for their 'inner crone.'" Indeed, there is an organization just for

reenactors interested in the occult: The Victorian Spiritualism Re-enactment Society, which claims over 400 members.[47]

In addition to the death-related portions of reenactments, it is a rare reenactor who does not enjoy visiting the graves of Civil War soldiers, from the very famous to the completely anonymous. Barb McCreary, for example, is "[A]lways on the lookout for Confederate Veteran graves." Steven Cone concurs. "Every time I visit a cemetery," he says, "I think of the unknown stories that have been lost forever." David Callahan is even more committed to grave hunting—he claims to have visited the final resting places of 996 of the 1008 full rank generals, 1337 of the 1400 Union brevet generals, 13 of Abraham Lincoln's 14 Cabinet officers, and 12 of Jefferson Davis' 15 Cabinet officers. Callahan publishes a newsletter for grave-hunting enthusiasts called "Grave Matters," in which he provides pictures of notable graves, narratives of cemetery tours, tips for finding gravesites, and reviews of books related to these subjects. [48]

Going to graves creates closeness with the dead while still remaining squarely within the realm of the natural world. For those reenactors who believe in the supernatural, however, there is a way to get even closer—contact with ghosts. Ghost stories are popular around the campfire, as are nighttime "ghost tours" of battlefields. Further, many reenactors are convinced they have seen ghosts, as in this story published in the *Staunton News-Leader*, a Virginia newspaper:

> Ghosts will be ghosts: they're fickle, elusive and painfully shy, especially when it comes to actually showing themselves and, in doing so, getting us to admit that they really do exist. So when an army of Civil War spirits rides in like gangbusters, as the men of Palmetto Sharpshooters say they did on June 5, 1996, it's nothing to sneer at.
>
> Naturally, those who were present that morning remember the occurrence vividly. At about 5:00 a.m., says Don Windley, a re-enactor with the Palmetto regiment, he and his comrades awoke to an inexplicable commotion at their campsite on the southern edge of the Piedmont battlefield. The group had slept there, beside the Middle River Church of the Brethren, the night before their annual anniversary observance of the battle.
>
> "We heard what sounded like three or four wagons," Windley recalls. "You could hear chains rattling. You could hear horses whinnying. You could hear hooves pounding. You could hear wagon-wheels creaking."

> Joe Drega, another member of the unit, walked up to the fence-line to investigate. Then suddenly, Windley says, "he was looking awfully weird and his eyeballs were really big. As we all walked up to the fence-line and the noise got louder, Joe's mouth kind of dropped open and he was looking in bewilderment at the forest."
>
> At first the Sharpshooters thought they were being paid a surprise visit by another group of re-enactors. "Myself and Sergeant Scott Harris stood there with Joe and his son, Josh, who climbed over the fence and walked toward the forest to greet the wagons as they came into camp. But when he reached the forest-line all the wagon movement and sounds stopped on cue, as though a conductor was orchestrating it. For two or three seconds there was dead silence, then the birds started chirping and everything went back to normal."
>
> A moment later, New Hope resident Joe Drega realized it couldn't have been a group of re-enactors after all. "Joe turned and looked at us and said 'Boys, there's no road in that forest anymore…'"
>
> Windley says that nothing like this has happened to the Palmetto re-enactors, before or since. "It was a fluke. I'm usually skeptical about such things, but if you had been there it would have made you a believer in the paranormal."[49]

Contact with ghosts brings reenactors even closer to the dead than visiting graves. However, there is a way to get even closer still: To actually be the dead. More than a few reenactors have flirted with the idea that they are, in fact, reincarnated Civil War soldiers. "The notion that one might be the reincarneted spirit of a Civil War person," explains Cal Kinzer, "is a very tempting one to reenactors. After all, we are a people who do our best to 'relive' the past and we have a special feeling of closeness to those who went before us a century ago." Bill Holschuh seconds Kinzer's sentiments:

> One topic that seems to come up fairly often around reenacting campfires is reincarnation. I guess it's not surprising to find that people who try to relive the past are just naturally curious about such a closely related subject. Part of what attracts us to reenacting is the connection we establish between ourselves and people who died many, many years ago. If reincarnation is a reality, it is exciting to think that some spiritual part of those souls who fought and died in the Civil War are still living among us today.
>
> It has always been a pet theory of mine that Civil War reenactors are people who have, in a past life, lived through the Civil War period and have some unresolved issues pertaining to it. [50]

A few reenactors do more than just flirt with the idea of reincarnation. Some actually believe they are reincarnated, and have even identified the soldier that they lived as in a previous life. Robert Lee Hodge believes he was John Johnson of the 47th Alabama. MaryLynne Bauer

feels that she was either Thomas Brady of the 73rd Ohio or Thomas Mitchell of the 122nd Ohio. David Purschwitz is convinced that he was James McNally, a member of the 8th U.S. Infantry and 5th New York Artillery, and Purschwitz's own great-grandfather. Jeffrey J. Keene has even written a book about his reincarnation experience. The back cover explains that:

> *Someone Else's Yesterday* is an amazing journey through the eyes of two people: one a Georgian, the other a Connecticut Yankee. Similarities between the two go far beyond coincidence. They think alike, look alike, and even share facial scars. Their lives are so intertwined that they appear to be one. Half of this equation, Jeffrey J. Keene, is a present-day Assistant Fire Chief in affluent Westport, Connecticut. The other half, John B. Gordon, Confederate General, Army of Northern Virginia, died January 9, 1904.[51]

**Genealogy and Heritage**

To believe in ghosts or reincarnation gives an individual a sense of permanence—that there is life after death. There is also another path that leads to that feeling, one not dependent on a belief in the supernatural. Keeping the memory of past individuals alive, and making sure their contributions are not forgotten, offers some sort of assurance that our own lives and contributions will not be forgotten. In *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen make this very argument, observing that "Studying history is the quest for immortality." Don Worth, the 3rd Georgia reenactor, puts it succinctly: "I study history because I want to feel like I am part of a broader time continuum—not just an isolated person who is defined by the 70 or 80 years (I hope) that I'm on this earth."[52]

The most common way in which people remind themselves of their place in the human continuum is through the keeping of family histories. This has been done for many centuries, and in many different ways—through coats of arms, surnames, family shrines and cemetery plots, and tracking birth and death dates in family Bibles. Today, the manner in which this impulse is

generally expressed is through the hybrid hobby-science called genealogy. Genealogists use a broad variety of tools—newspapers, websites, archives, government records, books—to trace their family histories, often back many hundreds of years. [53]

Genealogy may be the single most popular history-related activity in America today. Thelen and Rosenzweig conducted an extensive study of how Americans utilize the past in their daily lives, publishing their results in *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. They found that more than one-third of Americans had done some form of genealogical research in the past calendar year. Further, two-thirds of their respondents ranked their family's past as the most important part of history, far exceeding the total who chose the pasts of their nation (22%), ethnic group (8%), or community (4%) as most important. Based on these results, Thelen and Rosenzweig concluded that, "Almost every American deeply engages the past, and the past that engages them the most is that of their family." [54]

Genealogy has a central place in the reenactment community, as a great many members participate as a means of connecting to their family's past. Among them is Andrea Kent, the scholar-turned-reenactor introduced at the beginning of this chapter, who explains that:

> [Many] of us have ancestors who were in one way or another involved in that conflict. We are close enough to it, genealogically, to have heard tales of it from those we know. I, for instance, had an elderly cousin who just died two years ago at 97. She was raised by her grandfather, a Civil War veteran, and was able to tell me in detail of his experience in surviving Pickett's Charge. Many of us have such close encounters so we feel the proximity of the War.

Rory Jones concurs with Kent. "My great-great grandfather Levi Sampson," he says, "Was with the 110th New York Company C., and I have his picture in uniform. He is my rock. I'm so proud of him. His photo inspires me, it's part of why I renact—to remember." John Quimby echoes Jones' sentiments, explaining that, "My great grandfather kept a diary of the war, which he sent

home in installments to his family. I am fortunate to have this diary as a testament of his life as a sergeant in the 20th Indiana, a unit that saw combat in the Army of the Potomac throughout the war." Steven Cone's familial connection is so important to him that he includes it as a part of every electronic mail message he writes. His e-mail signature reads:

> In Memoriam "3rd Great Grand Uncle" Abner C. Ball (12/30/1827 - 12/31/1862) 22nd Alabama Infantry Company G "Randolph Spartans" Killed during the first day of the Battle of Murfreesboro.[55]

Some reenactors, rather than focus on a particular relative, seek to connect to all of their progenitors who fought in the war. Barb McCreary, for example, reenacts because, "I am a native born Texan whose ancestor Gordon C. Jennings died at the Alamo and passed this legacy on to descendants that proudly fought for the Confederate States of America." Similarly, Jonathan Pack became a Confederate reenactor because, "I come from Southern Heritage. My family was from Tennessee and Georgia." Similar sentiments can be found on the Union side. Tim Grottenthaler explains that, "I'm from Pittsburgh originally, and all of my relatives that fought in the war were on the Union side of the fence. I have stayed Federal ever since … and I feel I'm more in touch with my own Civil War persona because of it."[56]

Many reenactors, then, have a special affinity for the family members they have that participated in the war—they want to learn about them, to connect with them, and to make sure they are remembered. Interestingly, reenactors' concept of 'family' tends to be very inclusive. Most eventually come to think of all the people who participated in the Civil War, in some sense, as part of their family. Duke Harless explains:

> Practically 100% of reenactors have a burning passion for the impression they present. We all have a deep and burning respect for the units/men and women we portray. As we study, research and read about the sacrifices and deeds of our forefathers/mothers, the aged tintypes, diaries and reports bring them closer to our heart. Though we may not admit it we began to

> love these people we portray and they become like a family to us.[57]

The term that is commonly used by reenactors in this context is heritage.[58] Genealogy and heritage are natural analogs to one another—where genealogy speaks to the individual's specific roots, heritage speaks to the broader context from which they come. For most reenactors, celebrating and remembering both are deeply important. Shaun C. Grenan is characteristic:

> More than anything else, I consider re-enacting and living history demonstrations a tribute to those Civil War soldiers who were willing to lay their life on the line and the many who gave up their lives. It is a wonderful way for us to pay homage to those gallant soldiers no longer with us, so their deeds and sacrifices will not be forgotten.

Brad Leppla seconds Grenan's sentiments:

> [I reenact] to honor those brave men who fought in this war for their country, no matter which side on which they fought. There is a lot of honor and glory in this war exhibited by many of these citizen-soldiers and it is our duty as citizens of this great and free society to pay homage to those who sacrificed much—many sacrificed all—for our sake. I consider it a privilege to be able to participate in the same manner as those brave and patriotic soldiers.

Ted Brennan is even more succinct: "Reenactors serve as living monuments to the men who fought and died so 'that this nation might live.'"[59]

In order to underscore the sacrifices made by the people who fought the Civil War, it is quite common in the reenactment community to juxtapose their experience with the comfortable life led by modern-day Americans. Vern Padgett, for example, remarks:

> Perhaps it is too much for us to admit nowadays, watching our televisions, while eating fast food, or delivered pizza, that these brave Southerners did fight in rags, starving and unsupplied, for the freedom of their country, against a Northern invader, with his immense industrial might, his unending trains of corn and wheat and cattle, his regiments that numbered past 100 in many states, and his desire to vanquish the South as a separate country?

Such comparisons can inspire terrible guilt. It is not uncommon for reenactors to subject themselves to terrible punishment—marching without shoes, sleeping in freezing cold, donning wool uniforms in scorching heat—as a means, in part, of coping with this guilt. Unfortunately, unlike their Civil War counterparts, most reenactors are not twentysomethings in fighting shape. A number of reenactors have become seriously ill at events where they pushed themselves beyond their physical limits, and a few have even died.[60]

Of course, inflicting heat stroke on one's self is not the only way to honor the service of Civil War soldiers. Other reenactors commemorate Civil War-era Americans in more whimsical ways. Robert McCrary, for example, is an admirer of Confederate generals Patrick Cleburne and Edward Porter Alexander.[61] Consequently, he named his son Patrick Alexander. "I think it is great," says McCrary, "to celebrate our heritage through the names of our children." Such Civil War-inspired names are not uncommon amongst the members of the community and their children—Robert Lees are particularly easy to find, William Tecumsehs, Ulysses Simpsons, and Abrahams a bit less so. [62]

If the reenactment community can be said to have a mantra, then, it is "Remember." Most reenctors are deeply committed to celebrating the deeds of those Americans who waged the Civil War. They feel a responsibility for maintaining the memory of those who have passed before, and are hopeful that they too will be remembered in some way. Eirik McFerrin puts it succinctly when he advises his pards: "Remember, most of you will be ancestors of someone else someday. Give them reason to have pride in you."[63]

**Life Lessons**

For as long as people have sought to understand and connect to the past, so too have they sought to apply its lessons to the present. This notion is central to all major religions, and to most works of historical analysis, starting with Herodotus and Thucydides. Politicians, lawyers, scientists, and doctors all rely on past lessons to help them to succeed in the present. In our own time, the past is constantly mined for insight about the present.[64] Editorialists try to predict what will, or will not, happen in elections based on past results. Economists and stockbrokers do the same for financial markets. We look to heroic individuals from the past to instruct us on how to live today—"What would Jesus do?" is the question that many ask before they make any important choice. Or, for the more secularly minded, "What would Lincoln do?"[65]

Reenactors regularly draw on their hobby to aid themselves in the present. First, participating in this large, diverse, often contentious community teaches useful lessons in terms of diplomacy and interpersonal skills. Victorian Americans had complex conventions that were designed to maintain civility in human interactions. Victorian gentility appeals to many reenactors, among them Gene Newman:

> With the recent bickering about hate, blocking, particular impressions, et al, I feel a reminder may be necessary that the 1860's (that we seek to recreate), was an era when those of good breeding were taught to avoid giving offense to others, even at great cost to oneself. If something needed to be said, it must be worded in such a way as to edify and not to offend. If a gentleman escorted two ladies at the same time, he must make every effort to pay equal attention to both, so as not to appear to give preference to one over the other. If a lady realized, to her horror, that she had inadvertently accepted an invitation from two different men for the same dance, then she should decline both, to avoid offending one. These examples illustrate the lengths that our ancestors would go to put the thoughts and feelings of others first before speaking or acting.

Newman and other reenactors often endeavor to bring Victorian manners into their own lives, when practicable. This is evident, for example, in their tendency to sign correspondence with the exceedingly polite Victorian-era appellation "Your obedient servant" or the abbreviated and still period-correct "Your obd't servant." [66]

Besides developing interpersonal skills, participating in reenactment also reminds reenactors of the blessings they enjoy in their daily lives. "The more I spend time living as a man in the 1860s," observes John Mount, "The more grateful I am that I am not, in reality, living in the 1860s." Andy Hopwood concurs, remarking that reenacting reminds him of, "the things we take for granted so that on return simple modern every day things seem invaluable." So too does Delanie Stephenson, who says, "It gives you a better appreciation for your ancestors. For instance, last night was really cold, and it makes you appreciate what you've got now-a-days a whole lot more." [67]

In addition to those lessons that apply on a personal level, there is also a widespread sense among members of the reenactment community that the Civil War holds the key to the problems Americans today face as a nation.[68] Andrea Kent opines:

> We are presently going through a vast national soul-searching in which we are attempting, both at the ballot box and in our daily lives, to determine what America means and what course she is to follow in the future. There is an enormous cultural divide between those who adhere to the traditions, goals, and values of the past and those who would as lief discard them. As people seek for answers to the great questions, they are naturally drawn to the study of another time when America sought to define herself.

Mark Paz concurs with Kent. He says:

> Slavery and our disposition to the issue was the cause of the civil war. The South said it was about states' rights (which was about their right to have slaves). We had to define our view of what America was to truly mean--life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all or just some. Oddly, I believe we still grapple with that idea.

So too does Darryl Pearce, who is quite philosophical about his hobby:

> My question: Do we reenact to *honor* our ancestors or do our ancestors *caution us* through reenaction?
>
> My statement: We should remember our past, so we can recognize our mistakes, forgive our enemies, and seek amity and comity amongst our neighbors.[69]

**Escape**

The final motivation for reenacting that this chapter will explore is the one it began with: Escape. Human beings tend to look back on the past with fondness—remembering the positives, downplaying the negatives. This nostalgia, this desire to escape the present and travel to a simpler time, is expressed in many different ways. Sometimes, it is in the form of time travel fantasies, whether in books like *Time and Again* (1970), *The Time Machine* (1895), and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), or movies like *Brigadoon* (1954), *Back to the Future* (1985), *Time After Time* (1979), and *The Red Violin* (1998), or television shows like The *Twilight Zone* (1959-64, 1985-89, 2002-03), *Star Trek* (1966-69), and *Quantum Leap* (1989-93). People also gravitate toward immersive experiences that allow them to imagine themselves living, however briefly, in a past time. Most commonly, this occurs at historic sites that have been restored or maintained so as to be reasonable facsimiles of their past selves—Gettysburg, Plimoth Plantation, and Colonial Williamsburg are all popular destinations of this sort.

Nostalgia for the past is, not surprisingly, strong in the reenactment community. It could hardly be otherwise, as reenactment is an activity that tends to emphasize the positive elements of the Civil War—bravery, heroic sacrifice, triumph over long odds—and to downplay the negative. Most reenactors acknowledge as much. Jonah Begone, for example, remarks that, "We living historians occasionally justify our hobby in terms of seeking after or celebrating a less complex time in history. Perhaps what this statement really represents is a seeking after a simpler, less complex time in life, i.e. childhood."[70]

The opportunity to trade the negative elements of 21st century living for the positive elements of 19th century living, then, is a major attraction for reenactors. Andrea Kent explains the matter succinctly:

> My children and I have a very nice lifestyle, with a handsome house adjacent to a nature preserve and a swimming pool. Nevertheless, everyone is gloomy on the way back from an immersion event; none of us want to return to the twenty-first century. It's nice to pass an entire weekend without once hearing the names of John Kerry and George Bush. And us eccentric as we are, we aren't the only ones who feel this way. None of the friends we bring along to such events want to leave the nineteenth century either. My daughter's friends, all of whom wear black nail polish and listen to Green Day, and my boy's Playstation-addicted buddies, all express the deepest gratitude when we bring them along for these weekends. Yes, this is the case even when the weekends require that the children attend a school with slates and slate-pencils.

T. Jeff Driscoll echoes Kent's views:

> Reenacting is a wonderful hobby, and a marvelous way to escape the realities of our modern world. Whether you leave a houseful of screaming children, or the often frantic pace of the city, or a place of work, no one can deny that at least part of the reason we engage in this hobby-spend large sums of money, drive incredible distances, eat miserable food, and live under little tents—is to leave the hustle and bustle of the 20th century behind. That we can do this is a godsend.

It would not be difficult to offer a hundred more examples, as these sentiments are widely shared by members of the reenactment community. [71]

Of all the elements of 19th century life that appeal to reenactors, the most important may be the Victorians' style of social interaction. As John Driscoll explains:

> You know, the definite codes of conduct or of social conduct is one of the reasons, is what made that era tick. Is one of the things that's missing in today's society is, there are no codes of conduct … You didn't turn a gentleman down. If he came and asked you to dance, after being properly introduced, you weren't a lady if indeed you turned him down … But in the same vein, this gentleman didn't expect anything more than a dance.

Sue Karnecki concurs, observing that, "With the world becoming more and more violent, it is a respite from 'reality' and even though we are portraying a war, the environment of 'gentility' is

so very much appreciated." It may seem curious that someone would use the Civil War as a way of escaping violence, given the number of soldiers that were killed or maimed in gruesome fashion, but such is the power of nostalgia.[72]

When reenactors escape to the 19th century, most do more than just change their timeframe—they also change, for lack of a better term, their situation in life.[73] For example, the majority of reenactors are urban dwellers, but reenactments are held in rural or semi-rural areas. Most reenactors are solidly middle class, if not wealthier, but portray poor soldiers or civilians. Most reenactors are graying, and yet portray young men and women. It is also the case that high-ranking officers at reenactments tend to have fairly low-level jobs in their civilian lives, while many privates and corporals occupy positions of great authority once they leave the battlefield.

Reenactors' emphasis on historical accuracy is fueled, in part, by their desire to temporarily escape modern life. Modern behaviors, technology, language, clothing, and accouterments are unwanted reminders that the participants in a reenactment have not actually left the 21st century behind. By contrast, successfully creating the illusion of time travel is known among reenactors as a "Civil War Moment." The Civil War Moment is something of a rite of passage for reenactors; afterward, a participant can say he or she has truly experienced the hobby. Steve Shelley's account of his first Civil War Moment is typical:

> [S]econd year reenacting—135th Gettysburg, Pickett's Charge. Our company was in the second line, and as we advanced, we kept having to dress left. Seemed odd at the time until I realized that every step left was filling a now empty file. I was in a group which made it 20 yards shy of the wall, and took a hit. Got up and intended to straggle back as if wounded, but received the shock of my life when I turned around and could see what a field strewn with over 10,000 casualties looked like. I'm not too proud to say I cried on the walk back. Still chokes me up when I see the charge on *Gettysburg*.

The Civil War Moment is quite powerful for reenactors, so much so that many struggle to put the experience into words. Joseph Pereira concedes as much, remarking that, "Someday, I hope that

a sociologist conducts a study on the euphoric rush, the transcendence, the release, the connection to another place."[74]

It should be noted that, as much as they want to escape the 21st century for a few hours or a few days, most reenactors would not want to make the switch permanent. Their nostalgia for the past is not so strong that they forget that the 20th century has its upsides, and the 19th century had its problems. There are occasional exceptions to this rule, however. Some are so thoroughly enamored of the past that they work to make their escape a way of life. One married reenactor couple, for example, retired from their jobs in their mid-forties and opened a bed and breakfast in Ohio. At this inn, guests are invited to experience 1863—all furnishings, clothing, and food are period appropriate, while modern technology is strictly verboten. Another reenactor makes his living as a 19th century photographer. On weekends, he travels in his buggy to reenactments, and shoots tintypes for reenactors. During the week, he retires to his farm, where there is no electricity and no running water.

**Conclusion**

Civil War reenactment, as a case study, suggests the many and varied ways that Americans interact with the past. The tendency among scholars has been to view reenactors as a fairly monolithic community, who share only one or two basic reasons for participating. More careful examination, however, reveals complexity, and not simplicity. Reenactors have many different reasons for joining up, and often the goals of one member of the community will be in direct conflict with the goals of other members. One person's desire for competition, for example, might undermine another's desire for community, or one individual's penchant for dramatic

performance might interfere with another's "Civil War Moment." Such a situation can hardly be considered simple of monolithic.

Further, it is worth remembering that of all the ways of utilizing the past that are on display at a reenactment, none of them were actually developed by reenactors. The reenactors are building on traditions that date back hundreds or sometimes thousands of years. And so, on some level, Civil War reenactment reminds us that not only do modern Americans interact with the past in many different ways, but that human beings have always done so. The next chapter will develop this theme further.

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[1] Interview with Andrea Kent, February 20, 2004.

[2] See http://www.agsas.org.

[3] Cathy Stanton, *Being the Elephant: The American Civil War Reenacted* (1997), p. 66.

[4] Interview with Glenna Jo Christen, February 2, 2006.

[5] "The Campaigner's Manifesto," *Camp Chase Gazette* 27:4 (March 2000), p. 19; Interview with Don Worth, December 18, 2000; Interview with Jon F. Willen, November 5, 2015.

[6] "In Place, Rest," *Camp Chase Gazette* 27:7 (June 2000), 5; Letter to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 22:7 June 1995, 9.

[7] Interview with Stephen Gapps, August 20, 2006.

[8] "Letter to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 17:2 (Summer 1991), 38; E-mail to Fort Tejon Reenactment Group listserv, September 11, 2001; "Living History vs. Reenacting," *Camp Chase Gazette* 19:2 (June 1993), 16; Brennan, Ted. "The Point of Reenacting Battles" *The Washington Post* (June 6, 1996), A28; "Editorial," *Camp Chase Gazette* 2:9 (June 1974), 7.

[9] For a discussion of bicentennial pageantry see Hartje, Robert G. *Bicentennial USA: Pathways to Celebration*. Nashville, Tenn.: The American Association for State and Local History, 1973.

[10] Interview with Steve Shelley, July 29, 2004.

[11] Interview with Joseph Pereira, March 1, 2004; Interview with Gary Daniel, September 28, 2006; Horowitz, 8; Interview with John Mount, March 12, 2004; *Camp Chase Gazette* 10:8 (June 1984), 15.

[12] Interview with Margaret Gilbert, March 12, 2004.

[13] Interview with John Mount, February 24, 2004; At very large and well-organized reenactments, such as the anniversary reenactments held at Gettysburg, reenactors are assigned "death times" by drawing lots before the battle.

[14] Interview with Ed Mann, July 28, 2000; Interview with Dale Himebaugh, August 21, 2000; Interview with Duke Harless, July 19, 2001; Stanton, 97.

[15] For a history of the American historical profession, see Novick, Peter. That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988; For a discussion of the philosophical currents that have shaped the profession over time, see Appleby, Joyce. A Restless Past: History and the American Public. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

[16] Interview with Rich Kilar, March 1, 2001.

[17] Cullen, 196; Ulrich B. Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* (1918) was once considered the definitive overview of American slavery, though the book's paternalistic arguments are largely rejected by scholars today. Eugene Genovese's *Roll. Jordan, Roll* (1974) is now widely regarded as the definitive analysis of the subject; In *Founding Myths* (2005), Ray Raphael makes a similar observation, noting that, "Battles are easy to comprehend. They have clear roles and clear beginnings and clear ends."

[18] Interview with Jeb Cole, October 13, 2006. 'Stuart' is J.E.B. Stuart, the commander of Robert E. Lee's cavalry, who was mysteriously absent for most of the first two days of the battle. A few weeks before the battle, at Chancellorsville, talented Confederate corps commander Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson died, causing Lee to reorganize his two-corps army into three. The vague orders that Lee gave to new corps commander Richard Ewell on the first day of the battle of Gettysburg would likely have been handled properly by Jackson, but were likely misunderstood by Ewell. 'Longstreet' is James Longstreet, Lee's most senior corps commander at Gettysburg. Longstreet performed well in defensive maneuvers, such as at Fredericksburg, but was much less comfortable with offensive maneuvers. As a result, Lee's choice to give Longstreet responsibility for the main offensive on the second day of the battle, and on the third day (which

included the famous assault known as Pickett's Charge) has been much criticized since the battle ended; Cullen, 196.

[19] "Civil War Shelter Tent Pegs For Use In Living History Settings," *Camp Chase Gazette* 29:6 (May 2002), p. 20.

[20] His website is available at http://www.3gvi.org/ga3history.html.

[21]

[22] Interview with Dave Sanders, August 21, 2006. The specific quote that attracted his interest comes from Philip Haythornthwaite's *Uniforms of the American Civil War, 1861-65*. New York, Macmillan: 1975. Of the 62nd New York, Haythornthwaite writes: "In October 1861 this regiment was the most sloppy, unclean and generally disgraceful regiment in Union service. The gaudy Zouave costume always attracted a rowdy element, but this corps contained nothing but vagabonds who stole from friend, foe and civilian alike"; Gapps' quote comes from his website, http://members.tripod.com/~The_62nd/ (accessed March 1, 2016). Professional historians would tend to agree with his assessment. Besides their rough-hewn nature, the 62nd's poor reputation comes largely from a damning assessment of the unit offered by Brigadier General John Peck, who upon taking command of the unit wrote: "It was mortifying to find so much neglect of duty, so much inefficiency, and so low a conception of the soldiers position … Its organization was defective and unfortunate." The unit actually served with much distinction, however, participating in many battles, including Gettysburg, Antietam, and Chancellorsville. The unit's members won three Medals of Honor, while also reenlisting at a rate of nearly 100%.

[23] Anderson is not the only Civil War-era individual whose death was later thrown into question in this manner. Jesse James was famously the subject of many rumors asserting that he was not really killed by Robert Ford in 1882, and several men claiming to be James emerged in the years thereafter. Similarly, in 1903 a drifter named David George was able to persuade many Americans that he was, in fact, John Wilkes Booth.

[24] The group's homepage is http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BloodyBillAndersonMystery/ (last accessed March 1, 2016).

[25] The James brothers, who served in the Confederate army, had a nearly 20-year career as bandits, and occupy a central place in the mythology of the Wild West. Quantrill, also a Confederate, was notorious for his daring and his ruthlessness. Parker was responsible for guarding Lincoln on the night he was assassinated, but abandoned his post to visit a local tavern. Morgan is best known for a daring raid on Union lines in 1863.

[26] The notion that Americans are, as a whole, anti-intellectual dates back as least as far as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. The definitive study of the subject is Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

[27] For a discussion of the use of Lincoln in order to promote national unity, see Peterson, Merrill D. *Lincoln in American Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

[28] The foremost scholar in the study of hobby-based communities is sociologist Gary Alan Fine. He has studied, among others, the role-play gaming community (*Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds*, 1983), the mushroom collecting community (*Morel Tales: The Culture of Mushrooming*, 1998), and the little league baseball community *(With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*, 1987). His concept of what constitutes a community is being utilized here. For a general introduction to Fine's approach, see *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004; For a list of reenactor vocabulary, see Reid, Luc, *Talk the Talk: The Slang of 65 American Subcultures*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2006, 176-79; Interview with Kate Walters, March 3, 2006; Interview with John Tubbesing, August 21, 2014.

[29] Interview with Rob Robitaille, September 3, 2015; Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2001.

[30] E-mails to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, September 11, 2001.

[31] Shurig, Mike. "Letters to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 30:1 (Holiday 2002), 9; Brand, Richard. "In Memoriam: A Tribute to Steve Boulton." *Camp Chase Gazette* 36:4 (April 2008), 10; *Camp Chase Gazette* 28:3 (Winter 2000); *Camp Chase Gazette* 31:3 (Winter 2004).

[32] For coverage and commentary on the tower's destruction, from a reenactor perspective, see *Camp Chase Gazette* 27:8 (July/August 2000).

[33] In fact, most hobby-based communities have incidents of hobby-themed weddings.

[34] Interview with Bob Sullivan, January 15, 2014; Swart, Mark Brian. *Once More Into the Breach: A Personal Account: Reliving the History of the Civil War*. Denver: Outskirts Press, 2010, 125.

[35] For an overview of Christian relic-collecting, see Bentley, James, *Restless Bones: The Story of Relics*. New York: Constable, 1985; For an overview of the antiquarian movement, see Myrone, Martin and Lucy Peltz, eds.

*Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice, 1700-1850*. Farnham, UK: AShgate Publishing Ltd., 1999.

[36] For several excellent essays on this subject, see Leah Dilworth, ed. *Acts of Possession: Collecting in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: 2003. Jefferson to Dr. James Mease, in Paul Leiceister Ford, ed. *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 10:346. Quoted in Raphael, Ray, *Founding Myths* (2004).

[37] Interview with Lee Draughton, March 14, 2000.

[38] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, May 15, 1998.

[39] Prominent sutlers include C & D Jarnigan, Dirty Billy's Hats, Fall Creek Sutler, Grand Illusions Clothing Co., James Townsend & Son, Mason-Dixon Sewing Co., Mercury Supply Company Sutler, Mrs. Christen's Miscellanea, Thickitycreek Civil War Sutler, and Thomas Lincoln Boots & Brogans.

[40] E-mails to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, July 21, 1998.

[41] "Letters to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 25:9 (August 1998), p. 7.

[42] Interview with Jay Callaham, July 23, 2004; There is an interesting, possibly unintended, subtext to the term 'button pisser.' The brass buttons on the clothing in museums are indeed tarnished, and urinating on clean brass buttons will simulate that effect. However, the tarnish observed in museums exists only because the clothes are old—during the war itself the buttons would have been shiny. Thus, an actual button pisser—and reenactors invariably deny they have ever engaged in the practice—would be going to great lengths to achieve, ironically enough, a decidedly inauthentic effect.

[43] The Society for Creative Anachronism—individuals who reenact medieval Europe—also have a slang term to describe fake or phony equipment and costumes: farbel. It is unknown if the term was borrowed from Civil War reenactment, or if they both derive from the same source.

[44] The *Camp Chase Gazette* has weighed in, at great length, on the history of the term. See Jonah Begone, "Who Was the Founding Father of Farb? An Academic Treatise on the Origin of the Word," *Camp Chase Gazette* 26:10 (September 1999), p. 50.

[45] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, March 19, 2000.

[46] For an overview of Americans' interest in death, see Kerr, Howard and Charles L. Crow, *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983; for an overview of the American

spiritualist movement, see Cox, Robert S., *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003 and Moore, Laurence R., *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; for a discussion of Victorian funerals and death-related practices, see Flood, Karen, Pomeroy*, Contemplating Corpses: The Dead Body in American Culture, 1870-1920*. Ph. Diss., 2001, Farrell, James J., *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980, and Reed, Cheryl, *Spirited Discourses: The Curious Matter of Ghosts in Victorian Popular Culture*. Ph. D. diss., 1996.

[47] Interview with Robert L. Hadden, July 23, 2004; See https://myspace.com/vsrs (accessed March 1, 2016) for the Spiritualist reenactors' webpage.

[48] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, June 11, 2001; Interview with Steven Conn, January 3, 2006.

[49] Shulman, Terry. "Did Ghostly Soldiers Pay Re-enactors a Courtesy Call?" *Staunton News Leader* (July 10, 2004), 17.

[50] Kinzer, Cal. "Letters to the Editor," *Camp Chase Gazette* 26:7 (June 1999), 6; Holschuh, Bill. "Ridgepole Ruminations," *Camp Chase Gazette* 31:3 (March 2004), 66.

[51] Hodge, Bauer, Purschwitz, and nine others all discovered their "pasts" with the help of regression therapist Barbara Lane. She has written a book telling the stories of each of the dozen reenactors she worked with. See Lane, Barbara, *Echoes From the Battlefield: First-Person Accounts of Civil War Past Lives*. Virginia Beach, Va.: A.R.E. Press, 1996; Keene, Jeffrey J. *Someone Else's Yesterday*. Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2003.

[52] Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, 60; E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, September 30, 2006

[53] There are veritable mountains of works designed to help genealogists with their craft, with titles like *Trace Your Roots with DNA: Use Your DNA to Complete Your Family Tree*, *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*, and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Genealogy*, to take but three examples, along with websites like ancestry.com and familysearch.org. Very little scholarly attention has been paid to genealogy, however.

[54] Thelen and Rosenzweig, 234, 237, 22.

[55] Interview with Andrea Kent, February 20, 2004; Jones, Rory. "Camp Gossip," *Camp Chase Gazette* 32:8 (July 2006), 8; Interview with John Quimby, July 29, 2000; E-mail from Steven Cone, December 31, 2005

[56] Interview with Barb McCreary, March 10, 2000; Interview with Jonathan Pack, July 29, 2015; Interview with Tim Grottenthaler, June 27, 2001.

[57] Interview with Duke Harless, August 5, 2000.

[58] Heritage is a fuzzy concept, and its meaning and significance have been much discussed by scholars. See, in particular, Lowenthal, David, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Note that the definiton of heritage used by many scholars, including Lowenthal, varies somewhat from the defintion used by reenactors. Specifically, reenactors tend to use 'heritage' to mean something akin to 'my roots,' while scholars tend to see the history and heritage as antithetical. Lowenthal, for example, says, "History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes."

[59] Grenan, Shaun C. *So You Want to Be a Soldier: How to Get Started in Civil War Re-enacting*. Lynchburg, Va.: Schroeder Publications, 2003, ix; Interview with Brad Leppla, September 25, 2006; Brennan, Ted. "The Point of Reenacting Battles" *The Washington Post* (June 6, 1996), A28.

[60] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, May 2, 2001; For examples of reenactors who perished, see Meyer, Ziati, "A Regiment Honored Joseph M. Rumley of Bucks County, Who Died Recreating a Civil War Battle" *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 26, 2002) B03; Cohn, D'Vera, "Heat of Battle Takes Its Toll; 300 Felled by Weather At Manassas Reenactment" *The Washington Post* (July 21, 1986) B1; and Vogel, Steve, "Two Tragedies Mar Reenactment of Civil War's Deadliest Day" *The Washington Post* (September 16, 1997) B1. In the latter case, the dead man's pards were decidedly of two minds about his death. "We're subdued by it," said one of his fellow reenactors. "We always hate to lose one. But talking to a lot of the reenactors, they felt like it sure was a nice way to go."

[61] Major General Patrick Cleburne (1828-1864) was a skillful soldier, and the first prominent Confederate to call for the use of slaves as soldiers. He was wounded several times during the course of the war, and killed at the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864. Brigadier General Edward Porter Alexander (1835-1910) was commander of the artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia for most of the war. As such, he participated in most of the best-known battles of the conflict, and played a central role in Pickett's famous charge.

[62] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, July 29, 2001.

[63] E-mail to Fort Tejon reenactment group listserv, September 13, 2001.

[64] Rosenzweig and Thelen also make this point. See *The Presence of the Past*, 127-128.

[65] See Peterson, 314, for a discussion with this very heading.

[66] Interview with Gene Newman, August 29, 2000.

[67] Interview with John Mount, February 24, 2004; Interview with Andy Hopwood, September 19, 2006; quoted in Patrick Huber, "Women Civil War Reenactors: A Combat Dispatch from Fort Branch." in *North Carolina Literary Review* 8 (1999), 11.

[68] This notion is a central theme of Randal Allred, "Catharsis, Revision, and Re-Enactment: Negotiating the Meaning of the American Civil War." in Journal of American Culture 4 (Winter 1996), 1-13. He writes: "From a re-enactor's point of view, it was a time before the disintegration of social structures, when history had causation, a certain logic ruled the universe, and there were principles worth having and paradigms worth trusting. It was a time, from our era's perspective, when community pulled together in a singleness of purpose all too rare in any age and perhaps extinct in ours."

[69] Interview with Andrea Kent, March 12, 2004; Interview with Mark Paz, August 21, 2006; Interview with Darryl Pearce, March 1, 2003.

[70] Begone, Jonah. "Aging Children of Reenacting" in *Camp Chase Gazette* 30:6 (May 2003), p. 36.

[71] Interview with Andrea Kent, March 12, 2004; Driscoll, T. Jeff. "Living History vs. Reenacting," in *Camp Chase Gazette* 28:6 (May 2001) p. 16.

[72] Quoted in Stanton, 75; Interview with Sue Karnecki, September 16, 2006.

[73] German scholars who first identified this tendency, found in many different kinds of communities, use the term '*sitz im leben'*.

[74] Interview with Steve Shelly, July 29, 2004; Interview with Joseph Pereira, March 1, 2004.

# "Mystic Chords of Memory"

## Why People Love the Civil War

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"I am an absolute nut about the Civil War," admits Don Worth, "I have no idea why."[1] Worth, a retired computer systems administrator, has been reenacting for more than a decade, usually as part of the Confederate 3rd Georgia Infantry, and occasionally with the Union 2nd Vermont Infantry. His interest in the Civil War dates back even further, all the way to when he was a youngster growing up during the Civil War Centennial. He explains that he was first drawn to the Civil War when:

> [M]y Grandfather gave me the *Life* magazines in the early 1960s and the *American Heritage Book of the Civil War*. I had to do a Civil War project for school—6th grade?—and I remember cutting out pictures from the magazines for the report and looking up what I then considered obscure generals in the encyclopedia. At the same time, because of the centennial there were lots of other Civil War related things around. For example, I had the Marx Blue & Gray plastic soldiers play set and *The Gray Ghost* was on TV and I had seen the movie *Friendly Persuasion* and loved it. One of my friends had the Avalon Hill Game *Gettysburg* and I had to get that too. I ended up buying their Chancellorsville game too. And I had stacks and stacks of the Whitman Confederate play money. When I visited Knott's Berry Farm, I bought replicas of *Harper's Weekly* from the Civil War era too.[2]

Worth believes that when he was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, children's exposure to the past was far greater than it is today. Toy stores, for example, were filled with items inspired by historic events and individuals. Besides their Blue & Gray line, the Marx Company also sold toy soldiers from the Mexican-American War, War of 1812, Revolutionary War, and Indian Wars. There were also Red Ryder BB Guns, Lincoln Logs, Davy Crockett coonskin caps, and miniature Sherman Tanks. History was also a mainstay of television programming. In 1960, for example, nine of the Top 20 rated programs were Westerns—*Gunsmoke, Wagon Train, Have*

*Gun Will Travel, Wanted: Dead or Alive, Rifleman, The Lawman, Cheyenne, Rawhide,* and *Maverick*.[3] Morning programming was likewise quite historical. "Disney immersed us in every historical character he could lay his hands on—*Davy Crockett, Johnny Tremain, The Swamp Fox*," he remembers. Still, it was the Civil War that captured his heart. Asked to explain, he says:

> I remember being very impressed with John Mosby—the main character of the *Gray Ghost* TV series. I remember being much more interested in the Confederates—those dashing cavaliers! I suspect I was mostly a product of my times—the centennial washed over all of us like a giant wave. Perhaps it was partly that we were living in the era of the cold war—with the constant threat of annihilation, and it was pleasant to cast oneself back to an earlier, simpler time … The stories that came from the war seemed full of passion and heroism and noble deeds. I couldn't get nearly as excited about the Revolutionary War—even with movies like *Johnny Tremain*—or other wars.[4]

Once the centennial was over, Worth's interest in the Civil War waned. Attending college during the height of the antiwar movement, followed by marriage and the start of his career, diverted his attention elsewhere. In the late 1980s, however, his passion returned. He doesn't know why, for certain, though he says some personal problems—and the desire for occasional escape—played a role. These personal problems coincided with a dramatic increase in the attention paid to the Civil War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, thanks to the movie *Glory* and the Ken Burns *Civil War* series on PBS. As a consequence, the Civil War once became again a major part of Don Worth's life. Besides reenacting, he has created extensive Civil War-related websites, compiled a large collection of Gettysburg photographs, visited dozens of battlefields, taken coursework on the War, attended several Civil War conferences, and become a serious student of genealogy.

Don Worth is not alone in his fascination with the Civil War—it is, without question, the most popular period in American history. Volumes on the Civil War appear regularly on bestseller lists, and crowd shelves at bookstores across the nation. There are more than 60,000

published works on the War, a figure that easily dwarfs other popular topics in American History, including World War II (30,930 books), the Revolutionary War (28,960), the Vietnam War (21,874), slavery (19,337), women's history (11,554), World War I (11,511), and the Colonial period (5,783). The Civil War is the subject of the very first successful Hollywood film—*Birth of a Nation*—and also the most successful Hollywood film—*Gone With the Wind*. Ken Burns' documentary series on the war was the highest-rated program in public television history, seen by more than 40 million people. Of all the historic periods that are reenacted—medieval, Roman, Viking, Spanish exploration, World War I, World War II, Vietnam—the Civil War attracts far and away the most participants. Gettysburg National Military Park, with an average of about 2,000,000 visitors annually, is the most visited national park in America. There are more than 400 Civil War round table discussion groups—no comparable phenomenon exists for any other historical period. And in addition to all of this evidence of the war's popularity are numerous Civil War-themed websites, listservs, magazines, museums, cable programs, music collections, and television miniseries. [5]

Why is the Civil War so popular? This seems a simple enough question, and many historians have a simple enough answer. Shelby Foote, who wrote a bestselling three-volume history of the war, put the matter succinctly when asked:

> Any understanding of this nation has to be based, and I mean really based, on an understanding of the Civil War. I believe that firmly. It defined us … the Civil War defined us as what we are and it opened us to being what we became, good and bad things. And it is very necessary, if you are going to understand the American character in the twentieth century, to learn about this enormous catastrophe of the nineteenth century. It was the crossroads of our being, and it was a hell of a crossroads…

Academic historians tend to echo Foote's analysis, arguing that the war's overwhelming importance is the key to its great popularity. James I. Robertson, for example, asserts that the war

attracts such interest because it "was the biggest thing to happen to America." James McPherson agrees, observing that, "The most important reason for the enduring fascination with the Civil War [was that] great issues were at stake. Issues about which Americans were willing to fight and to die. Issues whose resolution profoundly transformed and redefined the United States."[6]

Such an explanation seems reasonable, and may even suffice to explain historians' interest in the war. When applied to reenactors, however, it simply does not stand up. To begin with, fascination with the Civil War transcends national boundaries. There are Civil War reenactors in Canada, England, Australia, Japan, Italy, Germany, and France, among other countries. Even before reenactment existed, there were a great many Civil War enthusiasts in those nations, including such luminaries as Winston Churchill, who insisted on touring Civil War battlefields on those occasions when he visited the United States, even at the height of World War II. The Civil War may have had an impact—even a significant impact—on foreign nations, but it surely is nowhere near the most important or transformative event in their histories. [7]

A second problem with assuming that the Civil War's popularity is due to its significance is that fascination with the Civil War typically starts in childhood, long before individuals are in a position to make judgments about—or even to be aware of—the war's significance. When reenactors explain how they came to be interested in the war, the stories they tell are remarkable for their similarity.[8] Like Don Worth, nearly all discovered the Civil War at a young age, and nearly all trace that discovery back to a very specific event or artifact. Michael Kelley, for example, remembers that, "I have been interested in the Civil War from a very early age. When I was 11 I lived just outside of Charleston, South Carolina, and the Centennial celebration really caught my attention." John Tubbesing says, "My first purchase as a child was a Civil War play set and I remember being wowed seeing one of the last Civil War vets on TV." Stephen Gapps

recalls that he first discovered an interest in the war, "At about age 7 through the Timpo toys collections of plastic soldiers." Dave Sanders' story is almost identical to Gapps':

> My first interest in the Civil war started in the late 1960s, early 1970s. This came about through advertisements in the back of DC or Marvel Comic books offering 300 toy soldiers—"Blue and the Gray"—and had a graphic of a Union or Confederate officer raising his sword to charge!

There is no single "hook," however more important than Bruce Catton's *American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*. Fully 37% of the reenactors interviewed for this study made specific mention of that specific book in discussing their early interest in the war.[9]

Interestingly, foreign Civil War reenactors tend to have childhood memories to those of American reenactors. For instance, more than half of the British reenactors interviewed for this project traced their interest in the war back to the exact same toy—a set of trading cards sold in Britain by the *Civil War News*. "I have had an interest in the Civil War since collecting chewing gum cards in the early 1960's," recollects Jeb Cole. John Overton fondly remembers that, "In 1963 a set of very gory trading cards came out in the UK, which every lad in town collected. That started my interest in the Civil War."[10]

A third problem with correlating the Civil War's popularity with its importance is that such an explanation does not mesh well with the broader landscape of reenactors'—or Americans'—historical memory. Reenactors often evince little interest in other important periods of American history, and sometimes are not even particularly well versed in the significant events and issues of the Civil War. They are far more likely to be knowledgeable about, say, William Clarke Quantrill than they are William Seward.[11] The same is true of Americans in general—the list of "most important historical events" and the list of "most popular historical events" only occasionally overlap.

An examination of the number of published books devoted to historical topics in instructive on this point. There are an astounding 20,917 works of fiction set in the American West, along with another 8,973 documenting the history of that region. In contrast, there are 3,643 books on Reconstruction, 3,319 on the Great Depression, and 1,846 on antebellum America. The growth of the West is undoubtedly an important part of the nation's history, but surely it is not as important as Reconstruction, the Great Depression, and the antebellum era combined. To take other examples, there are 1,185 books on the relatively minor Battle of Little Bighorn, but only 139 on Argonne Forest, the concluding battle of World War I. There are 1,140 books on the sinking of the *Titanic*, but only 82 on the stock market crash of 1929. There are 371 books on the Pony Express but only 53 on the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, a landmark event in American labor history. The same applies to biographies, where controversial and colorful individuals get much attention, even if they were not terribly significant. Such is the case with Jesse James, the subject of 754 books, and Buffalo Bill Cody, featured in an astounding 1,585 books. These easily outnumber the available works on civil rights pioneers Booker T. Washington (547 books) and W.E.B. DuBois (533), antebellum-era Southern statesman John C. Calhoun (533), politician and presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan (448), lawyer and jurist Thurgood Marshall (168), and inventor Eli Whitney (106). This is just one quick, rather crude, way of making this point; space will not allow for a more exhaustive case to be mad. Nonetheless, cataloguing films, or tallying articles from *American Heritage* magazine, or collecting anecdotal evidence from historians who have interacted substantially with the general public, or looking at Google searches would all surely yield the same result.[12]

In order to understand the popularity of the Civil War, then, it is necessary to turn to some explanation not entirely dependent on the war's historical significance—one that makes

sense in light on the War's appeal among foreigners and children, and one that makes clear why, say, the sinking of the *Titanic* would be of vastly greater interest than the crash of the stock market. The balance of this chapter will examine four different aspects of the war that help to solve this puzzle.

**The Civil War Industry**

It is important to begin by making clear that the argument here is not that the significance of the Civil War is irrelevant to its popularity. The significance certainly helps maintain interest, particularly when it comes to the "Civil War industry," as Philip Beidler labels it. He is deeply disturbed by the enormous amount of money that is made marketing and selling the Civil War:

> [T]he ongoing manufacture of the Civil War as the quintessential American item—a product, I will propose, not unlike its cousin, the sport utility vehicle, as dangerous as it is big and handsome, a shining exterior fabricated around the killing power of the machine.

Whether one shares his particular view, there is no doubt that there's big money in the Civil War, and that the consistent marketing of the war serves to keep it alive (and beloved) in the minds of Americans.[13]

Even while the war was still underway, there was money being made selling the conflict to "fans"— maps, Currier and Ives engravings of important battles, pictures of important leaders, hastily-published battle accounts. After battles, relic-hunters would quickly descend, searching for spent materiel and other artifacts that could be kept or sold. The notion of making money from tourism, which was somewhat new in the 1860s, was also on the mind of more than one entrepreneur. At least part of the reason that Gettysburg achieved the preeminence that it did was that efforts to turn the battlefield into a tourist shrine began literally weeks after the battle concluded. In the postbellum years, the Civil War industry continued to flourish. As noted in

Chapter 3, Northerners and Southerners found much profit in selling the South, both as an image and a destination. John Townsend Trowbridge and Whitelaw Reid had bestsellers with their travelogues of the region. Gilbert Bates and Father John Sherman undertook highly publicized tours, documenting their experiences in serial form in Northern newspapers, and fattening their respective bank accounts. The Civil War Centennial was, in many ways, a giant moneymaking venture. Karl Betts, he of the Civil War Centennial Commission, was a marketing executive and knew a profit opportunity when he saw one. Materials produced by the commission recommended that event sponsors connect their product with the war, for example by suggesting that Robert E. Lee would enjoy a particular brand of tobacco, or that the armies would have enjoyed uniforms made from the latest synthetic fabrics. Beyond the toys and books described above, there were also Civil War-themed games, maps, mugs, commemorative plates, t-shirts, shoes, posters, collectible coins, and medals sold during the Centennial. More Confederate battle flags were sold in 1961 alone than were sold during the entire Civil War. [14]

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the enormous moneymaking potential of the Civil War is to consider some of the important books, movies, and events that drew attention back to the conflict. A selection of these items is shown in the table on the next page; nearly all the books were bestsellers or major prizewinners or both, nearly all the movies were financial successes in either the theater or on tape/DVD. Even a cursory examination makes clear that it is rare for even a few years to go by without something that puts the Civil War into the public consciousness for

| Title | Medium | By | Year(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir of the Civil War* | Book | Sam Watkins | 1882 |
| *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* | Book | Ulysses S. Grant | 1885 |
| *Hard Tack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* | Book | John D. Billings | 1887 |
| *A Short History of the Confederate States of America* | Book | Jefferson Davis | 1889 |
| *The Red Badge of Courage* | Book | Stephen Crane | 1895 |
| *The Birth of a Nation* | Film | D.W. Griffith | 1915 |
| *The General* | Film | Buster Keaton | 1927 |
| *Gone with the Wind* | Book | Margaret Mitchell | 1937 |
| *Gone with the Wind* | Film | Victor Fleming | 1939 |
| *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* | Book | Sandburg Lincoln | 1939 |
| *The Life of Johnny Reb* | Book | Bell Irvin Wiley | 1943 |
| *Ordeal of the Union* | Book | Allan Nevins | 1947 |
| *The Red Badge of Courage* | Film | John Huston | 1951 |
| *The Centennial History of the Civil War* | Book | Bruce Catton | 1951-53 |
| *The Life of Billy Yank* | Book | Bell Irvin Wiley | 1952 |
| Passing of the last Civil War veterans | Event | N/A | 1956-59 |
| *The Civil War: A Narrative* | Book | Shelby Foote | 1958-1974 |
| *The Horse Soldiers* | Film | John Ford | 1959 |
| *Civil War Times* | Magazine | Robert Fowler | 1959-present |
| *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* | Book | Bruce Catton | 1960 |
| Civil War centennial | Event | N/A | 1961-65 |
| *Shenandoah* | Film | Andrew V. McLaglen | 1965 |
| *The Good, the Bad. and the Ugly* | Film | The Good | 1966 |
| *America's Civil War* | Magazine | Roy Morris, Jr. | 1968-present |
| *The Killer Angels* | Book | Michael Shaara | 1974 |
| U.S. Bicentennial | Event | N/A | 1976 |
| *Roots* | Television | Marvin J. Chomsky | 1977 |
| *Battle at Bull Run* | Book | William C. Davis | 1977 |
| *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* | Book | Mary Boykin Chesnut | 1981 |
| *The Blue and the Gray* | Television | Andrew V. McLaglen | 1982 |
| *North and South* | Television | Richard T. Heffron | 1985-86 |
| Civil War quasquicentennial | Event | N/A | 1986-90 |
| *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* | Book | James McPherson | 1988 |
| *Glory* | Film | Edward Zwick | 1989 |
| *Dances With Wolves* | Film | Kevin Costner | 1990 |
| *The Civil War* | Television | Ken Burns | 1990 |
| *Gettysburg* | Film | Ronald Maxwell | 1993 |
| *North & South* | Magazine | Keith Poulter | 1997-2013 |
| *The Confederate War* | Book | Gary Gallagher | 1998 |
| *Gangs of New York* | Film | Martin Scorsese | 2002 |
| *Cold Mountain* | Film | Anthony Minghella | 2003 |
| *Gettysburg* | Book | Stephen W. Sears | 2003 |
| *Killing Lincoln* | Book | Bill O'Reilly | 2011 |
| *Lincoln* | Film | Steven Spielberg | 2012 |

yet another go-round.

Civil War reenactors are, of course, enthusiastic participants in the Civil War industry, both as producers and as consumers. As to the consuming, Chapters 3 and 4 have already discussed the rather significant costs of participating in the hobby. Every item listed on the previous page, meanwhile, has been named by at least half a dozen reenactors as part of how they came to be interested in the war. Van Zabava, for example, explains that his attraction to the Civil War, "started in a movie theatre in 1990 with the movie *Glory*." Darin Richardson writes:

> I had always had a love for the Civil War. I'm not entirely sure when it started. Perhaps it began when the two mini-series *Blue and the Gray* and *North and South* were on television. Either way, I remember reading my first Civil War book in the seventh grade. I think it was a pictorial history of the Civil War written by Bruce Catton. I was hooked after that.

Cynthia DiCarlo, who does a Confederate civilian impression, says, "I don't have any direct ancestors to rag about, but started my reenacting career based on my love of the 19th century culture (thanks to watching *Gone With the Wind* as a child). Susan Lyons Hughes portrays a Northern Civilian, but says almost exactly the same: "If you are one of those who spent their childhood reading books about the Civil War, imagining life In the bygone days of hoop skirts and fans, or watching *Gone With The Wind* a hundred times, Civil War reenacting may be a way for you to capture the experiences of the Civil War period." [15]

Many reenactors also profit handsomely from the Civil War. There are multiple dozens of sutlers who keep the community supplied with authentic muskets, kepis, and shell jackets. Tom Hunge, for example, has been in the business since 1961, selling a range of products that includes 25-cent pencils and $1,000 Enfield rifles. "There have been days when I never put the phone down," he reports. "I keep it next to my ear and write new orders for eight hours straight." Thanks to the Internet, he no longer even has to travel to reenactments—his company,

Winchester Sutler, does all of its business via its website. During the sesquicentennial, his business increased by 50%. “It's not like we're General Motors,” he notes, “But people realize there's money to be made in this business now.” And while sutlery is perhaps the easiest way to make a living from Civil War reenacting, it’s not the only way. Bill Taylor, for example, makes a full-time living as a farrier, shoeing reenactors’ horses. Bobby Horton pays the bills by recording and selling Civil War music. John Avery does undertaking Civil War-style, as both his hobby and his business.[16]

Finally, it is worth noting that the reenactments are an industry unto themselves. Americans spend $1.4 billion a year attending Civil War living history events. That's about double what Broadway takes in. A great many small- and medium-sized communities host annual Civil War reenactment events as a two-for-one means of promoting history education and raising funds. The hosts aren’t above being a little inventive sometimes; for example, the largest annual reenactment in Texas is the annual commemoration of the Battle of Port Jefferson. That engagement may not ring a bell with even the most knowledgeable of Civil War historians. The reason is that it never happened, except in the minds of the Marion County Chamber of Commerce.[17]

**The Visual Record**

In their study of how people interact with the past, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen asked respondents about the ways in which they had interacted with the past in the previous 12 months. The overwhelmingly most popular choice was by looking at photographs, something that 91% has done. It was followed by taking photographs, chosen by 83% of interview subjects. This was followed by watching movies, at 81%, and then a pretty rapid downward curve for visiting

museums (57%), reading books about the past (53%), workin on a collection (39%), genealogy (36%), writing in a journal (29%), and participating in a history-centered study or discussion group (20%). These numbers affirm what every historian must, at very least, suspect. They also help to explain the appeal of the Civil War, which has a visual record unlike that of any other historical event.[18]

The historical context is exceedingly relevant here. In the visual arts, paintings and engravings remained preeminent. The Western world, including the United States, had entered the Romantic period in art. Advances in printing technology, meanwhile, made possible the mass production of images at a reasonable price. The result of these various trends was the production of literally thousands of engravings, lithographs, and paintings of the war. Because of the cultural milieu, and because the artworks were meant to be marked to a mass audience, they presented an exceedingly idealized vision of Civil War combat. This tradition continued after the war, and lasts to the present day in the works of wildly popular military artists like Don Troiani and Mort Kunstler. [19]

Of course, photography also existed at the time of the war, having been developed some two decades earlier. However, it was a still an art form on the upswing, and one that was not fully embraced as legitimate. As such, photographers of the era strove to make their images more painting-like, so that they would be regarded as "art." Put another way, the pictures were romanticized. The great majority of images captured were portraits, whose staging and tone recalled the paintings of European nobles that had been produced for centuries. Combat photos were not possible, given the 30-to-60 second exposure times that the era's photographic plates demanded, and even photos of dead bodies are somewhat rare. Civil War-era cameras were bulky and hard to move, and quite often photographers would not arrive until after the battlefield

had been cleared. For example, the only photographer traveling with Ulysses S. Grant's army in 1864 was Timothy O'Sullivan. He desperately tried to get shots of the general's handiwork, but Grant just moved too fast to make that possible. Thus the carnage from some of the most brutal fighting of the war was lost, photographically. Even on those occasions where dead bodies did remain long enough to captured—Gettysburg and Antietam, primarily—it was customary to arrange them in angelic poses, with hands on chests. This meshed well with the spiritualist bent of the era, and was also a good way to make sure that one did not have one's battlefield pass revoked for producing negative imagery. [20]

In short, circumstances conspired to create a catalogue of images that was both extensive and diverse, but also exceedingly romantic and appealing. There are no photographs of the Revolutionary War; paintings of World War II are scarce and anachronistic. Indeed, there is only a narrow window in which the trajectory of painting and graphic arts was crossing with that of photography—perhaps 15 or so years, from 1855 to 1870—and the Civil War is the major event of those years. It is for this reason that the war has an entirely unique visual record.

Civil War reenactors, not surprisingly, embrace this record quite warmly. Reenactment of battles is, after all, a visual medium, and we also recall how many of them had a youthful fascination with Catton's *American Heritage PICTURE History of the Civil War*. It is customary for reenactors to compiled picture books of the units and individuals they reenact; such evidence is regarded as the ultimate arbiter in any disputes over accuracy. A study in the Camp Chase Gazette revealed that 82% of the community uses pictures for research. [21] Confederate reenactor Stephen Franzoni explains that he is fascinated by the Civil War because it is, "the first war that we have a photographic history of the event that has created a window back in time." Civilian reenactor Sandy Boyar agrees, declaring:

> My interest must have started with the photographs. Photographs, more than words or paintings are truly real. The subjects come alive in the images. The truth of their actual existence is frozen in time. For me, it's the people, the human element. I seek to virtually get inside their heads and see, feel and think as they did. How then can I truly know the people of another era unless I go back into that era and do exactly the things that they did?

Bill Holschuh is also a part of the chorus: "We all love pictures. I've read that all of out memories are visual images, so the greater the visual impact, the more it will be remembered."[22]

**Historic Sites**

As noted in the previous chapter, human beings choose to commune with the past in many different ways. And one of the best ways to do so is to visit historic sites. This behavior recalls, of course, the religious pilgrimage, in which a believer might visit Mecca or Jerusalem or some important temple or cathedral to gain insight into their religion. In the case of historical pilgrims, destinations might include battlefields, museums, or monuments, among other options. And, as with the images, the Civil War brings together a unique collection of potential sites to visit.

According to Richard Handler and William Saxton, those who are in the know suspect that battlefields are the single most popular type of tourist destination in the world. The Civil War, of course, left behind thousands of the. Actually, it left behind 10,000, to be precise. About 400 were identified by the National Park Service as worthy of preservation, and about 50 actually have been preserved. 50 out of 10,000 is only a small percentage, but it's still far more than any other war fought in North America. This was because—encouraged by boosters like Henry S. Huidekoper, Langhorne Wister, and Paul Roy—Civil War-era Americans quickly grasped the significance of the war they were fighting. At the same time, the emergence of middle-class tourism alerted them that the sites of combat might be worth saving. And so, within 15 years of Appomattox, at the prompting of the GAR and other members of the Civil War

generation, the U.S. government formally established the first five national military parks: Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Antietam, Shiloh, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg. By contrast, the Revolutionary War generation had no such insights, and so most battlefields were quickly developed or turned into farmland. Historian Thomas A. Chambers explains:

> Even in the midst of the Civil War, its battlefields were being dedicated as hallowed ground. Today, those sites are among the most visited places in the United States. In contrast, the battlegrounds of the Revolutionary War had seemingly been forgotten in the aftermath of the conflict in which the nation forged its independence. Decades after the signing of the Constitution, the battlefields of Yorktown, Saratoga, Fort Moultrie, Ticonderoga, Guilford Courthouse, Kings Mountain, and Cowpens, among others, were unmarked except for crumbling forts and overgrown ramparts. Not until the late 1820s did Americans begin to recognize the importance of these places.[23]

Further, as anyone who has visited nearly any American city or town that existed in 1865 knows, the Civil War generation were enthusiastic builders of monuments. On some level, the most important monuments are the soldiers graves, which were dug in newly-christened national cemeteries at Arlington, Gettysburg, and other locations. In addition to those were tens of thousands of statues, obelisks, markers, and other installations (over 1,000 on the Gettysburg battlefield alone.) The other popular wars in American history—the Revolution, World War I, World War II—have only a fraction of the monuments that the Civil War has. [24]

Then there are the museums. As with the battlefields, Civil War-era Americans moved fairly quickly to open up spaces in which the material culture, and with it the service of the soldiers, could be admired. The first was in Philadelphia, opening in 1866, and most large cities in the North followed suit fairly quickly. On the Southern side, the White House of the Confederacy was no longer needed for governmental purposes, and so it was turned into a combination museum/shrine to the Lost Cause. A fair number of these museums, including the one in the Confederate White House, are still in operation. [25]

Pilgrimages to Civil War sites are an important part of modern reenactment culture; a rite of passage that signifies full entrance into the community. There are those who visit the graves to commune with the dead, as noted. Vacations spent touring Civil War sites, often with pards, are a popular pastime. Or, for those who are not faint of heart, there's "doing" the Civil War Robert Lee Hodge style. In his chapters of *Confederates in the Attic*, the main plot point is author Horwitz accompanying him on a double-time whirlwind tour of Civil War sites, complete with period food and dress, and nights spent sleeping under the stars in pup tents. This kind of "Civil Wargasm," as Hodge describes it, isn't for everyone, though.

**Chivalry**

In his best-known work, *Travels in Hyperreality*, the late author Umberto Eco observed that Westerners have for centuries looked backward to the medieval era—with its structure, and its simple rhythms, and its chivalry—as the corrective for what was "wrong" with the present, particularly in times of turmoil. Certainly, antebellum white Southerners took that tack. Under pressure from the industrial North, they turned to medieval Europe as a source of solace and also justification for their world order, recasting themselves as noblemen and the slaves as serfs, with everyone thus occupying their "proper" role. Suits of armor and coats of arms, even though they had no historical basis, were popular decorations in Southern plantation homes. Walter Scott's novels were wildly popular, as were imitations cranked out by Southerners, such as George Tucker's *The Valley of the Shenandoah* (1832), and William Alexander Caruthers's The *Kentuckian in New York* (1834) and *The Cavaliers of Virginia* (1835). Chivalric sentiment lingered into the war years, with Southern cavalrymen—J.E.B. Stuart, in particular—fancying themselves the embodiment of medieval knights. Historians Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown

also note an incident in Choctaw, SC—during the "March to the Sea"—in which General William T. Sherman happened upon a cache of Scott novels while in a Southern residence, and decided to avail himself. "So," they observe, "Sherman indulged himself in chivalric literature as he leveled pretenders to its tradition." [26]

Chivalric ideas remained salient even after the war had ended. For Southerners, old habits died hard, particularly for the men who founded the Ku Klux Klan. Meanwhile, in the North, looking backward also had a certain appeal. As Southern historian Rollin Osterwise explains:

> The South's romantic myth of the gentleman on landed estates, with a flourish of chivalry and graciousness, exercised an appeal to the newly rich and powerful Northern businessmen and to their wives, to whom the aristocratic tradition—with an authentic American touch reaching back to Washington and Jefferson—became attractive now that they could afford to practice it. The combination of all these factors—in degrees impossible to measure—stimulated powerful national periodicals to enter the lists of public opinion wearing the armor of Southern knighthood. The Myth of the Lost Cause was on the way to its eventual triumph—in the pages of *Scribner's, Century, Harper's* and *The Atlantic*.

The upshot of all this mythologizing is that the antebellum South acquired a reputation for being the last (or only) chivalric era of American history. Recall, for example, the opening crawl of 1939's *Gone With the Wind*:

> There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields called the Old South. Here in this pretty world, Gallantry took its last bow. Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and of Slave. Look for it only in books, for it is no more than a dream remembered, a Civilization gone with the wind... [27]

It is difficult to know if the medieval impulse ever really ebbed, but what we can certainly say is that it flowed in the 1960s, in response to the various challenges and crises of the era. Indeed, at precisely the same time that Americans on the East Coast were bringing the American era of chivalry back to life during the Centennial, those on the West Coast were bringing the actual era of chivalry back to life in the form of the Society of Creative Anachronism, founded in San Francisco in 1966. It cannot be a coincidence that the two largest

communities of reenactors both re-create eras associated with chivalry, and both emerged from the same cultural milieu.[28]

Now, 50 years later, there remains a lingering sense amongst some Americans that the culture needs more chivalry. Booksellers have many, many volumes on this theme; Brad Miner's *The Compleat Gentleman: The Modern Man's Guide to Chivalry* is representative. Its cover explains:

> At a time of astonishing confusion about what it means to be a man, Brad Miner has recovered the oldest and best ideal of manhood: the gentleman. Reviving a thousand-year tradition of chivalry, honor, and heroism, *The Compleat Gentleman* provides the essential model for twenty-first-century masculinity. Despite our confusion, real manhood is not complicated. It is an ancient ideal based on service to one's God, country, family, and friends—a simple but arduous ideal worthy of a lifetime of struggle…*The Compleat Gentleman* is filled with examples from the past and the present of the man our increasingly uncivilized age demands.

Reenactors find the chivalric tradition to be very appealing. Their tendency to use 'your obd't servant' as a salutation—very chivalrous—has been discussed. Quite a few of the individuals interviewed for this study made specific reference to chivalry in discussing their participation in reenactment. To take but two examples, civilian reenactor Genie LaPorta describes the legacy of the Civil War as, "The end of a way of Life, of gentile manners and chivalry...where men could be that dashing knight and women could be a lady in elegant clothes." Tom Machingo, who does primarily a Southern impression, speaks similarly: "[The Civil War] fascinates because it was a defining moment for our Nation, the first modern War, yet still a chivalrous Napoleonic one, with colorful personalities who are still household names, and a simpler time in America."[29]

**Conclusion**

This chapter, paired with the previous one, was intended to make the point that modern-day individuals interact with the past in diverse ways and for diverse reasons. This argues against the temptation to dismiss the reenactment community as a monolith, made up of racist crackpots trying to turn back the clock on modern-day social relations. We recall the work after which this study was named; in which James McPherson suggested that there were as many motivations for fighting in the Civil War as there were soldiers. The same is surely true for the modern reenactment community.

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[1] From Worth's homepage, http://worth.bol.ucla.edu/ (last accessed March 1, 2016)

[2] Interview with Don Worth, July 4, 2008.

[3] See http://tvbythenumbers.com/2008/06/07/we-look-back-at-the-top-tv-shows-of-1960/4053

[4] Interview with Don Worth, July 10, 2008.

[5] These figures on books in print are derived from searching WorldCat, the world's largest bibliographic database. It combines the catalogs of more than 10,000 libraries in 90 countries. The figures quoted were current as of January 15, 2016; Adjusted for inflation, *Gone With the Wind* grossed $1,390,067,000, the highest inflation-adjusted gross of all time. See http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm. The film was also a critical success, earning rave reviews and eight Academy Awards, plus five additional nominations; The ratings for Ken Burns are reported in Toplin, Robert Brent, ed., *Ken Burns' "The Civil War": Historians Respond*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, xv; Gettysburg attendance from Caldwell, Dave. "At Gettysburg, Farther From the Battle but Closer to History" in *The New York Times*, March 12, 2008, E44.

[6] Ward, Geoffrey, Ric Burns and Ken Burns. *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (1990), xvi; McPherson, James, Alexander Street ALA breakfast keynote address (lecture, June 24, 2007).

[7] See Muller, J. "'The Noblest and Least Avoidable Conflict...': Winston Churchill and the American Civil War, United States Churchill Conference, Richmond, Virginia, 2 November 1991. Published in *Proceedings of the International Churchill Society 1990-1991*, Hopkinton: New Hampshire, International Churchill

Society, 1993, pp. 91-106.

[8] Interestingly, professional scholars tend to tell very similar stories. For example, see Stephen Cushman's *Bloody Promenade*, p. 9-10, in which he traces his interest in the war back to a copy of the American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War that he received from his grandfather.

[9] Interview with Michael Kelley, August 14, 2008; Interview with John Tubbesing, August 14, 2006; Interview with Stephen Gapps, February 10, 2012; Interview with Dave Sanders, August 21, 2006.

[10] Interview with Jeb Cole, August 22, 2006; Interview with John Overton, July 14, 2006.

[11] Quantrill was a notorious Southern partisan and guerilla warrior. Seward was Lincoln's Secretary of State, and his importance far exceeds that of Quantrill.

[12] The book totals in this paragraph are again taken from WorldCat at www.worldcat.org. The Battle of Little Bighorn, better known as Custer's Last Stand, was a crushing 1876 defeat of the U.S. Army by forces under the command of Native Americans Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Chief Gall. Though notorious, particularly given how badly the Americans were beaten, the battle had relatively little long-term significance, as the U.S. continued its military action against the Natives, and ultimately succeeded. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire saw150 young female laborers die in a fire as a result of a highly dangerous workplace. It played an important role in encouraging unionization and workplace safety legislation. Jesse James was a notorious outlaw who committed a string of crimes with his brother Frank and a gang of supporters, and whose death is shrouded in controversy. Buffalo Bill Cody was a decorated soldier, an explorer, and a showman famous for his Wild West-themed traveling show. All of these individuals were recently ranked among the 100 most influential Americans of all time by a panel of influential historians. See *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 2006. Booker T. Washington is best known as the founder of the Tuskegee Institute and for his advocacy on behalf of education for African-Americans. W.E.B. DuBois was a longtime scholar and activist, responsible for influential books *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935), and for helping to found the organization that became the NAACP. John C. Calhoun was vice-president and a long-serving U.S. Senator, and the unquestioned leader of the South in the antebellum era. He articulated the legal and intellectual basis for secession in his speeches and writings. William Jennings Bryan was a four-time presidential candidate, the standard-bearer of the farmer-centered Populist movement in 1896, Secretary of State, and the prosecuting attorney in the

Scopes Monkey Trial. Thurgood Marshall was the victorious attorney in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which made segregation in schools illegal, and later served an influential term on the U.S. Supreme Court. Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, which arguably saved Southern slavery from extinction in the 1790s, and perfected interchangeable parts.

[13] Beidler, Philip. "Ted Turner at. al. at Gettysburg, or, Re-enactors in the Attic." *Virginia Quarterly Review* 75:3 (Summer 1999): 489.

[14] For a discussion of marketing during the Civil War, particularly marketing of Gettysburg and related products, see Weeks, Jim. *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and An American Shrine*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003 for a full accounting. For postwar tourism, see Caudill, Edward and Paul Ashdown. Sherman's March in Myth and Memory. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008 and Hillyer, Reiko. Designing Dixie: Landscape, Tourism, and Memory in the New South, 1870-- 1917. Ph.D. diss., 2007. Note about Confederate flag sales from Golden, Harry. "Let's End the Civil War!" Saturday Evening Post 235 (August 11, 1962), 10.

[15] Zabava, 7; Richardson, 14; Daniel, Thomas A. *The Southern Cause: For the Love of Dixie*. Richmond: Brandyland Publishers, 2008, 126; Hughes, Susan Lyons. *First Impressions: Getting Started in Civilian Reenacting*. Marietta, OH: Camp Chase Publishing, Inc., 1994, vi.

[16] Information on comes from Spitznagel, Erich. "The Reenactors Rise Again." *Bloomberg Businessweek* 12 (January 5, 2012), 13.

[17] Lehrer, Eli. "Living History." *American Enterprise* 14:2 (July 2012), 33.

[18] Rosenzweig and Thelen, 19.

[19] The definitive works on this subject are Neely, Mark E., Jr., Harold Holzer, and Gabor Boritt. *The Confederate Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987 and Neely, Mark E., Jr. and Harold Holzer. *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War North*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

[20] For a discussion of the photographic style and conventions of the era, see Gallman, J. Matthew and Gary W. Gallagher, eds. *Lens of War: Exploring Iconic Photographs of the Civil War*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015; Frassanito, William. Gettysburg: A Journey in Time. New York: Thomas Publicatons;

Kaufman, Will. *The Civil War in American Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006; and Cushman, 9-14.

[21] "Reenactor Survey," *Camp Chase Gazette* 32:2 (January 2002), 13.

[22] Interview with Stephen Franzoni, June 15, 2015; Boyar, Sandy. "The Human Element...A Personal Observation," *Camp Chase Gazette* 10:8 (June 1983), 22; Holschuh, William. "Living History: Taking It To The Classroom," *Camp Chase Gazette* 31:6 (September 2004), 48.

[23] Handler, Richard and William Saxton. "Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in 'Living History.'" *Cultural Anthropology* 3:3 (Aug. 1988): 248; the figures for numbers of battlefields is from Prideaux, Bruce. "Echoes of War: Battlefield Tourism," *Battlefield Tourism: History, Place, and Interpretation*, edited by Chris Ryan, 1-12. New York: Elsevier, 2007; Chambers, Thomas A. *Memories of War: Visiting Battlegrounds and Bonefields in the Early American Republic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012, 23.

[24] Brown, Thomas J. "Introduction: The Undead War." In *Remixing the Civil War: Meditations on the Sesquicentennial*, edited by Thomas J. Brown, 1-16. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, 1.

[25] For a detailed history of the Museum of the Confederacy, see Thomas, Emory M. "Of Health and History: The Museum of the Confederacy." In *The Battlefield and Beyond: Essays on the American Civil War*, edited by Clayton E. Jewett, 310-325. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012.

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# Appendix

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The standard interview questions evolved moderately over the course of the project; this is the final and most commonly used questionnaire:

Biography

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. What is your current state of residence?
5. What is your birth state?
6. Did you serve in the military?
7. When did you first become involved with Civil War reenactment?
8. What impression(s) do you do?
9. What unit(s)/organization(s) are you a member of, if any?
10. Do you reenact any other periods?

About Reenactment

1. What is your favorite part of the re-enactment experience?
2. What is the most important part of reenacting, to you?
3. What is your least favorite part of the re-enactment experience?
4. What is your biggest complaint, if any, about reenacting or the reenactment community?
5. What are the main reasons that people reenact, do you think?
6. Have you had a "Civil War Moment"? If yes, please explain.

Information Sources

1. What is your favorite Civil War movie? Why?

2. What is your least favorite Civil War movie (if any)? Why?

3. What do you think of the manner in which Civil War reenactors have been portrayed in books, movies, television shows, documentaries, etc.?

4. Have you seen Ken Burns' Civil War series? If yes, what did you think of it?

5. What sources do you rely on for information about the Civil War?

6. Are there any historians whose work on the Civil War you particularly enjoy? Which historians/books?

History Education

1. Did you enjoy history as s subject when you were in elementary/high school?

2. If yes, why? If no, why not?

3. What is your opinion on the subject of history as it is taught to students today?

4. Do you consider educating students/the public to be an important part of reenacting? If yes, have you done anything special to advance that goal?

Interpreting the Civil War

1. What is your view of the cause(s) of the Civil War?

2. What Civil War personality (or personalities) do you most admire? Why?

3. What Civil War personality (or personalities) do you least admire? Why?

4. What Civil War story/event interests you the most?

5. What do you think is the most important result or long-term effect of the Civil War?

6. Why do you think the Civil War fascinates people as much as it does?

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